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## **Corrective feedback and its effect on motivation in language learning**

В статье исследуется проблема коррекции ошибок при изучении иностранного языка, а также ее влияние на мотивацию обучающихся. Рассмотрены различные подходы к исправлению ошибок и типы корректирующей обратной связи. Также излагаются результаты исследования, проведенного в целевой группе студентов с целью выявления стратегий корректирующей обратной связи и их влияния на мотивацию обучающихся.

**Ключевые слова:** изучение иностранного языка, обратная связь, исправление ошибок, мотивация

This article presents a study of corrective feedback in language learning as well as its effect on learners' motivation. We explored different approaches to error treatment and types of corrective feedback. The article also reports on the findings of a small-scale investigation of correction strategies and their effect on motivation of the target group learners.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, corrective feedback, error correction, motivation

Error is an integral part of learning. When studying a foreign language students inevitably proceed from the norms of their native language. At the same time the main source of errors might be structures that do not exist in the native language, for example, English articles, or structures that to some extent are similar to the forms of the native language. The latter are often called "false friends".

On a subconscious level we are accustomed to the fact that mistakes are bad, but without mistakes we will have no development. And here the crucial role is played by a teacher. It is the teacher who should explain to students that a mistake is not a demo-

tivating factor but on the contrary, a step for improving their skills and acquiring new experience. One of the main tasks of a teacher is to explain how to correctly deal with mistakes in the learning process, so that later young graduates will be able to minimize the negative consequences of their mistakes at work. Thus, it is important for students and teachers to take a correct view of errors and not to ignore them. The correct attitude to mistakes largely depends on how a teacher gives feedback.

Turning to the topic of the article, it should be emphasized that the relevance of the subject matter covered is due to the recent changes in the development of the society and the educational environment. Nowadays quite a lot of researchers and methodologists are opposed to corrective feedback. The issue of the demotivating potential and motivating role of feedback causes a great deal of controversy in the educational environment. This study is aimed at identifying the attitude of the target group students to the teacher's corrective feedback as well as at assessing its motivating and demotivating potential. Implementation of the study results can increase the students' motivation at foreign language classes and subsequently increase their training effectiveness.

The interpretation of term "feedback" is quite ambiguous. Generally this term is defined as a scope of information, notes, corrections, comments that students get from a teacher or classmates in the form of an assessment reaction to their completion of any learning task.

Some methodologists interpret the term "feedback" as information provided to students with regard to the results of their learning tasks in order to increase the effectiveness of their learning activities [3, p. 254]. Feedback should provide students with the opportunity to analyze their learning activity, draw up some conclusions and carry out self-correction.

In the methodology of foreign language teaching examples of feedback may include the teacher's phrases "*Good job!*" or "*No, you pronounce this word incorrectly*", an 80% score for the exam, notes written in the margins of an essay, a frown or dubious expression.

Considering the result of the learning activity the feedback is divided into positive and negative. The prevailing point of view among methodologists is that positive feedback is much more effective than negative one since the teacher's approval and confirmation that students' learning activities are correct, contribute to the development of strong learning motivation. Positive feedback not only motivates students but also increases their level of confidence and promotes the natural impulse to achieve success. In addition, the teacher's praise and encouragement contribute to building a rapport and positive relationship between a teacher and students, which in its turn can also have a motivating effect on the latter. However here we should point out the possibility of developing an undesirable reaction to positive feedback, that is too frequent praise and approval by a teacher can lead to devaluation of the reward and a decrease

in the motivating effect. In this case the lack of the teacher's approval will be perceived by students as negative feedback.

Negative feedback has a negative impact on students' self-esteem and overall demoralizing effect. It should be noted that in teaching practice there is a tendency to give positive feedback to high-achieving students and negative feedback to low-achieving students, which deteriorates their motivation to learn a foreign language.

Regarding negative feedback it should be mentioned about the adequacy of the assessment given by a teacher. If assessment is adequate, negative feedback is considered an effective method of influencing since its main goal is to increase the level of performance and discipline. On the one hand, completing any activity that is stimulated by discomfort is meaningless, but on the other hand, it prevents errors or minimizes them. Therefore we can conclude that a negative assessment, if it is justifiable, can increase working efficiency. But it should be borne in mind that both frequent praise and frequent disapproval by a teacher has negative effect on motivation. Moreover, negative motivation will not work without positive one.

Currently, views on the teacher's feedback are changing due in no small part to the development of a humanistic vector in education. Many researchers point out that both negative and positive feedback have detrimental effect on student motivation, explaining this by the fact that students carry out learning tasks not for the purpose of successful communication but in order to gain the teacher's praise.

In the second language learning methodology it is considered that feedback performs two functions – an assessment function and a correction function.

For the purpose of our study let us focus in more detail on the error correction function. As it has already been noted in the first part of our work, a teacher should carefully select the tools for assessing and correcting mistakes since the wrong choice of a correction strategy can lead to a decrease in motivation and loss of interest in the subject.

Most researchers agree that a teacher should correct students' mistakes in a positive and tactful way and obviously without criticism and irritation. However it is also necessary to take into account such factors as individual reaction of students to a particular correction strategy. What may seem to some as an excessively strict and even rude teacher's attitude to a mistake, could give others an image of quite an adequate, albeit harsh, reaction. Thus it may be reasonable to conclude that a teacher should take an individual approach to correcting students' mistakes.

Researchers in second language acquisition distinguish several types of error correction in oral feedback [1, p. 9]; [2, p. 37]:

1. Explicit correction is a direct indication of errors and giving the correct answer. This type of correction involves the use by a teacher of such phrases as: *Oh, you mean...*, *You should say...* and so on.

2. Implicit correction is an indirect indication by a teacher of errors in order to provide for self-correction. Implicit correction can be expressed in verbal and non-

verbal form. An example of verbal implicit correction may be the teacher's request to clarify or explain what the student means. In this case, a teacher can use the phrases: *Sorry?*, *What do you mean?*, *Once again?* Non-verbal implicit correction or a paralinguistic signal is a way to indicate a mistake by non-linguistic means, for example using gestures, poses, facial expressions.

3. Metalinguistic correction is information, comments or questions from a teacher regarding the student's mistake without giving the correct answer. For example, a teacher may ask a student: *Can you find your error?* Metalinguistic correction involves the use of a metalanguage to indicate the linguistic nature of the error. For example, in response to a student's erroneous statement *He did it herself*, a teacher may say: *No, it's masculine*.

To identify the most effective types of corrective feedback and assess its motivational role, we conducted a survey with participation of 150 first- and second-year students of non-linguistic specialties of Sevastopol State University. The respondents made their choice based on their personal experience of receiving feedback from English teachers. It is worth noting that the students in the surveyed group are the speakers of Russian and mixed-level English learners. For the purposes of the study we used a specially designed questionnaire where students were asked to choose a relevant attitude to error correction, to evaluate the effect of positive and negative feedback on their motivation/demotivation and also to choose the most preferred strategy for error correction. The survey outcomes demonstrate that the surveyed students are not afraid to make mistakes and get constructive criticism on the task completed.

So, based on the results of the survey the respondents do not consider it appropriate to correct mistakes without further explanation by the teacher. Only 3% of the students prefer the opposite approach when the teacher does not focus on a student's mistakes and does not stop for clarification. Almost 6% of the respondents are sensitive to their mistakes and note that speaking tasks are particularly difficult for them because of the fear of making a mistake in speech. The vast majority of these respondents are first-year students. It is noteworthy that if a teacher focuses on solving communicative tasks in the language learning process, these fears tend to disappear by the end of the first year of study. But a teacher should establish good rapport with such students and be very careful about expressing negative feedback. The most optimal strategy in this case will be to support low-achieving students by asking them guiding questions and eliciting the right answer. 9% of the respondents prefer a positive feedback without frequent error correction. 16% of the students consider constructive negative feedback as a motivating factor that makes them take the initiative and work harder. They consider mistakes to be a stimulating factor. 36% of the respondents prefer self-correction after the teacher points out a mistake. So it might be reasonable not to correct mistakes but give students an opportunity to find a solution themselves. 62% of the respondents are quite comfortable with mistakes, taking them as an integral part of the educational process. And 64% of the respondents prefer the

strategy of metalinguistic explanation when the teacher gives a rule explaining a particular error.

Summing up the results of our study it is important to note that the majority of the students have positive attitude to all types of feedback including negative one. Moreover, they consider a teacher's feedback an integral part of self-development and learning process. We see that not only a positive feedback can serve as a stimulating factor. The students speak favourably of constructive criticism they get from their teacher. Last but not least, it is important for them that the teacher explains their mistakes and gives the language rules.

Speaking about error correction it should be pointed out that a teacher should use the entire scope of correction strategies and adapt them individually for each student. It is preferable at first to use an implicit correction, for example a paralinguistic signal, so that to guide students to self-correction. And only if this strategy fails to meet teacher's expectations, it is worth proceeding to to explicit correction giving the student the correct answer and metalinguistic explanation of the error made. Pursuing this approach a teacher will be able to motivate students to self-correction and increase the level of their language literacy.

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### **О некоторых методических вопросах использования игр в преподавании иностранных языков**

Игры в преподавании языков заслуженно пользуются популярностью, поскольку спектр их применения очень широк и разнообразен. Они легко «встраиваются» в преподавание любого языка и на любом этапе. В статье анализируется структура подготовки и проведения различных видов игр в аудитории.

**Ключевые слова:** игры; иностранный язык; вовлечение; мотивация; парная и групповая работа