

Correction – Part 2

Erroroleplay

Before you read **Erroroleplay** by Rosie Tanner, consider the following question.

If you were involved in a fluency activity in a language you were learning would you want to intervene in any way when you made mistakes, and if so, how?

Now read **Erroroleplay** and complete the tasks which follow it.

Erroroleplay

by Rosie Tanner

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Role-play had never really been a part of my teaching repertoire, nor, when I became a teacher trainer, of my training repertoire. Although I had used role-play successfully when I taught secondary school children, I had always considered it quite childish and false and felt rather nervous about handing over a role to someone who might freeze up and then lose their own nerve (and thus ruin my class.) But I decided it was about time to break out of my own typical teaching patterns *and* to try out some role-play.

While negotiating the content of their practical Classroom Techniques option at the beginning of the year, the Polish undergraduates on my Methodology course requested a session on error correction. I felt that one possible way of introducing them to error correction techniques would be for them to experience different oral correction strategies and to discuss the alternatives afterwards. This is the workshop I invented to try to achieve the aim, entitled "Erroroleplay". It involves giving the trainees roles as different types of teacher, each role-playing teacher has a different strategy for correcting errors, or not correcting as the case may be. Briefly the roles are as follows. One teacher ignores their group and corrects no errors; the second joins the task enthusiastically and "forgets" to correct; a third continually intervenes, immediately correcting any learner who makes a mistake, the fourth monitors the activity, writes down any errors made and gives language feedback at the end of the task.

I made the roles deliberately extreme and simplistic, since I think the role-play works better that way (i).

STEP ONE

The whole class is divided into four groups, each of "which sits in one of the four corners of the classroom. Each group is allocated a role-playing teacher (for their specific roles and tasks, see the role cards below).

Each "teacher" has two parallel tasks:

- (i) to set up an activity which takes their group ten minute. (for example, Mr/Ms Aloof's group's task is to draw a picture that one of their peers describes to them) and
- (ii) to play a role, with special reference to an error correcting strategy (for example Ms/Mr Aloof is a teacher who ignores learners totally and never corrects errors).

(1) A colleague, Krzysztof Dabrowski, suggested a variation: that I should just give the tasks to four teachers, without focussing particularly on error correction, and see what happens. This could prove interesting and might better reflect the complex nature of real classrooms.

All the tasks were done in Polish, because the trainees are learning to be EFL teachers and would, therefore, set up the tasks. in English in their own classrooms.

Learner role:

One learner in each group is also given the role as Ms/Mr Catnap, who role-plays a learner with many problems in spoken English, Ms/Mr Catnap plays this role throughout the workshop,

ROLE CARDS

TEACHER 1: MR/MS ALOOF

Your group's task: give your group 10 minutes to complete their task.

Give one member of the group the picture attached. S/he must keep it secret and describe it to the others, who should draw it. They can ask questions for clarification, but cannot look at the picture. Stop the activity after 10 minutes, when the picture can then be revealed to them.

Your role is to be the teacher who does not intervene at all in the activity. After setting up your activity, and making sure all participants understand, sit at a table apart from the learners and pretend you have nothing to do with the group. Do not correct any errors.

TEACHER 2: MS/MR MEDDLE

Your group's task: give your group 10 minutes to complete their task.

Explain to them that in half an hour the earth is going to be totally destroyed. All the members of your group have secured places in a rocket which is to take off in 10 minutes time and which contains enough food and fuel for 30 years. There are four people outside the rocket who want to take up the final place in the rocket. Your group must decide which of the following people to take: it must be a unanimous decision and you can only choose one extra person.

The four people are.

1. **Meena:** woman aged 27, pregnant, Pakistani, doctorate in Food Science, good cook, in good health.
2. **Harry:** man aged 23, nurse, American, qualified in general medical and psychiatric nursing.
3. **Ola:** teenage girl aged 16, Australian, very knowledgeable about science, enthusiastic about life.
4. **Tim:** science student aged 24, Nigerian, knowledgeable about computers and space craft gregarious,

Your role:

You enjoy the activity so much that you join in. You forget about errors and don't correct anyone.

TEACHER 3: MR/MS BUSYBODY

Your group's task: give your group 10 minutes to complete their task. NB You must only have FOUR people in this group. If you have more than 4, the others should just observe the group and you during the task.]

Your group members have a copy of four sets of pictures each, numbered 1-4. Their task is to discover which of them have the same picture. (Only two of the total number of pictures are the same.) Stop them after 10 Minutes if they haven't finished,

Your role is to intervene as much as you can, correcting people's mistakes as they make them. Be as aggressive, and bossy as you can; interrupt as many times as possible, correcting language mistakes.

TEACHER 4 MS/MR EAVESDROP

Your group's task: give your group 10 minute, to complete their task.
Your group should draw up a list of 10 pieces of advice for a new teacher about correcting spoken and; written, errors,

Your role: You should make a note of the errors the students make as they occur. Just before the end of their task, stop them and take a few minutes to talk then about their mistakes.

LEARNER ROLE: MS/MR CATNAP

You had a really bad night and don't feel much like English today. Make lots of language mistakes as you do every activity. Make sure you do this for EVERY activity.

STEP TWO

Each teacher sets up their own task with their Own group They then monitor their activity or not according to their role. After about ten minutes, every group should, if the role-playing teachers have followed their instructions to complete their task within ten minutes, have finished their first task. Before starting task two, they are given a few minutes to complete the role-play questionnaire (see below).

ROLEPLAY QUESTIONNAIRE

After each task, for each of the teachers who teaches you, write down a few comments about how they taught you and the. role they played. This could be about their attitude, their qualities as a teacher, their teaching or 'correcting techniques. etc.

Write each teacher's name in the space provided so you can identify them.

TEACHER 1

Name:

TEACHER 2

Name:

TEACHER 3

Name:

TEACHER 4

Name:

STEP THREE

The role-playing teacher now rotate, moving to the next group, setting up their new group's task and again playing the role given to their", they thus teach the same activity for a second time and play their role again, but this time to a different group. The teachers rotate after another ten minutes has elapsed, until each teacher has taught each of the four groups. Immediately after each activity, the learners are given time to complete their questionnaire for each teacher.

STEP FOUR

A plenary or group work session, where the different approaches of each role-playing teacher and the advantages and disadvantages of the various error correcting styles are discussed.

ISSUES

Some issues which were raised during our plenary discussion were:

A. LEARNERS' AND TEACHERS' FEELINGS:

How does the poor learner (Ms/Mr Catnap) feel when corrected?

How did you feel as a learner when, there was no error correction (in fact, no feedback at all)?

Which error correcting style did you prefer? How did you feel when the teacher became so involved in the activity that they forgot to correct errors?

How did you feel towards the teacher who ignored you?

As a teacher, does it embarrass you to correct?

How much does correcting errors worry you as a non-native teacher?

B. TIMING OF ERROR CORRECTION:

Should there be any difference between error correction techniques at different stages of learning (e.g. beginners compared with advanced learners)?

When is the best moment to correct an error?

Are there any times when we might correct immediately a mistake is made?

When, might we NOT correct an error? Which errors, and why?

C. AMOUNT OF CORRECTION:

How much should we correct our learners?

Any difference in amount according to level?

Any difference in amount according to task?

Should teachers allow any *errors* to go un-corrected? If so which and why?

How much monitoring should there be?

D. STYLE OF CORRECTION:

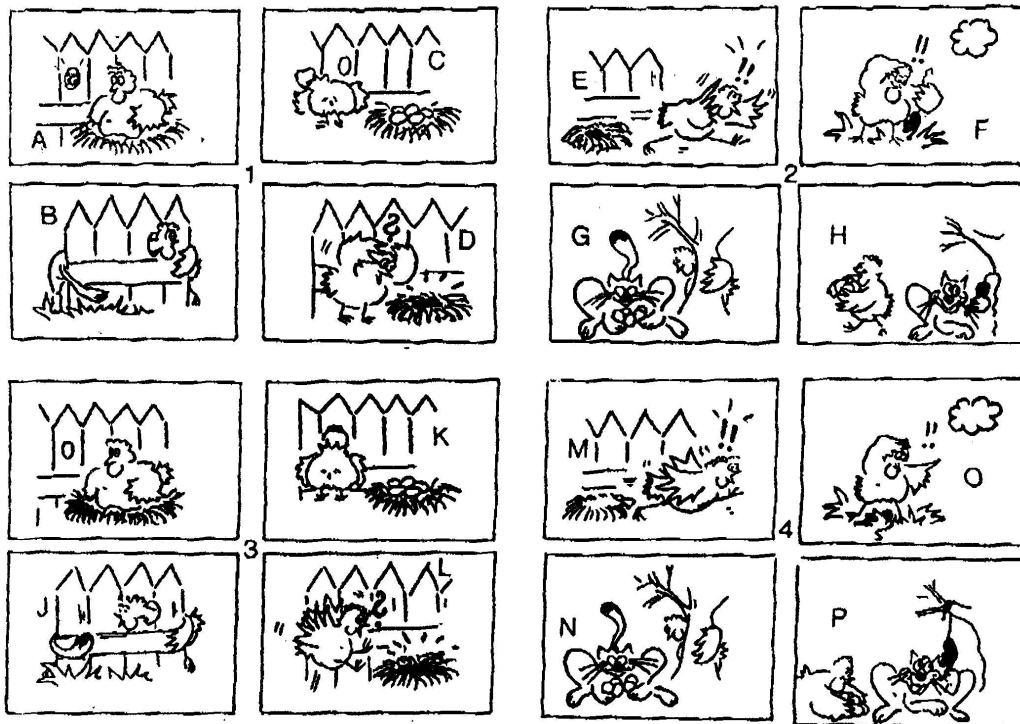
What type of error correction did you prefer?

What type of feedback is useful and appropriate (language/content)?

What strategies can we use to correct without discouraging our learners too much?

What are the advantages and problems of learner-to-learner correcting each other?

What are the positive and/or negative aspects of student-to-student correction?



FEEL FREE TO PHOTOCOPY AND ENLARGE THESE PICTURES IF YOU WISH TO RUN THE SAME TRAINING SESSION AS ABOVE ETC.

ERROROLEPLAY

Not all of the answers to these questions were predictable. The trainee playing Ms Busybody played her role so well that many of her peers loved her as a teacher and enjoyed her aggressive interventions: One interesting point which came out of the discussions was the way that the Mr/Ma Catnaps felt as poor learners: left out and frustrated with Mr/Ma Aloof, but attacked and inferior with Mr/Ms Busybody.

There were further spin-offs from the Erroroleplay; some questions about classroom management were also raised, since some of the teachers' instruction giving had not been very effective. The four role-playing teacher's all practiced and improved their skills in the setting up of tasks, since they had to give their instructions four times, once to each group. The group was also introduced to four tasks which were new to them as teacher trainees and which they could adapt to the level of their own learners. Furthermore, part of the plenary session also included collating the results of Ms/Mr Eavesdrop's group task' advice for a new teacher about correcting spoken and written errors,

The Erroroleplay was certainly a fun way for my trainees to learn about error correction. By experiencing different error correction styles, they could decide for themselves which error correction strategy they might choose for which type of learner.

References:

Bond, T. 1986. Games for Social end Life Skills London: Hutchinson.
Drawing used in Task 1 found on page 154.
Klippel, F 1984. Keep Talking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Task 2 adapted from activity 93, "Rescue" and other sources.

Further readings:

Edge, J. 1989. Mistakes and Correction
Longman: Harlow. A very useful background text, short and to the point, which trainees might like to read,

Acknowledgement

With Grateful thanks to Magda Karkoarka for her wonderful drawing's.

Now that you have read **Erroroleplay**, complete the following tasks:

- Is the activity designed for students, teachers or teacher trainees?

- What do the groups do, and why does one person in each group get the 'catnap' role?

- Describe the four 'teacher's in your own words. Which one do you most like the sound of?

- What has happened when Rosie Tanner has used this activity with her classes? How does she account for this?

- What is your reaction to (a) this activity, and (b) the reactions of the participants?