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INDEXING AND ABSTRACTING

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EXAMINING THE VALUE OF ERROR CORRECTION STRATEGIES FOR ORAL PROFICIENCY USED BY BENINESE EFL TEACHERS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the value of error correction strategies used by Beninese EFL teachers in promoting learners' oral proficiency in secondary school level. It aims firstly, at identifying the effectiveness of strategies that teachers can adopt in correcting errors in EFL classes. Secondly, at pointing out the difficulties teachers face when correcting their students' oral proficiency errors and lastly, at exploring the importance of error correction in the improvement of their students' oral communicative ability. The respondents of this study are EFL teachers and students in a secondary school located in the Littoral region of Benin. The qualitative research method was adopted. In this trend, questionnaires and interviews were used to gather reliable data. The analysis of the collected data revealed that EFL teachers adopt indirect correction technique as the most effective technique to correct learners' oral proficiency errors. It is also revealed that most of EFL teachers lack appropriate teaching experience. Besides, teachers face difficulties such as learner's anxiety and lack of motivation during English teaching sessions. Unlike the general observation, findings have revealed that students are afraid of speaking English language not because they are discouraged by their teacher's error correction technique, but they fear of being laughed at by their mates. They assert that they prefer to be corrected by their teacher and not by their mates. As conclusion, teachers are encouraged to take into account learner's affective filter during corrective feedback by adopting more indirect strategies such as recasts and delayed error correction technique. The study has finally revealed that both teachers and students testify the significance of error correction in the development of EFL beginners' oral communicative ability.

Keywords: error correction, strategies, oral communication, EFL Beginner classes

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Résumé :

Cette étude se concentre sur la valeur des stratégies de correction d'erreurs utilisées par les enseignants béninois d'Anglais, langue étrangère dans la promotion de la compétence orale des apprenants au niveau de l'enseignement secondaire. Ce travail vise tout d'abord à identifier l'efficacité des stratégies que les enseignants peuvent adopter pour corriger les erreurs dans les classes. Ensuite, il examine les difficultés rencontrées par les enseignants dans le processus de correction des erreurs de leurs apprenants. Cet article met enfin un accent particulier sur la valeur de la correction des erreurs dans l'amélioration de la communication orale des apprenants. La population cible est composée des enseignants et apprenants de la langue anglaise dans l'une des écoles secondaires dans la partie méridionale du Bénin. La méthode de recherche qualitative a été adoptée pour mener cette recherche. Dans cette tendance, des questionnaires, un guide d'entretien sont les instruments utilisés pour recueillir des données fiables. L'analyse des données collectées a révélé que les enseignants estiment que la stratégie la plus efficace pour corriger les erreurs de compétence orale chez les apprenants est la méthode indirecte. Il est également révélé que la plupart des enseignants n'ont pas assez de qualification et d'expérience professionnelle. En outre, les enseignants sont confrontés à des difficultés telles que le problème de timidité et manque de motivation chez les apprenants en situation d'apprentissage d'Anglais. Contrairement au constat général, les résultats ont révélé que les apprenants ont peur de parler Anglais non pas parce qu'ils sont découragés par la technique de correction utilisés par leur professeur, mais ils ont peur de se faire ridiculiser par leurs camarades. En conclusion, les enseignants sont encouragés à prendre en compte le côté émotionnel des apprenants dans le processus de la correction des erreurs en adoptant des stratégies plus indirectes telles que la refonte et la technique de correction d'erreur retardée. L'étude a finalement révélé que les enseignants et les apprenants témoignent de l'importance de la correction des erreurs dans le développement de la capacité de communication orale des apprenants débutants d'Anglais, langue étrangère.

Keywords: correction des erreurs, stratégies, communication orale, classes des apprenants débutants

1. Introduction

The English language is now a universal language and learning this indispensable language is very important for communicative purposes across different cultures and countries, for business and diplomatic relations. As such, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Beninese secondary schools is therefore, of utmost importance. The overall objective of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is for learners to have a good command of the four language skills that is, listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, this study focuses more on the usefulness of error correction on increasing learners' oral production. Teaching EFL students how to

Speak the target language fluently and accurately is not an easy task for EFL teachers. As non-natives of the English Language, it is natural for students to commit errors during oral production. Zublin (2011, p.6) explains that *"errors are regarded as a natural part of the learning process, with the teacher performing the role of facilitator, providing help when necessary and creating a supportive environment in which students can obtain a successful enhanced learning outcome"*. EFL students are bound to commit errors when speaking. This should not be seen as a sign of failure but instead as a useful tool to improve on their oral proficiency. Therefore, teachers have the obligation to provide error correction that is, replacing those inaccuracies by the accurate in order for students to better their oral proficiency. However, it has been noticed that in Beninese EFL classes, students have been discouraged from communicating in the English language due to some error correction strategies adopted by EFL teachers such as punishing or mocking the students for making an error. Moreover, Brown (2001, p.61) states that *"...all second language learners need to be treated with affective tender loving care."* This implies that it is important for teachers to be sensitive towards their students' learning by formulating effective error correction strategies that will motivate and improve their level in the target language.

The goal of the current work was to lay emphasis on the importance of using effective error correction strategies to enhance the Beninese EFL learners' oral communicative skill. The study also has evaluated the existing error correction strategies of speaking and introduce one of the most suitable ones which may best suit learner's oral proficiency needs.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is evident that error correction is useful and can be helpful for learners in EFL classrooms. However, in the secondary school level in Benin, there are many problems associated with effective strategies related to error correction in the EFL classroom. Some teachers do not use the effective oral error correction strategies in their classroom to improve students' oral performance. Some of them lack the appropriate knowledge regarding the importance of oral errors correction strategies and the appropriate way to correct learners' oral proficiency errors in the classroom.

As a result, correcting students' errors becomes a delicate task for teachers; and if not handled carefully, students lose their love for the target language and at worst, abandon it completely. Long (as cited in Zublin, 2011, p.8) argues that *"...Teachers' classroom feedback to students should give them the message that mistakes are not "bad" but that most mistakes are good indicators that innate acquisition abilities are alive and well..."*

Therefore, this study was an attempt to explore the different effective correction strategies, their importance on learners' oral communication and the different difficulties teachers face when correcting their students' errors during communication.

3. Purpose(s) of the Study

The main purpose of this study is:

- to find out the different strategies that a teacher uses to correct errors in beginners' classes;
- to explore the importance of error correction in the promotion of EFL students' oral communication;
- to examine the different difficulties EFL teachers face when correcting their learners' spoken errors.

4. Research Questions

This study aims at finding answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the various effective strategies and techniques that EFL teachers can make use of in correcting spoken errors in their beginner classes?
- 2) What are the different difficulties EFL teachers face when correcting their learners' oral communication errors?
- 3) What is the importance of error correction in the promotion of EFL beginner students' oral communication?

5. Literature Review

The notion of error correction also known as corrective feedback has been a topic of debate by previous researchers. In this section, an overview of previous researches that are related to this study is presented.

5.1 What is Error Correction?

Error correction is the replacement of the inaccurate expressions of learners by the accurate. Chaudron (1977) refers to error correction as *"any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to or demands improvement of the learner's utterance"* (as cited in Minh, 2003, p.1). However, researchers such as Truscott (1999) in his publication disapprove the concept of error correction stating that *"oral correction poses overwhelming problems for teachers and students, research evidence suggests that it is not effective..."* (p. 453). However, despite these controversial opinions, findings of certain researchers proved that error correction positively influenced learners' oral proficiency (Lightbrown and Spada, 1990; Zublin, 2011; Rahimi and Dastjerdi, 2012; Deghani, Isadpanah, Shahnava, 2017; Uysal and Aydin, 2017).

5.1.1 Errors and Mistakes

Errors and mistakes are terms generally used in conversations and are constantly used interchangeably. There are however slight differences between the two. *Errors* are those inaccuracies in learners' speech as a result of lack of knowledge of the target language

while *Mistakes* refers to inaccuracies in learners' utterances due to stress or anxiety. Corder (1967) considered errors the results of the learner's poor *linguistic competence*, while mistakes are manifested in the speaker's *performance* as merely slips of the tongue or memory failures (as cited in Aouiche, 2017, p.44).

5.1.2 Why do Beginner Students make Errors?

Committing errors is a natural part of the learning process. Beginner students tend to commit many errors in learning EFL as they are fresh learners. According to Burt and Kiparsky (1974), human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes (as cited in Arias, 2004). Brown (1941, p.226) adds by saying that "*inevitably, learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition and that process will be impeded if they do not commit errors and then benefit from various forms of feedback on those errors*". However, there are specific reasons behind beginner students' committing errors. Some of these reasons are:

- **Interference from L1 (First language):** The transfer of elements of the native language to the target language is perhaps the major cause of errors by learners because they most times believe that their native language and the target language function the same way. Krashen (2009:27) expresses that the use of an L1 rule allows the performer to outperform his competence, to meet a practical need in L2 communication (as cited in Zublin, 2011, p.9).
- **Complexity of the Target Language:** EFL students often make errors sometimes due to some complex structures of the target language. Learners often commit errors in the use of phrasal verbs, articles and misuse of infinitive. For example, "I object to be treated like this" instead of "I object to being treated like this". (Gumbaridze, 2012, p.2). Confusable words such as "make/do"; "sit/seat"; "price/prize" also make learners commit errors.
- **Anxiety and Inferiority Complex:** Anxiety is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry (Scovel, 1978. p. 134) (as cited in Brown, 1941, p. 148). The feeling of inferiority and low self- esteem make learners commit errors. The fear of being laughed at by their mates makes them lose concentration when speaking. This actually creates confusion within themselves and they become stressed out in the process they mistake.

5.1.3 Significance of Learners' Errors

Errors provide evidence of students' learning and needs. When treated effectively with appropriate feedback, errors lead to better learning (Uysal and Ayidin, 2017, p.3). Corder (as cited in Carrion, 2016, p.231) says "*errors are a way the learner has of testing his hypothesis about the language he is learning*". Moreover, errors provide teachers with feedback so as to know the effectiveness of their teaching and enable them to decide whether they should spend more time on a specific item or go on with a new one (Martinez, 2006, p.3).

5.2 Defining Oral Communication

The exchange of information or passing of information, ideas and thoughts from one person to the other is known as “communication”. Julia T. Wood (2009) describes communication as *“a systematic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meaning”* (as cited in UKessays, 2018). In addition, UKessays cites Elizabeth Tierney (1998) who saw communication as a process which begin *“when you have a message to deliver to an audience...the message can be an idea, a thought or feeling which we wish to share with others...”* Anything “oral” refers to the mouth or by words of mouth that is, spoken but not written. Thus, oral communication refers to any type of interaction between two or more people that makes use of words and makes use of speaking and listening.

5.2.1 Oral Communication in the EFL Beginner Classes

Oral communication has to do with one of the four language skills which is “speaking”. The main goal of teaching EFL is for learners to be able to communicate fluently and accurately in the language though in the beginner classes, it is often difficult to make them lose the fear to speak. This is due to different factors like students’ lack of confidence, insecurity, lack of motivation, fear, among others. Therefore, students need to feel motivated to communicate in English in class for a real purpose, so that they can use English in different social contexts, not just the class (Espinoza Campos, 2014, p.453).

5.3 Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback (CF) is the correction, right or accurate form of utterances, words or sentences provided by teachers regarding their learners’ errors or mistakes, aimed at improving their knowledge of the target language. In providing feedback in the classroom, teachers should put into consideration the different learning capabilities of their students and providing feedback at the appropriate time. As Spacey (2017) puts: *“It’s a question of balance. Students know they need help in order to learn; teachers have to get to know their students and not be too heavy handed when it comes to individual mistakes.”*

5.3.1 Delayed and Immediate Corrective Feedback

Teachers in providing feedback, are to pay attention to individual student’s learning capabilities. That is, they should pay attention to the individuality of that learner such as: whether she/he is an anxious person, whether he/she feels comfortable with the correction, whether after correction he/she is willing to continue his/her speech. Also considering some other aspects such as: whether the focus of instruction is on improving learners’ accuracy or fluency and specifically whether our correction should be immediately, or we should wait until their speech finish and then correct with some delay. Thus, considering the time that teachers should correct learners’ errors is also important. Therefore, teachers should know whether a specific error should be corrected immediately or with some delay (Shabani and Safari, 2016, p.94).

Shividko (2016) in a blog supports the idea of immediate correction stating that *"I am a strange language learner unlike most people, I like to be corrected directly and explicitly. I learn best this way."* This lady goes further by explain that making a linguistic mistake produces an emotional discomfort in her. In her own words, *"...almost discomfort with my performance self."* She concludes by saying that the remembrance of the emotional discomfort makes her constantly aware of the corrected error thereby facilitating her learning. Studies of Shabani and Safari (2016) also advocates the effectiveness of immediate correction. Also, Irfani (2014) findings, proved that students preferred immediate correction. However contrary to this preference for immediate correction, Aouitche (2017, p.50) in her study, found that 75% of teachers opted for delayed or postponed CF. Supporting this finding, are researchers such as Dabbaghi (2006); Abid Dawood (2013); and Gharaghanipour, Zareian, and Behjat, (2015) who argued that the Delayed type of CF was more preferable and effective in the improvement of learners' oral production (as cited in Shabani and Safari, 2016, p.107).

For beginner students as pointed out earlier, during oral activities it is important for teachers to take into account the learning situation, be sensitive towards their students and strike a balance between whether to correct immediately or to delay in order not to obstruct the flow of the class and encouraging a feeling of security to use the language.

5.4 Error Correction Strategies

Brown (1941, p.112) defines strategy as *" specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating..."* Error correction strategies refer to those techniques, methods or ways EFL teachers apply in providing corrective feedback regarding their learners' utterances. The aim of using these strategies is to improve learners' utterances by and not embarrassing or demotivating them. It is important to note that *"...if error correction technique is not chosen in a proper way, it can unintentionally upset students' confidence in fluency."* (Gumbaridze, 2012, p.1). Every student differs from the other in nature. One particular strategy or technique may not necessarily be appropriate for the other. That is, a correction strategy may seem motivating for one student and demotivating for another.

In this section, some error correction techniques will be explained.

- **Explicit Correction:** In this type of error correction strategy, the teacher indicates to the learner in a very clear and direct way that his/her utterance is incorrect and provides the right form. Here, the teacher often indicates that the learner has committed an error, interrupting the student before he/she has finished speaking. This technique could have a negative effect, especially among anxious students as they normally loose the track, forget what they were talking about and their anxiety levels are increased (Martinez, 2006, p.6).
- **Recast:** Recast refers to an indirect indication that a student's utterance is incorrect. A recast correctly reformulates a student's incorrect utterance while maintaining the central meaning of the utterance. Zublin (2011, p.18) referred to recasts as *"unobtrusive and do not interfere with the flow of communication"*.

- **Clarification Request:** This often requires the student's reformulation of his/her utterance. By using phrases such as "excuse me" or "I don't understand", "*The teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or the utterance consisted of some kind of mistake... Then, a repetition or a reformulation from the learner is required*" (Papangkorn, 2015, p.2).
- **Metalinguistic Clues:** Without providing the correct form, this technique involves the teacher asking students whether an utterance is said in a particular way or not. That is, *the teacher poses questions or makes comments related to the student's utterance, such as "Do we say it like that?"* (Zublin, 2011, p.18).
- **Elicitation and Repetition:** Elicitation requires the teacher to elicit the correct answer from students by asking them questions about the incorrect utterance. That is, the teacher can start a sentence and pause to allow the learner to complete the sentence. In "repetition" the teacher repeats the error and adjusts his/her intonation thereby drawing learners' attention to the incorrect word. (Zublin, 2011; Panpangkorn, 2015).
- **Self-Correction and Peer Correction:** Recent researches encourage teacher to make use of the combination of teacher, peer and self-correction. Self-correction enables students learn through trial and error. Moreover Brown (2001, p.68) asserts that the ability to self-correct selected errors shows learners' readiness to use that form correctly and regularly. Edge (1993:10) states that "*People usually prefer to put their errors right than be corrected by someone else. Also, self-correction is easier to remember, because someone has put something right in his or her own head*". Accordingly, the teaching/learning situation is essential to promote learner autonomy in such a way that learners may become fully aware of their achievements and faulty results. Sultana (2009:11) also points out that "*The idea of self-correction is closely tied with learner autonomy. ... Self-correction is the technique which engages students to correct their own errors.*" (as cited in Zublin, 2011, p.19).

Peer Correction involves the contribution of other members of the class. For the class not to be too "teacher-centred", teachers could use the technique to allow for activate participation in the class. Moreover peer "*correction is less threatening, less authoritarian, and more supportive- when correction comes from the teacher, it stresses teacher's authority.*" (Zublin, 2011, p.20). However, studies of Zublin (2011) found out that students don't like it when they are corrected by their mates or peers. They saw it as embarrassing stating that "*My mate has no authority to correct me*" or "*I do not think that I am being corrected correctly*". (p.29).

In conclusion, "*when teachers apply...correction techniques, they need to take into account the pros and cons of these techniques, so as to avoid pitfalls in their specific contexts*" Minh (2003, p.16). Carrion (2016, p.243) adds by saying that "*Correcting effectively involves choosing the most appropriate technique according to the type of error, type of activity and type of learner*".

5.5 Importance of Error Correction on Oral Communication in the EFL Beginners' Class

The role of error correction to language teaching can never be overestimated. Error correction is important in order to make learners aware of their misconception of the target language rule and improve their language production. It consolidates their knowledge therefore, improving their learning. Without error correction, students can have a false assumption thus, fossilisation of their error. Carrion (2016, p.239) in her study, found out that 99% of students described error correction as “*useful*”.

However, researchers such as Horwitz & Cope (1986), Truscott (1999), Young (1991) supports that correction of errors has also been considered to have negative effects. Walker (1973) for instance, found in his study that students preferred not to be corrected for every error; this practice lessens their confidence and forced them to waste so much effort on details that they used to lose the overall ability to use language. Excessive feedback on error can also have a negative effect on motivation and can also prevent learning steps to take place because, if everything is corrected, students do not take risk and do not say anything unless they are sure it is correct. (Martinez, 2006, p.3).

5.6 Problems and Difficulties EFL Teachers Face when Error Correction in their Classes

Teaching beginners is one of the most challenging level of language instruction (Brown, 2001, p.98). It is not easy for EFL teachers to correct their beginner students. They often have to deal with issues concerning motivation, students' affective filters among others. Beginner students also make the same errors over and over again which becomes frustrating for teachers. Nevertheless, one should never get tired in trying to correct beginner students as they are highly dependent on their teachers.

5.6.1 Lack of Motivation

Motivation is really important in the beginner class. Without motivation or interest for EFL, learners may find it difficult in learning and speaking the language. Gardner (1985, p.509) refers to motivation as “*the combination of the effort plus the desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitude toward learning language*” (as cited in Hounnou Azoua, 2018, p.18). Also, Brown (2001) states that “*motivation is the extent to which you make choices about (a) goals to pursue and (b) the effort you will devote to that pursuit*”. He adds that motivation is the difference between “*success and failure*”. If students are motivated, they will learn and if not, they won't (p.72).

Therefore, it is very important for teachers to motivate their learners at all times to speak the English language. Since beginner students are most times of a tender age, a reward could be attached to a meaningful oral production provided by the students. That is at the beginner level, extrinsic motivation (anticipation of reward) could go a long way in increasing their interest in the target language.

5.6.2 The Affective Filter

This is one important issue that teachers are often confronted with when correcting their students. The affective filter is a mental block that prevents learners from fully utilizing

the comprehensible input they receive Krashen 1985 (cited in Zublin 2011, p.14). Nervousness, anxiety, self-confidence, boredom among others are affective factors that could lower student's willingness to learn the target language. Moreover, Du (2009, p.162) in his journal states that:

"Affective factors are seen to play an important role in acquiring a L2. Comprehensible input may not be utilized by L2 acquirers if there is a "mental block" that prevents them from fully profiting from it. The affective filter acts as a barrier to acquisition. The filter is up when the acquirer is unmotivated, lacking in confidence, or concerned with failure. The filter is down when the acquirer is not anxious and is trying to become a member of the group speaking."

The affective filter has to do with emotions and students' emotional state matters a lot in their language learning. By boosting up students' confidence and lowering their anxiety, taking into account their affective filter, teachers can help students develop a positive attitude towards error correction.

5.6.3 Fossilisation

Brown (1941, p.271) defines fossilisation as *"the relatively permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person's second language competence."* He sees it as normal and natural stage for some learners and should not be seen as some sort of *"...terminal illness"* Fossilization is the presence of some particular errors in the utterances of learners. Most times, these errors become so permanent in their speeches that it becomes difficult to correct them. This is however peculiar to beginner students who had a bit of the target language right from primary school and learnt erroneous forms of the language.

In conclusion, most of the cited writers in the literature review have a positive view concerning error correction. Contrary to the view of researchers such as Truscott (1999) who claims that error correction does more harm than good to students, I am of the opinion that error correction should not be neglected in the beginner classes else, the students' foundation will be shaken because they will acquire erroneous concepts and on the long run with nobody to correct these errors, fossilisation occurs. On this note, I so much agree with Regan (2017) who in her article encourages her students not to be afraid of making errors. Teachers as facilitators have the great responsibility of correcting their students' errors over and over again if need be. Though in so doing, it is important for teachers to strike a balance between under-correction and over-correction. The teacher also has to take note of the error correction technique to adopt depending on the context and learning situation. That is why I agree with Gumbaridze (2012) who is of the view that error correction technique has to be chosen carefully so as not to demotivate students. In order for teachers to help students improve their level of proficiency, they need to correct their learners' errors but in doing so, they need to take into account the students' different personality in order to avoid students' discouragement from speaking in the process.

6. Methodology

6.1 Type of the Research

This study is a qualitative research and it was conducted to explore error correction techniques and strategies at Beninese secondary schools' level. A questionnaire was developed to elicit the effective oral strategies used by teachers in their oral proficiency classrooms. An interview guide was also used to record down the oral correction techniques used by the participants teachers in their classrooms.

6.2 Participants

The participants of the study were fifty-three (53) beginner students among whom twenty-nine (29) girls and twenty-four (24) boys; in addition to eight (8) English teachers who were teaching beginner classes at secondary level. Among the teachers, there are seven men and one-woman teacher. The students' medium age was 13 and French was their L2 or official language. They were randomly selected.

6.3 Research Tools

Data were collected by using two tools namely students and teachers' questionnaires and interviews guide. For the first tool, two different questionnaires have been designed. The first is addressed to teachers teaching beginner classes while the second is for beginner students. The purpose of the questionnaires was to investigate how often teachers correct students' oral errors as well as to know about the type of oral errors to be corrected. They also aimed at getting respondents' opinion regarding the expectation and the effectiveness of oral error correction and types of errors to be corrected. For the second tool, Five (5) English teachers have been interviewed. The aim of the interviews has been to find out learners' attitudes towards error correction during oral activities in the beginner classes and how teachers handle them. Secondly, to discover the strategies and techniques teachers use often during error correction.

6.4 Data Collection and Method of Data Analysis

Questions have been addressed to both teachers and students through questionnaires. In order to get the respondents' trust and conviction, time was spent in explaining the purpose of the investigation before distributing each questionnaire. Both teachers and students filled in the questionnaires and they were collected immediately. Also, the interviews with the teachers were carried out without much reluctance from the teachers. The data collected have been analysed and displayed based on the information got from the questionnaires and the interviews. Students and teachers' responses related to the questionnaires have been developed. The interview guide has also been explained and analysed.

7. Presentation and Analysis of the Results

This section presents the analysis of the results related to both students' and teachers' questionnaires as well as the results of interviews.

7.1 Result Related to Students' Questionnaire

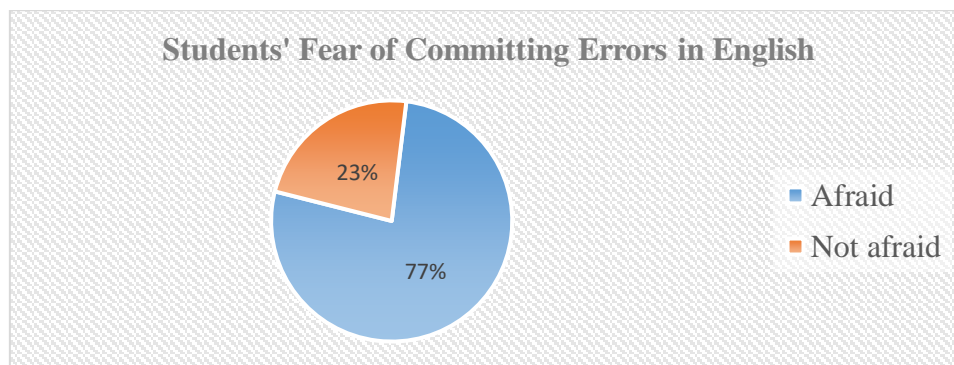


Figure 1: Students' Fear of Committing Errors in English

Figure 1 shows that 77% of the beginner students are afraid of committing errors. Only 23% stated they are not afraid of committing errors. So, from the results, most beginner students are afraid of making mistakes or errors in English.

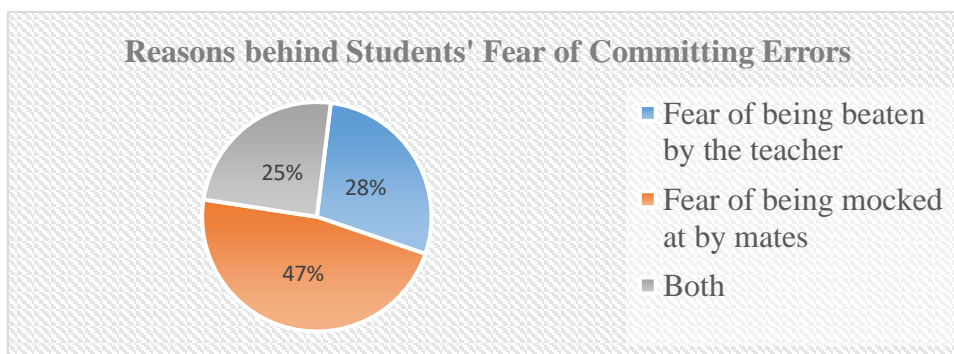


Figure 2: Reasons behind Students' Fear of Committing Errors in English

The results in figure 2 indicate that 28 percent of the respondent students are afraid of making mistakes in English out of fear of being beaten by their teacher. Also 47 percent do not want to speak and make mistakes due to fear of being laughed at by their mates or colleagues in class while 25 percent of the students states that due to fear of being beaten and being mocked at by their friends too, they are afraid of making mistakes.

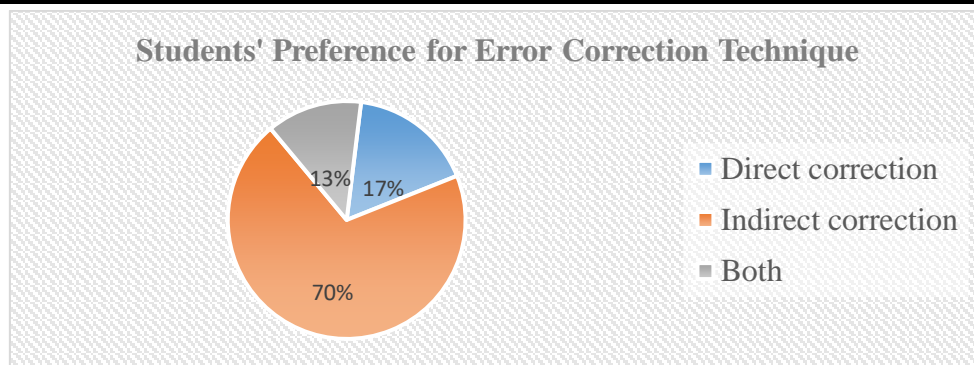


Figure 3: Students' Preference for Error Correction Technique

The results in figure 3 show that 17 percent of the beginner students prefer direct correction whereas 70 percent went for indirect correction. However, 13 percent still preferred both. This result indicates that most beginner students prefer indirect correction as an error correction technique.

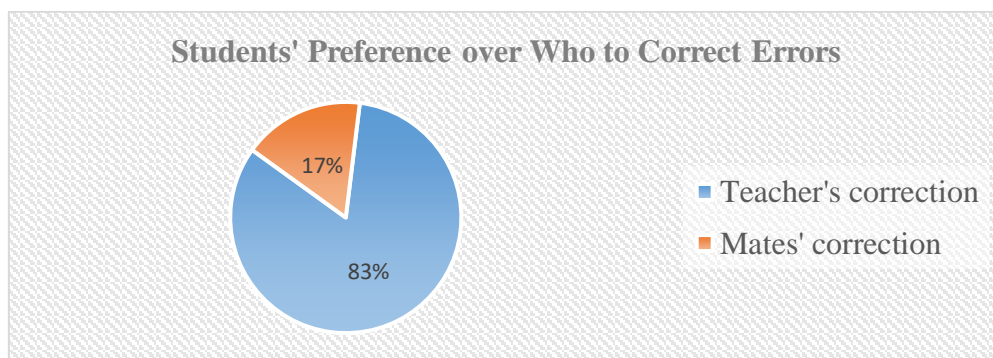


Figure 4: Students' Preference over Who to Correct Errors

From the results on figure 4, 83 percent of the respondent students prefer being corrected by their teachers while 17 percent of the students stated that they prefer to be corrected by their friends.

7.2 Results Related to Teachers' Questionnaire

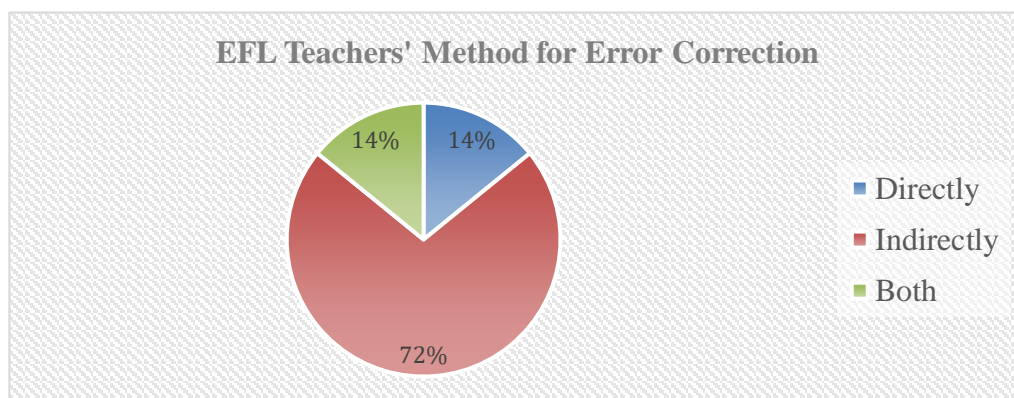


Figure 5: EFL Teachers' Method for Error Correction

The results on figure 5 showing teachers' method of error correction, indicates that 14 percent of the respondent students use the direct method in correcting their student while 72 percent of the teachers' state that they correct their learners' errors indirectly. However, only 14 percent of the respondent teachers argued that they make use of both methods.

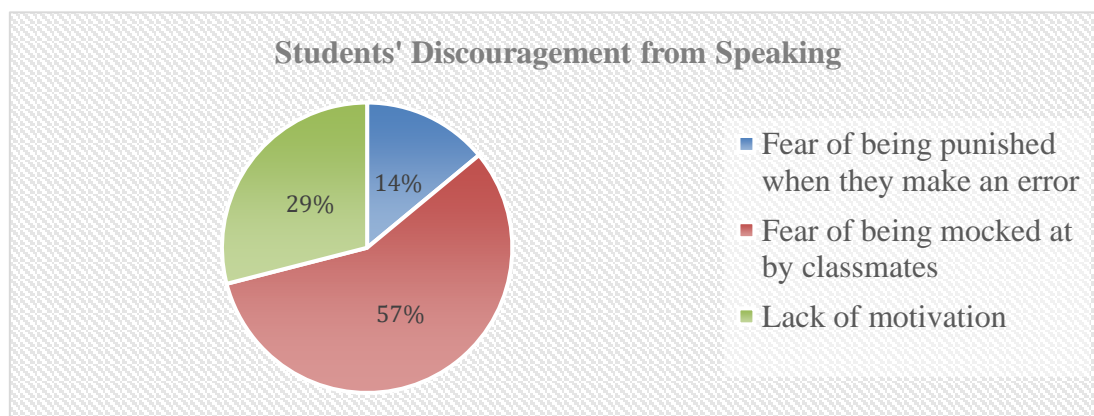


Figure 6: Students' Discouragement from Speaking

The results on figure 6 give a presentation of the reasons or causes behind students' discouragement from speaking English. From the table, 14.29 percent of the respondent teachers think that the fear of making mistakes and getting beaten by the teacher discourages students from expressing themselves in English. Also, 57.14 percent of the teacher argued that students do not speak due to fear of being mocked at by friends while 28.57 percent of the respondents think it is demotivation that discourages beginner learners from speaking.

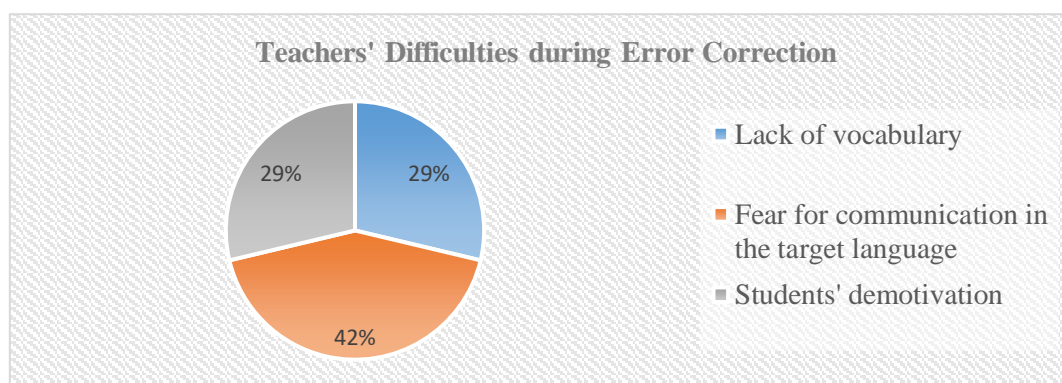


Figure 7: Teachers' Difficulties during Error Correction

The respondent teachers stated the various difficulties they face when correcting their beginners spoken errors. On figure 7, the results show that 28.57 percent of the teachers expressed that students' lack of vocabulary is a major difficulty they face whereas 42.86 percent of the respondent teachers claimed that students' fear of communication in the target language hinders them from speaking which becomes an

obstacle for teachers to correct their spoken errors. However, 28.57 of the teachers argued that they are faced with the problem of demotivation in their beginner students.

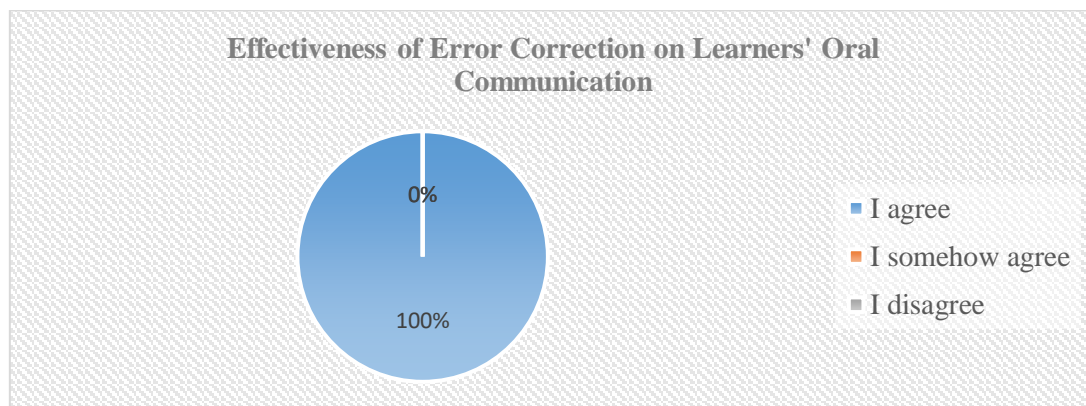


Figure 8: Effectiveness of Error Correction on Learners' Oral Communication

The results on figure 8 indicate that all the teachers in order words, 100 percent of the respondent teachers agree that error correction is effective in improving beginner learner's oral communication.

7.4 Results of the Interview

The respondent teachers revealed that sufficient time is not devoted to speaking in the classroom because most of the examinations in English are based on writing and grammar so, more time is devoted to writing and grammar activities. The interviewed teachers expressed that not all students develop a positive attitude towards error correction. Some said that they lack motivation to speak during English lessons whereas other asserts that they do not have interest in learning English while others believe that the students' major problem is they do not want to make mistakes and then get mocked at by their mates. The interviewed teachers stated that they are generally faced with the problem of demotivation and high anxiety level in their learners.

In addition to that, the teachers revealed that parents do not encourage their children to speak English stating that they (parents) often develop a neglectful attitude towards their children learning. Most of the interviewed teachers advocate the use of indirect correction when correcting learners' spoken errors expressing that using this technique will not only encourage learners to speak but will also reduce their anxiety level.

8. Discussion of Results

Taking into account the data that have been gathered through the research tools, this section will discuss the results of the findings.

8.1 Effective Strategies for Error Correction in the EFL Beginners' Class

The information got from the field investigation revealed that 72% of the respondent teachers adopts the indirect correction technique while 14% uses both direct and indirect technique. From the students' view, they expressed that they preferred indirect correction as a strategy for error correction. The teachers in their opinion too assert that the strategy that is most effective is the indirect error correction technique because it is less demotivating. This includes restating learners' utterances, using prompts among others. However, it is important for teachers to consider the personality of each students when providing correction. As can be seen from teachers and students' responses, some of the respondent favour the direct correction technique over the indirect one while others went for both. Therefore, teachers should take into account the classroom atmosphere and choose the most suitable correction technique depending on the learning situation.

8.2 EFL Teachers' Difficulties when Correcting Spoken Errors

The results based on findings from the different instrument for data collection used in this study, one could say that EFL teachers face some challenges when correcting their beginner learners. They face difficulties such as demotivation, students' lack of vocabulary and anxiety. The results of the teachers' questionnaire revealed that 42.86% of the respondent teachers argued that students' fear of communication which can be related to anxiety is a major difficulty they face during error correction. Also, the majority of the respondent students also revealed that they do not like to speak out of fear of being mocked at. They have this inferiority complex which makes it difficult for teachers to correct their errors without demotivating them. As low-level learners, the lack of vocabulary also constitutes a problem as teachers are obliged to supply them "*with the simplest of words*" stated a respondent teacher.

It is vital to note that teachers' lack of professional experience and training constitute a major problem. Teaching is not an easy task. Teachers have to be efficiently trained so as to be productive in their classes. The analysis of the teachers' questionnaire shows that only 29% of the respondent teachers are trained whereas 71% of them are untrained. This could affect the quality of their teaching and could create an impediment to the progress of the educational system.

8.3 Importance of Error Correction on EFL Beginners' Oral Communication

The results of both the teachers and students' questionnaires account for the effectiveness of error correction on beginner learners' oral proficiency. The majority of the students that is 94.34% of the respondent students, acknowledged that error correction is really important in improving their oral communication. Also, all the respondent teachers, that is 100% of the EFL teachers stated that error correction is indispensable to the progress of beginner students' oral communication.

This finding is in line with that of researchers Deghani, Isadpanah, Shahnava (2017) who found out in their study that "*... oral corrective feedback provision in the classroom plays a facilitative role in improving students' speaking skill*" (p.288). The role of error

correction in improving learners' oral proficiency in the beginner classes cannot be overemphasized but in doing so, teachers should strike a balance between over-correcting and under-correcting so as not to create demotivation in the learners.

Base on the main findings related to the field investigation, I can assert that the majority of the students agree that error correction is important but do not want to commit errors in order not to be laughed at by their mates. Only a few were scared to be beaten by the teacher. Also, the majority of the students favour indirect correction and prefers to be corrected by their teacher and not their mates. However, in this case study contrary to general observation in most EFL teachers, the sampled teachers adopt the indirect correction strategy as the most effective when correcting EFL beginner learners. That is the students are not discouraged from speaking the English Language due to their teacher's method of correcting their errors but instead are afraid of being laughed at by their mates.

From the interview, the teachers confirmed that students feel discouraged when their mates laugh at them when they commit an error. The teachers made note of the lack of parents' contribution towards the students' learning stating that most of the students do not having the recommended textbooks which can slow down their' learning. Therefore, parents also have an important role to play in the successful EFL learning of the beginner students.

9. Recommendations and Suggestions

Following the findings, here are some recommendations and suggestions:

- Government should organise massive training workshops and seminars to improve teachers' quality of teaching.
- Teachers should always take into account learners' affective filter during corrective feedback by creating a relaxed learning environment for learners.
- Teachers should mostly adopt the indirect error correction technique because it is less demotivating and should be patient with their beginner learners.
- Teachers should strike a balance between over correcting and under correcting their learners depending on the learning situation they are faced with else demotivation occurs.
- Students are advised be more serious towards their English learning by actively participating during lessons and ignoring friends who laugh at them when they commit errors.

10. Conclusion

This work has focused on the value of error correction strategies in promoting Beninese EFL students' oral proficiency in secondary schools' level. This study aimed at identifying different types of useful strategies for error correction regarding oral proficiency errors. This work has also been able to identify the various challenges

teachers faced when correcting learners' spoken error and the difficulties learners face too. It has also investigated the importance of error correction on oral proficiency classroom.

The literature review has helped in providing better insights into the notion of error correction and in stating previous researchers' view on the concept of error correction. It also explored the significance of learners' errors among others and discussed the various strategies that teachers could adopt when correcting their learners' errors.

Concerning the methodology of the work, both EFL teachers and students have played an important role. The field investigation has been carried out precisely in Littoral Region of Benin Republic with EFL beginner students and their teachers. Questionnaires and interviews are instruments that have been used to collect data.

Findings showed that 90% of beginner students like English but are most times afraid of speaking the English language. The reasons behind this as revealed by the students are as a result of making mistakes or committing errors and then get laughed at by friends or even get beaten by the teacher. However, the majority of both teachers and students preferred indirect error correction strategy and 94.34 % of the students asserted that error correction is important to improve their communicative skills. In addition, the lack of teachers' training and teaching experience constitute a major problem as revealed in this study.

Finally, it has been recommended to train and recruit more proficient teachers so as to improve the quality of EFL teaching. Also, suggestions have been made to EFL teachers and their students that could help in promoting a better learning atmosphere to both parties. Further researches could be conducted in investigating speaking anxiety among EFL beginner students.

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Hindémè Ulrich O. Sèna
EXAMINING THE VALUE OF ERROR CORRECTION STRATEGIES FOR ORAL PROFICIENCY
USED BY BENINESE EFL TEACHERS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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