

Error Correction: A Cognitive-Affective Stance

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the application of some of the most frequently used writing error correction techniques to see the extent to which this application takes learners' cognitive and affective characteristics into account. After showing how unlearned application of these styles could be discouraging and/or damaging to students, the paper proposes modifying the application of these techniques in such a way that the new versions involve learners in the correction process, avoid destroying their confidence, Walz (1982), and avoid hindering their motivation.

Key words: Error Treatment, Correction Techniques, Cognitive-Affective Treatment

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of error treatment in the domain of ESL has been studied extensively by many practitioners, including Connors and Lunsford (1995), Walz (1982), Hendrickson (1980) and Fanselow (1977). These studies and many others propose different methods for dealing with errors, depending on the schools of thought to which their writers subscribe. For instance, while the focal point of the methods proposed by followers of behaviorism is on preventing errors, the focus of the methods initiated by the cognitivists is on intellectual analyses of the causes of errors and ways of dealing with them. In behaviorism, errors are depicted as sins that should be avoided and bad habits that should not be tolerated, whereas in cognitivism errors are perceived as evidence that learners are testing hypotheses, as Gorbet, cited in Walz (1982), maintains. Cognitive-oriented approaches suggest that errors are part of learning. In fact, some linguists such as Alwritht (1975) believe that errors are "crucial to language learning." However, regardless of the pedagogical or ideological affiliation, there are four interrelated