To Correct or Not Correct?

Ideas for Subtle Grammar Correction
During Speaking Tasks
Pre-Webinar Questions Review

1. What activities do you do in your classes to practice speaking?

2. If you correct your students’ grammar while they are speaking, when and how do you correct it?

3. Why do you think students struggle to speak freely?
The Importance of Speaking Practice

- Grammar exam scores do not necessarily indicate oral proficiency
- Practice leads to language being more fluent
- TOEFL and IELTS exams require speaking
The Problem

- Correcting during flow of speech interrupts thought process
- Repeating mistakes creates bad habits
1. Written Grammar versus Spoken Grammar

2. Techniques for correcting spoken grammar errors and mistakes

3. Practical application of correction techniques
Written Grammar Versus Spoken Grammar

- **Written grammar allows students to:**
  - Stop and think before they write
  - Correct before the teacher sees it

- **Written grammar does not:**
  - Allow questions from the reader
  - Require answers from the writer

One-way communication
Written Grammar Versus Spoken Grammar

- **Spoken grammar requires:**
  - Instant speech
  - Interaction between the speakers
  - Appropriate interactions
    - Volume
    - Body language
    - Level of formality
    - Facial expression

Two-way communication
Spoken Grammar Features

- Ellipsis
  - Omitting part of the sentence
- Fillers
  - Pauses with words or silence
- Heads
  - Moving words to the beginning
- Tails
  - Moving words to the end
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellipsis</th>
<th>Non-Ellipsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He left to go there.</td>
<td>John’s brother left to go to the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any questions?</td>
<td>Do you have any questions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes, I have a question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The box was made in Italy.</td>
<td>The box on the table was made in Italy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Written Grammar Versus Spoken Grammar

- **FILLERS:** words, sounds, or silence in speech

So, umm speaking can be hard, like when I’m nervous.

Uh, so when I’m nervous ... it’s umm ... really hard.
HEADS AND TAILS: placing a word or phrase for emphasis

Heads
- Grammar, it can be confusing for learners!
- The game, it was amazing!

Tails
- It’s so confusing for learners – grammar that is.
- It was an amazing game, wasn’t it?
Helping Ease the Fear of Speaking

- **Authentic text**
  - Movies and speeches not ideal, as they are scripted

- **Recorded speech**
  - Natural, unscripted

- **“Unscripted” media**
  - Talk shows, interviews
Spoken Grammar Features

A: This one gives a whole lot of food, so ... you end up with a lot of food not quite as good ... but you know it's... it was okay considering what we were doing.

B: Yeah ... um mine was pretty good, but ... um it was a little too ... too rich for me.

A: Too rich?

B: The sauce was really thick. I would have liked it to be a little thinner.
Why are Fillers Used in Speech?

- The speaker is thinking!
  - Searching for a word or idea
  - Searching for the correct grammar
  - Translating from the first language
Errors Versus Mistakes

- **Errors** result from a lack of knowledge
  - Students don’t know the rule

- **Mistakes** result from various factors, usually requiring time to think
  - Students know the rule

People are more likely to make mistakes during speech than in writing.
No Need to Correct...

These problems indicate where your student is struggling.
No Need to Correct...

- During situations that will embarrass
  - Formal class presentations
  - Extremely shy students
- When a student is clearly struggling
  - Correct them afterwards, let them work through it first.

**EXCEPTION:** student asks for help
Speech Correction

Focus on:

- Grammar you’re working on in class
- Mistakes that create misunderstandings
- If the student asks for help

Keep in mind, you won’t hear every mistake!
# To Correct or Not Correct - Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Do not correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Forms being practiced</td>
<td>• Fillers, pauses, repairs and self-corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mistakes that create misunderstandings</td>
<td>• Situations that might lead to embarrassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student asks for help</td>
<td>• Formal class presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student trying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of Noticing

- Grammar stops improving when students do not notice mistakes

- This might happen when:
  - Learners are able to communicate their needs
  - Correction of mistakes/errors has stopped
  - Consistent practice and study slows
Guiding Students through Self-Correction

1. Recasting

2. Clarifying questions

3. Negotiating meaning
1. Recasting – The Most Subtle

- Purpose: to make your student notice the mistake

- Restate what the student said, but with the correction
  - *S:* What were the question?
  - *T:* What was the question?
  - *T:* Can anyone tell us what the question was?

- Student response is not required
Recasting: When to Use

- During whole class discussions
  - Quickly recast and move on

- During conversation
  - Teacher/Student
  - Student/Student
2. Clarifying Questions

- Two methods
  - Ask a genuine question
    - S: *He* will come tonight. (*means she*)
    - T: Who?
    - S: Um, *she* will come tonight.
  - Pretend you didn’t hear
    - S: Yesterday, I *go* to the park.
    - T: Pardon?
    - S: Yesterday, I *went* to the park.
2. Clarifying Questions

- Encourage student to self-correct

- Distinguish mistakes from errors
  - Errors cannot be self-corrected
  - Mistakes can be self-corrected
Clarifying Questions: When to Use

- Clarifying questions work best when:
  - A question can be asked (Who, What, When...)
  - It’s a form you’ve been working on

- Best times to use:
  - Whole class discussions
  - One-on-one conversations

- Don’t use:
  - While students are talking with each other
  - During formal presentations
3. Negotiating Meaning – Least Subtle

Teacher and student discuss meaning for clarity

S: Yesterday, I goes to the mall.
T: Did you go or someone else?
S: I did.
T: Did you mean I went?
S: Yes
T: Could you repeat your answer?
S: Yesterday, I went to the mall.
T: And what happened at the mall?
Negotiating Meaning: When to Use

- Works best for activities involving
  - One-on-one conversation
  - Small groups (2-3 friends)
  - Private tutoring

- Don’t use...
  - During whole class discussions
  - Anywhere you might embarrass a student
Benefits of Subtle Correction Techniques

- Students self-correct
  - Promotes awareness

- Maintains the flow of conversation

- Shows that you are listening

- Shows that mistakes are noticeable
Correcting Example One

Yes, um... I think the author um was said that um he ran away because his parents were mean.

- Recast: The author was saying that he ran away.
- Clarifying question: Could you repeat that?
- Clarifying question: What was the author saying?
- Negotiating meaning would be hard because the meaning is clear.
Example One

Yes, um ... I think the author um was said that um he ran away because his parents were mean.

- Something to notice
  - Student improved after thinking
- When can we correct this sentence?
Example Two

I no like that book...it was eh diff diff
diff...difficuls.

- Works well for pronunciation, too!
- When can corrections be made?
  - During pauses
  - At the end of the sentence
Negotiating Meaning: Example

S: I no like that book ... it was ehhh diff diff ehhh ... difficuls.
T: Did you like the book?
S: No.
T: So, you didn’t like it. Was it difficult?
S: Yes
T: Try saying that as a sentence now.
S: I didn’t like the book.
T: Good. Why didn’t you like it?
S: It was difficult.
T: Good!
One Word Answers – Recast

S: I no like that book...it was eh diff diff eh... difficuls.

T: Did you like the book?

S: No

T: I didn’t like the book
Ideas from “Reading to Speak”

- Re-enact the reading
- Debate a topic
- Read to interview
Example: Debate on School Uniforms

- Steps for successful speaking practice and grammar correction
  1. Pre-plan
  2. Read and discuss with classmates
  3. Have the debate
  4. Discuss the debates
1. **Introduce topic**
   - Find out what they already know
   - Find out if they have strong opinions

2. **Write vocabulary they may need on the board**

3. **Predict Grammar issues**
   - Use of auxiliary “do”
   - Conditional tenses
T: Who thinks we should wear school uniforms? Do you like your uniform or not?
S1: I not like my uniform
T: I don’t like my uniform. What about you S2?
S2: I … don’t like it.
T: Good. Why do we have uniforms?
S3: My mom likes them to ready.
T: Why does she like them?
S3: To ready…. In the morning.
T: To get ready in the morning?
S3: Yes ... to get ready in the morning.
T: Good, who else?
1. Divide students into two groups:
   - Group 1: For school uniforms
   - Group 2: Against school uniforms

2. Each group reads an article related to their position

3. Break into pairs – one from each group
   - Students explain articles to each other
S1: Schools with uniforms are safer.
S2: That’s not true.
S1: The article says bad people are easier to saw.
T: Easier to see, go on.
S2: No they aren’t. Bad people will be saw cause teachers do no know them.
T: Bad people would be seen because teachers do not know them. Good. Keep going!
Debate

- Students sit in assigned groups
  - Move desks or tables to face each other
- Each student must take a turn to speak
- Teacher moderates
  - Offer opportunities to correct
S1: School uniforms would limited our freedom.

T: School uniforms would limit our freedom. Team 2, what do you think about that?

S2: But school uniforms do us safe.

T: Pardon? I didn’t hear you.

S2: Umm... School uniforms make us safe?

T: Yes, very good and very good point. How do they make us safe – someone else in your group.

S3: We know who belong at school.

T: We know who belongs at school. Very good. Back to team 1. How would uniforms limit your freedom?
Discussion After The Debate

- Begin by having class vote on the topic
- Discussion questions:
  - How did you feel about arguing against your opinion?
  - Did anyone change their opinion? Why?
  - Most of you think _____, why?
- Call on students to increase participation
- Try to keep the conversation calm
T: Did anyone change their opinion?
S1: I never thought about how made schools safest.
T: **How what** made schools **safer**?
S1: Uniforms.
T: Oh, okay. Try saying that again.
S1: I never thought about **how uniforms made schools safest**.
T: I never thought about how uniforms **made schools safer**.
S1: **Safer** – oh, okay.
S1: Uh, the boy is the dog, uh, the boy bring bucket and fish net.
S1: Um, maybe he like the lake-
S1: and he found, he found a frog ... in the pond in the lake.
S1: He want to catch the frog ... too, he want to go there but he hooked the river and also his dog or something.
Corrections

S1: Uh, the boy **is the dog**, uh, the boy **bring** bucket and fish net.

T: **the boy brings a bucket**

S1: Um, maybe he **like** the lake-

T: **he likes the lake, keep going**.

S1: and he found, he found a frog ... in the pond in the lake.

T: **good!**

S1: He **want** to catch the frog ... too, he **want** to go there but he **hooked the river** and also his dog or something.

T: **What did he hook?**
Spoken Grammar Features

S1: **Uh**, the boy is the dog, **uh**, the boy bring bucket and fish net.

S1: **Um**, maybe he like the lake-

S1: and he found, **he found** a frog ... in the pond in the lake.

S1: He want to catch the frog ... too, he want to go there but he hooked the river and also his dog or something.
Summary

- **Recast** – Simply repeat what your student said with the correct form

- **Clarifying questions** – Two types
  - Ask the student a question that makes them notice the mistake
  - Pretend you didn’t hear the response and ask them to repeat it

- **Negotiating meaning** – Ask the student clarifying questions and arrive at a corrected sentence
Last Thoughts

- Expect your students to struggle
  - They need time and practice, expect...
    - Slow speech
    - Pauses
    - Fillers
  - You can’t teach basketball without letting students play, and...
    - you can’t teach English without letting students speak!
Thank you!

See you during the post-discussion on Ning!


