

# Students' Perspectives on Oral Error Correction

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Stevović, Ena

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2017

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci**

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-02-22**



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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Ena Stevović

**STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON ORAL ERROR  
CORRECTION**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.A. in English Language and  
Literature and Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka

**Supervisor:** dr. sc. Irena Vodopija Krstanović

Rijeka, June 2017

## ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with oral error correction in the EFL classroom. First, the theoretical background provides definitions of errors, mistakes, accuracy vs. fluency in terms of task objectives, as well as peer assessment and techniques teachers use while correcting students' oral mistakes. Then, the focus switches to the present study, which aims to examine students' opinions regarding *when* they would like to be corrected, *which* errors they believe should be corrected, as well as *what aspects* of the English language students believe are the most important ones to correct, and finally, *which techniques* teachers should use while correcting their oral production in the EFL classroom. The study was conducted at Prva sušačka hrvatska gimnazija, a grammar school in Rijeka, Croatia, among 95 students that study English as their foreign language. The instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire and the data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The findings suggest that the students prefer elicitation and explicit correction, while, on the other hand, recast and clarification request proved to be their least favorite error correction techniques. Also, they prefer being corrected by their teachers as opposed to their peers. Students would also like their teachers to point out to the positive parts of their oral presentation, preferably by nodding. This study has found that the students would like to be corrected after they have finished talking/presenting, and that vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are almost equally important aspects of language that the students believe need to be corrected. This study highlights the importance of teacher politeness when it comes to correction, as well as the need to adjust corrective feedback to individual students and their proficiency level, character and personal motivation and interest in language learning. The practical implications for the classroom are also discussed in this thesis.

**Key words:** error correction, oral, EFL classroom, opinions, students

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ABSTRACT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges teachers face in the language classroom is how to teach students effectively and help them attain high standards of language learning given the different student needs, language levels, learning abilities and learning styles, among others. Adapting instruction to student needs is a basic requirement as there is no foreign-language classroom where all the students have language competences which allow them to carry out meaningful communication without making a single mistake. In fact, mistakes happen to English language majors at the University; they even happen to language teachers while teaching, i.e. covering a certain topic. Therefore, it is common and rather normal for students learning a foreign language to make mistakes. From this it would follow that the question is not *how to avoid* mistakes, but rather *how (the teacher) should respond* when they occur.

The motivation for the topic of error correction emerged during my last year at the University, precisely during the first semester when I took the course Methodology in English Teaching. That was the first time I have encountered different error correction techniques, and was astounded to see that something that seems so simple and natural can have such a positive or negative impact on students' language development. Moreover, what surprised me even more was the fact that it seemed that not many teachers used different error correction techniques or were aware of the consequences of error correction on the learner and learning. Therefore, it seemed like a relevant and important field for research.

The aim of this thesis is to explore students' perspectives on oral error correction, specifically their preferences on *when* they should be corrected (during the presentation<sup>1</sup> or after), *how* they should be corrected (teacher-initiated error correction, peer assessment) and *which* errors they believe should be corrected the most. Also, the study examines which specific aspects of language students believe are the most important ones to correct and their reasons why they believe this is the case. Finally, we will explore students' possible suggestions to their teachers regarding oral error correction.

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents an introductory chapter on errors and error correction, starting with the difference between *error* and *mistake* as two similar yet different terms. Next, we will define the term *error correction* and describe some

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<sup>1</sup> presentation is used as the best translation in this case, but it serves as a synonym for speaking, oral assessment, talking etc.

common error correction techniques and their possible benefits and drawbacks (based on Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Lastly, the focus will switch to the objectives of a particular task or assessment which is of an utmost importance when deciding when and how we should correct our students.

Chapter 3 presents the literature review on the topic of oral error correction. It discusses the most important research in the field, with a focus on questions that are important for this particular thesis and study, such as students' preferences on oral error correction techniques and peer assessment.

In Chapter 4, the focus is on the study conducted among 95 high school (gymnasium<sup>2</sup>) students in Rijeka regarding their perspectives on oral error correction. Specifically, it describes the aims and research questions, participants and the setting of the study, as well as the methodology used to gather and analyze the data. The main focus of the chapter are the results and the discussion, as well as practical implications for the classroom that can be derived from the results obtained in the study.

Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes the study and the thesis itself with some final remarks and the implications for further research.

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<sup>2</sup> A school in Germany, Scandinavia, or central Europe that prepares pupils for university entrance. (Oxford living dictionary)

## 2. ERRORS AND ERROR CORRECTION

Errors in the EFL classrooms are, as already mentioned, something that happens continuously and naturally, but in order to be able to realize what they are, we first need to define them. “Error is an unacceptable form which the students regularly make because they do not know a rule, or have internalized it wrongly, while a mistake is a slip which the student could in fact have avoided with a little more thought” (Ur, 2014, 88). Given that it is difficult to differentiate between a student error and a mistake in the classroom, especially during interaction or production, in this study, these terms will be used interchangeably. In other words, they are almost impossible to distinguish, even though at the theoretical level there is a difference between the two.

When we hear the term *error correction* (also known as *corrective feedback*) we also immediately think of a classroom situation. We look at teachers as constant correctors who should know when, how and what to correct in any given situation. Moreover, we believe it is a process that happens naturally in the classroom. Most of the time, error correction requires teachers to predict how would a student feel if corrected, what the most appropriate technique of correction is, along with what those techniques even are and which benefits and drawbacks each of them has, and finally, which specific aspects of language must be corrected, and which ones can be overlooked. All these questions are not easy to answer and every teacher treats them in his or her own way, mostly going along with what he or she believes works best in the classroom.

Given that there are numerous different perspectives on error correction, it might be useful to take a look at two different positions. For example, Truscott claims that correction does not work at all, in fact, he even believes it can have harmful effects (Truscott, 1996). On the other hand, it is believed that error correction produces improvement in students’ speaking skill, although not immediately (Sheen, 2011). In addition, it is commonly believed that error correction helps to prevent an error form of becoming permanent or fossilized (Ur, 2014). “Students’ errors are evidence that progress is being made. Errors often show us that a student is experimenting with language, trying out ideas, taking risks, attempting to communicate” (Scrivener, 2005, 298). Similarly, fifty years ago, Corder (1967) stated that “the answer to what drives second language acquisition could be found by studying learners themselves and the errors they make” (Murray & Christison, 2011, 157). This statement proves that error

analysis was known and important 50 years ago; it is not a novel notion. According to Krashen, error correction is one of the two characteristics of learning as a conscious process, together with rule isolation (Johnson, 2008).

In light of the above, it would seem that errors are a part of language learning (James, 2013). That applies to much more than just language; we as humans make errors whenever we learn something; it is a natural part of the process of learning. The rationale underlying experiential learning is that one learns by doing (Dewey and Dewey 1915), while Wolfe and Byrne (1975) used the term “experienced-based learning”. The term “trial and error” learning is used to explain inductive learning processes. Likewise, in the language classroom students learn English by using the language, i.e. practicing speaking and, in the process, they inevitably make errors. “Most obviously, learners’ utterances seem to vary from moment to moment, in the types of ‘errors’ which are made, and learners seem liable to switch between a range of correct and incorrect forms over lengthy period of time” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Therefore, students should learn from the errors they make, and we, as teachers, should deal with them in the best way possible. People are generally not satisfied when someone corrects them so the same inevitably relates to students. This means that we need to be extremely sensitive when it comes to correcting our students because of the possible negative effect it can have on the student and the teacher-student relationship. To examine this issue in greater detail, we will now turn to attitude statements defined by Ur (2014).

## 2.1. Attitudes on error correction

As mentioned before, there seems to be the prevailing perception that the relationship between a teacher and a student as a relationship between the one that corrects and the one that is being corrected is a negative one. Therefore, it seems fair to say that there is a “power hierarchy” between the teacher and the student (Jamieson & Thomas, 1974; Ur, 2014); however, that does not mean that it must be a negative one. On the contrary, “power hierarchies may in some circumstances be necessary, productive and fully compatible with good human relationship” (Ur, 2014, 90). It is up to the teacher to steer the relationship in a way that would satisfy both parties, since the teacher is believed to have an authority to do so. Furthermore, error correction can be potentially humiliating for the student, with an emphasis on the word *potentially* because again, the teacher is the one that should choose his or her



words and techniques carefully in order to make sure not to humiliate the student. It is also very important to pay close attention to the things that are correct and positive in student's oral production and to draw student's attention to those parts, especially if the student is avoiding a very common mistake, for example. It serves both as motivation and praise.

## 2.2. Why students make mistakes?

There are two distinct causes as to why students make errors in the EFL classroom (Harmer, 2001). The first one is obvious, but often overlooked: L1 interference. "Errors are mainly if not entirely, the result of transfer of L1 habits" (Ellis, 1994, 43; Brown 2001, 66). There are multiple ways in which another language learned previously to English can interfere with English grammar, pronunciation, spelling etc. If we compare English grammar to Croatian, for example, we can see that there is a reason why our students, even at the University level, have trouble with remembering to use articles; Croatian grammar does not have articles and therefore, we do not find them relevant or remember to use them properly.

The other cause of errors are developmental errors, the term that comes from early child language development. The EFL students tend to over-generalize some rules they have learned (for example, "She is more prettier than me"). Interestingly, a study by Dulay & Burt (1974) has shown that L1 interference accounts for only 4,7% of the children's errors, while an astounding 87,1% of errors are due to developmental errors. Harmer concludes with a statement that "When second language learners make errors, they are demonstrating part of the natural process of language learning" (2001, 100).

## 2.3. Oral error correction

There are numerous things to consider while correcting students' oral errors. Let us now take a brief look at various aspects of oral error correction that are important to take into consideration and that are also incorporated into our research questions.

First of all, as already mentioned, the question *when* is of an utmost importance. Johnson (2008) states that he encountered multiple situations when learners asked to be corrected, even though the focus was not on form or accuracy, but rather on fluency and on getting the message across. As we said, one of the key issues with oral error correction is that it interrupts the flow of speech, which can be harmful for students, especially since they are

(probably) going to get a grade based on their oral performance, and the fluency is what is graded at that point. However, if we do not correct the errors *as they go*, would the students be able to remember where they have made a mistake? If the teacher corrects them after they are done with their speaking activity, will that have the same effect as correcting them *while* they speak? There are numerous opinions on this particular problem. For example, Ur (2014) believes that the answer to this question lies in our own personal judgement, where we must consider numerous factors such as students' level of confidence and knowledge, our goals for that particular class or the course in general, the type of error and its frequency and so on.

Furthermore, it is also very important to know *which* errors to correct. There are three types of error that should receive priority: ones that impair communication, those that stigmatize the learner, and the particularly frequent ones (Hendrickson, 1978). According to Burt and Kiparsky (1972), two main types of errors are considered to impair communication. *Global errors* are the ones which lead to a lack of understanding because they affect the whole sentence structure, and *local errors*, which, on the other hand, do not significantly slow down communication because they come in specific parts of sentences.

Given there are different techniques of error correction (which answer to a question *how*), in the next section, we will look at strengths and weaknesses of each one.

### 2.3.1. Oral error correction techniques

There are several techniques of oral error correction that are used in the EFL classroom, all of which have their positive and negative sides, and are more or less effective in terms of ensuring that the students will improve their language skills. The six most common techniques (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and the ones that we will be dealing with in this thesis are as follows:

1. Recast
2. Elicitation
3. Clarification request
4. Metalinguistic feedback
5. Explicit correction
6. Repetition

Let us now look at each technique in greater detail by analyzing its strengths, weaknesses and the impact it can have on the learner.

#### 2.3.1.1. Recast

In this technique, the teacher implicitly corrects the student without explaining what went wrong, moreover, without even saying that *anything* was wrong. For example, if the student says "Women are kind than men" the teacher's response can be "**Indeed, women are kinder than men**"<sup>3</sup>. **In other words, the teacher just repeats the utterance using the correct form instead of an incorrect one.** This technique is considered to be the most common but the question is how effective it actually is. For now, what we know is that recast does not seem to be proportionally effective in regard to its usage. In fact, it is considered to be the least effective in producing uptake. i.e. getting the student to understand and produce the correct form in response to the correction, and is the least likely to result in lasting learning (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). The reason behind this is that most of the time, the students do not even realize that there was a correction at all, especially if this technique is used during presentation of some sort, where the student continues to speak and does not really pay attention to correction.<sup>4</sup> In addition, studies carried out by Lyster (2004) indicate that techniques, such as elicitation and repetition that involve some kind of negotiation and active contribution from the student are the most effective. On the other hand, we should not disregard recast completely, since recast can have benefits for students that are more proficient in English and that just made an unintentional mistake because it allows them to continue without losing their train of thought, but still, it makes them aware of the fact that they have made a mistake.

#### 2.3.1.2. Elicitation

Elicitation involves the teacher pointing out to the student that a mistake has been made and that they need to correct it. For example, if the student says, "once upon a time, there is a girl" the teacher can just pinpoint to the part in the sentence where the mistake has been made and give the student the opportunity to correct himself or herself. "**Once upon a**

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<sup>3</sup> all the examples are the ones used in the questionnaire; the anticipated teacher's corrections are in **bold**

<sup>4</sup> benefits and drawbacks of each technique are based on the results of this study, as well as on the personal experience of the author

**time, there...**” is enough for the student to realize he or she did something wrong. Also, the teacher can say **“Could you say that again?”**, drawing attention to the fact that something was wrong and allowing the student to rethink his or her sentence. This is beneficial since the students need to figure out the correct form themselves, but the fact that they are presented with the part of an utterance where the mistake was made makes it easier for them to reach self-correction. On the other hand, if they do not know the correct form to begin with, elicitation will not help them as much.

#### 2.3.1.3. Clarification request

Another common technique is clarification request which is a polite way to provide the student with the information that the message was not understood or that a mistake has been made. There are numerous questions that can be asked that can help the student to achieve self-correction. Some of these are: **“Excuse me?; I don't understand; What do you mean?”** and many more. However, those questions can be perceived by the students as humiliating or provoking, since it all depends on the intonation the teacher used in a particular situation. Also, it does not point out to a part of an utterance where the mistake was made, making it difficult for students that are not as proficient to realize where the mistake was. Still, clarification questions can benefit the students in such way that it provides them with extra time to collect their thoughts and to offer the correct form.

#### 2.3.1.4. Metalinguistic feedback

Teachers can also correct errors by using metalinguistic clues that explain to the student that there has been a mistake, however, the teacher does not provide the correct answer. For example, the student’s utterance can be “I eat yesterday” and the teacher’s comment can be **“If you use the adverb *yesterday*, you should use past simple, in this particular matter, past simple of the verb *eat*”**. Also, the teacher can just simply point out that the tense is wrong, or, it can provide the student with the tense that needs to be used, without detailed explanation. This technique gives the students the opportunity to revise some important grammar rules and to establish what they (potentially) already know, while on the other hand, it can produce zero effect if the student is not familiar with the rules in the first place or if he or she does not necessarily know language rules but rather learns by ear.

#### 2.3.1.5. Explicit correction

This technique is the most straight-forward of all because it allows the teacher to clearly state what has gone wrong. For example, if the student says “I eat yesterday” the teacher’s response would most likely be “**You should have said „I ate yesterday“**“. This can be beneficial if the students understand the correction and why it was made, because it does not interrupt their flow of speech, plus, it is short and efficient. However, explicit correction does not engage the student in any way, making it hard for him or her to self-correct or possibly, to even know why the teacher’s utterance is the correct one, and not his or hers.

#### 2.3.1.6. Repetition

Repetition allows the teacher to indicate that there has been a mistake, without actually saying it. When the student makes a mistake, **the teacher repeats the sentence with a raising intonation or with such intonation that simply draws the student’s attention to the mistake**. That informs the student that something was wrong and that he or she needs to correct it. This can have possible harmful effects since, depending on the intonation, the students could interpret their teacher’s utterance as yelling, which can be potentially humiliating. On the other hand, if done correctly, it can be a beneficial way of eliciting self-correction.

#### 2.3.1.7. Peer assessment

Peer assessment can also fall under the category of error correction techniques. This technique involves a student providing the student that made a mistake with the correct form. As the other mentioned techniques, peer assessment certainly has some benefits and potential drawbacks, which can be even more accentuated in this case since the correction involves another student. The benefits can be seen in the fact that peer assessment engages the whole class to pay close attention and actively listen to their peers and their oral production. This way, the teachers are not only potentially achieving a higher level of discipline, but also enhancing their students’ attention span. On the other hand, this is a technique that teachers should be very careful with, since the dynamics in the classroom and the relationship among students play a significant role in making sure the correction takes place smoothly. However, it should be borne in mind that not all students enjoy being corrected by their colleagues so it

is advisable to do it only if the chemistry in the classroom allows it. The reason behind this is that students find the teacher to be more reliable and knowledgeable and also, they can feel embarrassed if their peer corrects them, since they are (potentially) at the same proficiency level.

An example which illustrates peer assessment is the so-called “chain”, where student A makes a mistake, and student B corrects him/her. If he does not know the answer, an opportunity is passed on to the student C and so on (Scrivener, 2005).

Having looked at the question of *how* the errors should be corrected, let us now switch focus to two different objectives that each task or assessment can have that can help us figure out how and what to correct in each given situation.

#### 2.4. Types of task objectives

Each individual task/activity<sup>5</sup> or assessment<sup>6</sup> in general should have one of the two objectives; developing either fluency or accuracy (or both). If the focus is on accuracy (“where students are encouraged to make their utterances as near to a native-speaker’s as possible”, Bartram & Walton, 1991, 2), it should be explicitly stated what aspect of language is the focus of the task (vocabulary, grammar). In this case, it is more likely that correction will be needed. If the focus is on fluency, i.e. getting the message across (“speaking for the purpose of speaking”), then it should also be clear if language errors will be corrected and if yes, which ones. However, correction will probably be subtler in this case.

Every student’s oral performance should contain both positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback can often be tricky because we either completely forget to provide it due to mainly focusing on negative feedback, or, equally bad, we overpraise the student, which can be counter-productive (Harmer, 2001). Both negative and positive feedback should be done in moderation and in balance, and the reason for each type of feedback should be explained to students. Harmer clearly states that we as teachers often have a problem with focusing on content in oral or written activities so we overly-focus on language. If we give students activities that obviously assess their imagination (role-plays, giving opinions etc.) we should take the content into consideration.

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<sup>5</sup> graded or not graded

<sup>6</sup> graded

This is where the difference between accuracy and fluency comes to question. We as teachers need to decide what we expect from students when we assign an activity. Is the focus on accurate transfer of the message (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary use) or is fluency more important, i.e. getting the message across? Harmer (2001) explicitly states that when a task is non-communicative, it is a teacher's job to "stop the activity to make the correction" (105). He calls this "teacher intervention". On the other hand, he argues that stopping a communicative task "mid-way" can raise stress levels and stop the acquisition process of the language. It is believed that it is best to intervene in learner's talk "as late as possible" (Lynch, 1997). However, this notion that only communicative activities should be corrected in terms of language is not something all authors and researchers agree on. If there is a risk of a student not getting the message across, or if we evaluate that a certain moment is good for drawing the student's attention to the problem, we can correct the error in a way we see fit. It is, however, advisable to correct students mistake in a way that it does not hurt their feelings and, if it is a communicative task, to record mistakes while the student is talking (e.g, making a table with types of errors) and to explain all the corrections after the student has finished talking, either independently or in front of the whole class.

The theoretical background on errors and error correction will be further discussed in the next Chapter, when we turn to literature review of some the most important research that has been done on oral error correction.

### 3. ERROR CORRECTION AND ELT

#### 3.1. Literature review

Studies on error correction have examined multiple questions regarding this topic. The study by Park (2010) examined whether there were any differences between teachers' and students' perception of effective error correction practices, specifically regarding the provision of error correction, the appropriate time of correction and the types of errors that required correction. Interestingly, as the study found, the need for error correction seems to be perceived more strongly by the students than by the teachers. The students tend to believe they always need to receive corrective feedback and that all mistakes need to be treated, whereas only a small percentage of the teachers share their opinion (also Baz, Balçıkanlı & Cephe, 2016). However, the results regarding the time when the mistakes should be treated differ from the research by Livingstone (2015) because the students believe that their mistakes should be treated at the moment when they are made whereas the teachers disagree. All in all, language learners want more correction than they receive from their teachers.

In a study conducted by Penny Ur (2014) among 500 primary and secondary school students studying English in Israel in 2007 it was found that the students tend to believe that it is not beneficial if the teacher ignores the error and does not correct it at all. The same goes for when the teacher says what was wrong but then gets someone else to say to correct version. On the other hand, the students think it is very good when the teacher says what was wrong and gives the correct version, as well as when the teacher explains why something is wrong, i.e. explains what the rule is. In addition, the study has shown that the students prefer recast as an error correction technique.

The study by Livingstone (2015) examined students' and teachers' perceptions about error correction in the L2 classroom. The results confirm that students generally tend to make mistakes in the L2 classroom, and interestingly, 2/3 of the participants prefer to be corrected both publicly and privately. The reason why students believe their mistakes should be corrected publicly is so that the other students can benefit from it. Almost all the participants believe they should be corrected after they finish responding to the teacher. When it comes to the peer assessment, 2/3 of the participants believe that the teacher is not the only one who should correct their mistakes. The teachers' responses were slightly different regarding the



percentage, but the main points were similar, which indicates that students and teachers generally share the same opinions when it comes to error correction in the L2 classroom.

The most recent studies regarding this topic have focused on exploring teachers' and students' preferences as well as students' attitude toward the use of oral error correction techniques in the language classroom (Alamri & Fawzi, 2016). Two questionnaires were used, one to elicit techniques that are preferred by teachers to correct students' oral errors and another one to elicit students' preferences and attitudes toward oral error correction techniques that were used by their teachers. The findings revealed that students generally have a positive attitude towards error correction, i.e. they see it as necessary and helpful and that this finding is in line with the studies by Alhaysony (2016), Genc (2014), Zhang et al. (2014), and Calsiyao (2015). Furthermore, there are differences in perception of how often teachers correct and how often the students are corrected. The majority of teachers believe they correct *sometimes*, while the majority of the students believe that *always* happens. Interestingly, it has been found that the majority of students prefer immediate correction for all types of errors including fluency and accuracy errors but only 10% of the teachers do so. When it comes to delayed correction, only 20% of the teachers provide it for all errors while 50% of teachers usually provide delayed correction for accuracy errors and sometimes for fluency errors. Also, it was found that recast and explicit correction are the preferred techniques by the majority of the students and teachers. Explicit correction as a technique is considered least effective, almost the same as ignoring the error altogether. On the other hand, clarification request and explicit correction were the most preferred techniques by teachers. In contrast, Alhaysony (2016) obtained completely different results, and found that clarification request is the most popular technique among the students.

Interestingly, as Debreli & Onuk (2016) state, there has been plenty of research that dealt with students' and/or teachers' preferences on error correction techniques but not a lot of research has been done on the topic of EFL teacher's preferences of oral error correction techniques and the extent to which they were able to use them in the language classroom. This study is a practical one, and it engaged 17 EFL teachers, who participated in a semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which, as the researchers point out, is often neglected as a method of research when it comes to error correction but it shouldn't be since it can provide us with the insights into actions of the teachers in classrooms, instead of only what their preferences are. Generally, the results have shown that the teachers could not implement their preferred techniques of error correction due to educational constraints, moreover, the

techniques that they did employ were the ones that they did not like or prefer. In addition, Debreli & Onuk (2016, 77) point out that studies by Diab (2007) and Shelley & Jill (2010) show that “although the majority of the teachers preferred a self-correction approach, they could not employ them in their classrooms owing to time constraints, and sometimes due to the teacher’s lack of skill.” This study also shows that the majority of the teachers prefer self-correction and peer-correction techniques, with only some of them preferring teacher-correction techniques. However, those techniques were not implemented in the classroom as much as the teacher wanted to, due to already discussed reasons. Some of the reasons indicate that teachers believe that there is just not enough time or that the classrooms have a lot of students and they are not able to correct all the errors individually, especially not while using self-correction techniques. Also, the syllabi and lesson plans don’t allow as much time for correction as they wish to have. Finally, the students’ proficiency level also has a significant impact on how and to what extent error correction will be implemented in the classroom.

The question of actual usage of specific error correction techniques was also analyzed by Coskun (2010) after he tried to self-observe his classroom behavior regarding oral error correction in a beginner’s class. His findings showed that he mostly used repetition for both grammar and pronunciation errors. In comparison, Lyster & Ranta (1997) found that, in their student-teacher interaction, recast was used the most (55%), with repetition making only 5% of their interaction with their students. However, their findings also revealed that recast as a technique was the least effective and that it did not lead to reparation of the mistake by the students. Finally, even though the students have the tendency to believe they do not repeat the same error twice, this study has found that this is not the case; i.e., only 17% of total errors were repaired by the students.

Another interesting aspect of error correction is the question: what do learners expect from their teacher/instructor when he/she corrects them? “What is more, it can be understood from learner interviews that some learners in this study want the instructor to be friendly, direct and explicit when the instructor gives corrective feedback (Lyster, 1998b; Seedhouse, 1997; Spada, 1997), and to correct the errors gently” (Baz, Balçıkanlı & Cephe, 2016, 60). Also, the learners want to be corrected explicitly. They also found that the learners believe the instructor is the one that should correct the errors, and not peers (cf. Alhaysony, 2016). Most of the instructors share the same opinions, saying that it is especially hard if a peer corrects a student after the teacher has already done it, because it feels like they are mocking him/her.

The study by Ustaci & Ok (2014) agrees with these findings, saying that around 90% of the participants want to be corrected politely, i.e. without the teachers hurting their feelings. This study also found that around 77% of the participants prefer to be given time to correct their vocabulary and pronunciation errors, since this is the focus of the study itself. Also, around 71% of the participants agree that mistakes should be corrected individually at the end of the class. This was corroborated by Alhaysony (2016).

This concludes the theoretical background of oral error correction. Let us now turn to the present study as the central part of this thesis.

## 4. THE PRESENT STUDY

### 4.1. Aim and research questions

The first aim of this study is to examine students' preferences regarding *when* errors should be corrected, and *how frequently* they should be corrected.

The second aim of this study is to examine students' preferences regarding *which aspects* of the English language are the most important ones to correct in the EFL classroom.

The third aim of this study is to examine students' preferences regarding *oral error correction techniques*, i.e. what techniques they think the teachers should use while correcting their oral production in the EFL classroom.

The overall research question which guides this study is "What are students' perspectives on oral error correction in the EFL classroom?"

Follow-up research questions for this study are:

- a) What type of oral errors do teachers correct?
- b) How are errors corrected in the classroom?
- c) What techniques of error correction do students find useful?
- d) What effect does oral correction have on the students?
- e) What are the perceived benefits of oral error correction?
- f) What challenges does error correction pose to the student?

### 4.2. The setting and participants

The study was conducted at Prva sušačka hrvatska gimnazija in Rijeka, Croatia and it comprised 95 students, 17 to 19 year-old, 34 male and 61 female enrolled in general, language and math tracks at PSHG. Specifically, 23 participants are enrolled in the language track, and 46 and 26 in the general and the math tracks, respectively. All of the participants are native speakers of Croatian and study English as their first foreign language. The questionnaire was distributed during EFL classes in the first two weeks of April 2017. It took the students

approximately 15 to 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Before the participants began answering the questions, the researcher informed participants that participation was voluntary and that their personal information as well as their answers were confidential. In addition, the subjects were informed that they could receive results of the study upon request.

#### 4.3. Research method

The data was collected by means of a questionnaire written in Croatian. The questionnaire comprised 28 questions divided into three parts. The first part contained questions which inquired into the demographics of the participants: gender, age, grade and school, as well as information on the grade in English achieved in the previous school year. In part two, the participants were asked to rate 18 statements on a five point Likert scale (1 - I highly disagree, 2 – I mostly disagree, 3 – I neither agree nor disagree, 4 – I mostly agree, 5 - I highly agree). Those statements were interested in students' preferences on when they like to be corrected, what aspects of language they think are most useful to correct, how often they make mistakes etc. Question 19 elicited to what extent the participants liked a certain oral error correction technique, from 1 to 5. Techniques were not named in the questionnaire but rather presented by examples of how they occur in the classroom. The remaining 9 open-ended questions in part three elicited information on participants' experience in error correction, specifically on aspects of language that were corrected the most and in what way this was usually done. Also, it examined participants' possible problems and suggestions they had for their teachers regarding oral error correction.

Questions from 1 to 19 were analyzed quantitatively. The results from these questions were entered into a program<sup>7</sup> where the mean (M), mode and standard deviation (SD) of each question were elicited. Questions from 20 to 28 were analyzed qualitatively.

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<sup>7</sup> the program was made by the programmer in Rijeka, colleague Vanja Ivković ([ivkovicv@hotmail.com](mailto:ivkovicv@hotmail.com)) on the C++ platform for inventing various programs

#### 4.4. Results

The results for the questions 1 to 19 were statistically analyzed and the mean, mode and standard deviation were found for each question. The important thing to mention is that every participant answered to all questions from 1 to 19. Results are shown in the table below.

**Table 1. Results for questions 1-19**

QUESTION	MEAN (M)	MODE	sd
1.	2,29	2	0,29474
2.	3,49	4	0,49474
3.	2,49	2	0,49474
4.	3,77	4	0,23158
5.	2,51	1	1,51579
6.	2,71	2	0,71579
7.	3,43	4	0,56842
8.	2,29	2	1,29474
9.	4,57	5	0,57895
10.	4,46	5	0,46316
11.	3,64	4	1,64211
12.	2,36	2	0,63158
13.	4,38	5	0,62105
14.	4,36	5	3,35789
15.	4,27	5	0,27368
16.	3,40	4	0,4
17.	2,11	2	1,11579

18.	3,36	4	2,35789
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19.a	2,41	2	1,41053
19.b	3,84	4	0,15789
19.c	2,92	4	1,92632
19.d	3,91	5	0,08421
19.e	3,99	5	0,01053
19.f	3,40	4	0,4

Let's analyze each question separately.

When asked whether they (often) make mistakes while speaking, 52,63% of participants mostly disagreed, which means they believe they rarely make mistakes while speaking. Only 5,26% of them say they completely agree with the statement, showing that only 5 of them believe they often make mistakes while speaking.

The majority (63%) of the participants believe that even if the teacher does not point out the mistakes or mentions it in any way, they would still be able to realize they have made one. Only 3,15% of the participants completely disagree, meaning that they need their teacher to say what was wrong, in contrary, they would not be able to realize the mistake has been made.

Most of the participants (38,94%) mostly disagree with the statement that they forget where they were and lose their train of thought if corrected during presentation. On the other hand, the second in line is number 4 on the Likert scale (mostly agree – 26,31%) which means the difference between the ones that can continue after being corrected and the ones that cannot is not that significant. Moreover, only 3,15% of participants believe they always forget where they were after being corrected during presentation.

In accordance with the previous statement, 41,05% of participants mostly agree that they can continue without any problems if corrected during presentation. Moreover, 31,57% of them believe they never have problems continuing with speaking after being corrected.

Only 2,1% of the participants believe they have problems continuing after correction, which again corresponds to the previous question.

When asked whether they hesitate to talk so that they do not make mistakes, 32,63% of the participants answered they never hesitate to speak while 27,36% of them rarely do so. There are also 6,3% of them that neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Interestingly, 41,05% of the participants said they take notice of accuracy while speaking, but, on the other hand, around the same percentage of participants (33,68%) mostly wants to get the message across when they speak without putting the emphasis on accuracy. Only 4,2% of them completely agrees with the latter making this a statement that has around the same number of participants on both sides of the spectrum.

More than half of the participants (52,63%) believe that generally, they remember the correct form instantly and they do not make the same mistake again when corrected. Only 3,1% of them can not relate to this; they have more trouble with remembering the correction next time the same situation happens in their oral presentation.

Participants mostly disagree (47,36%) with the statement that the teacher needs to correct them multiple times in order for them to remember the correct form, again, in regard to the previous question. Only 3,1% of them can not relate to this which also contributes to the validity of the previous question.

When it comes to teacher's reaction to positive segments of student's presentation, it seems that nodding is slightly more appreciated than short motivation words (69,47% vs. 60%).

When we talk about *when* the teacher should correct the students, 34,73% of the students agree that it should be done after they have finished talking. Moreover, 29,47% of them completely agree with this statement. Only 5 participants think that it should be done during the presentation.

In addition to the previous question, most of the participants (45,26%) believe they either remember the correct version if the teacher corrects them after they have finished talking or, they remember in what part of their presentation the mistake was. Only 4,2% of them have problems in this area.

When asked what aspects of language they believe should be corrected, 53,68% of participants believe it should be their vocabulary, while only 1 of them does not find it useful.



Second in line is pronunciation, with 57,89% finding it useful, and only 2 of the participants not having an opinion on the topic (they neither agree nor disagree). Exactly half (50%) of the participants find correcting their grammar useful, which brings us to the conclusion that correcting their grammar is the least useful aspect of language to correct, according to students.

Correcting in their mother tongue (Croatian) is almost equally useful to them as it is useless (36,84% find it useful, 22,1% of them find it mostly useless, while 8,42% of the participants find correction in Croatian completely useless).

Most of the participants do not like being corrected by their peers. They either do not like it at all (34,73%) or do not like it most of the time (38,94%). Only 4,21% of them prefer being corrected by their peers more than by their teachers.

Most of the participants like having to repeat the correct version after their teacher corrects them (44,21%) while 8,42% of them do not have an opinion on the topic.

Question 19 aimed to show their liking/not liking of the particular technique.

The participants generally dislike recast<sup>8</sup> (35,78%), with only 5 of them really liking it. Elicitation technique received more praise, with 44,21% of them liking the technique (4 on a scale from 1 to 5) and only 1 participant disliking it completely. Clarification request, similar to elicitation, elicited number 4 as the most common one, providing us with indication that 33,68% of the participants generally like the technique, with 8,42% of them really liking it. Metalinguistic feedback is the most popular one, with 41,05% of the participants really liking it and 33,68% of them liking it, followed by explicit correction that was really liked by 40% of the students and liked by 35,78% of them. Only 7,36% of the students do not like metalinguistic feedback as a technique, as well as 3,15% of them who do not like explicit correction. Lastly, 45,26% of the participants graded repetition with number 4 on the scale from 1 to 5 and only 7,36% of the students do not like the technique in question.

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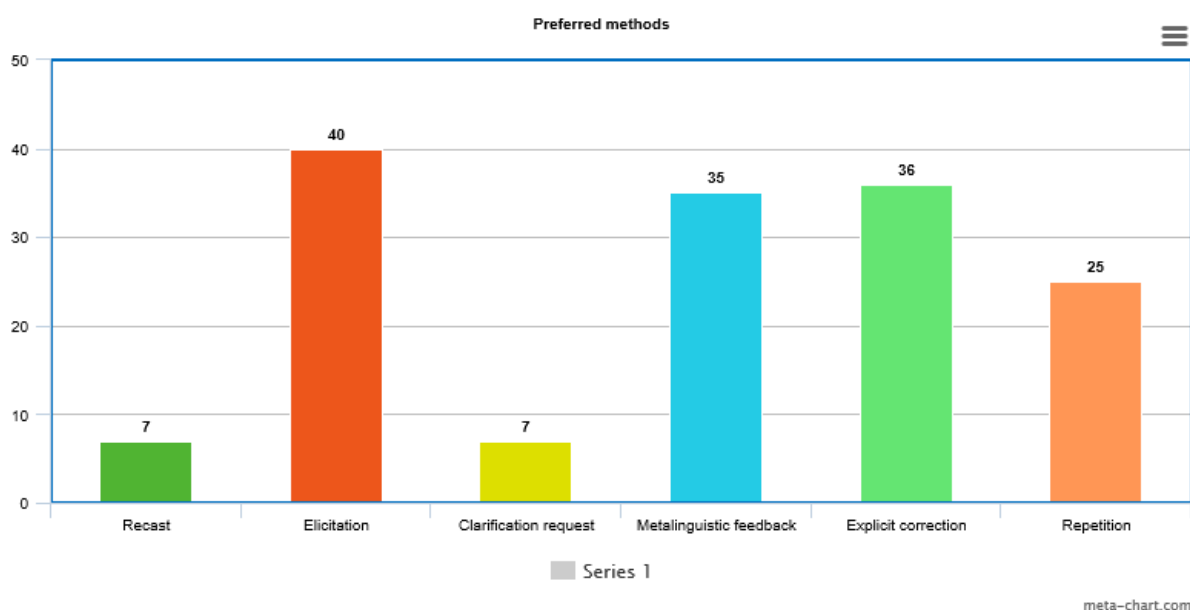
<sup>8</sup> The participants did not receive the names of techniques in their questionnaires, but we are going to use full names of the techniques instead of examples given to the students in question 19 a-f.

The open-ended questions (questions 20 to 28) elicited the students' opinions and were analyzed qualitatively.

All questions were answered but not all the participants answered to all parts of each question. For example, for question 20 they stated the technique/techniques they preferred, but did not explain the reason why. Also, for questions 25 and 26 we got an answer to what aspects of language they want to have corrected or they usually get corrected, but without an explanation how and why. Because of this, we will be using number of participants that gave a specific answer, without the percentage.

Let's analyze each question separately.

**Table 2. Participants' preferred techniques of oral error correction**



The participants preferences for oral error correction technique can be seen in Table 2. The reasons why they liked the technique of **elicitation** best (N=40) are as follows:

- "I learn the most that way" (N=12)
- "it makes me think" (N=10)/ "I have to get to the solution by myself" (N=8)
- "I remember the correction easier this way" (N=8)
- "I understand where my mistake was" (N=6)
- "it allows me to correct myself while at the same time showing me where my mistake was" (N=2)

The second technique was **explicit correction** (N=36) because:

- “it does not waste time” (N=7)
- “there is no misunderstanding/it is clear” (N=4)
- “it helps in learning” (N=3)
- “I do not have to realize where the mistake is by myself” (N=2)

The technique that received almost the same amount of positive feedback is **metalinguistic feedback** (N=35) because:

- “I remember what the mistake is and why it is wrong” (N=6)
- “I remember the grammar rule the easiest and I use it in the future” (N=6)
- “it is specific and objective” (N=6)
- “it does not waste time/it is clear” (N=4)
- “I get an explanation that makes me remember easier” (N=4)

**Repetition** follows (N=25) because:

- “it allows me to correct myself while showing me where the mistake is at the same time” (N=4)
- “it shows me what is wrong and then I remember easier” (N=5)
- “it makes me think” (N=2)

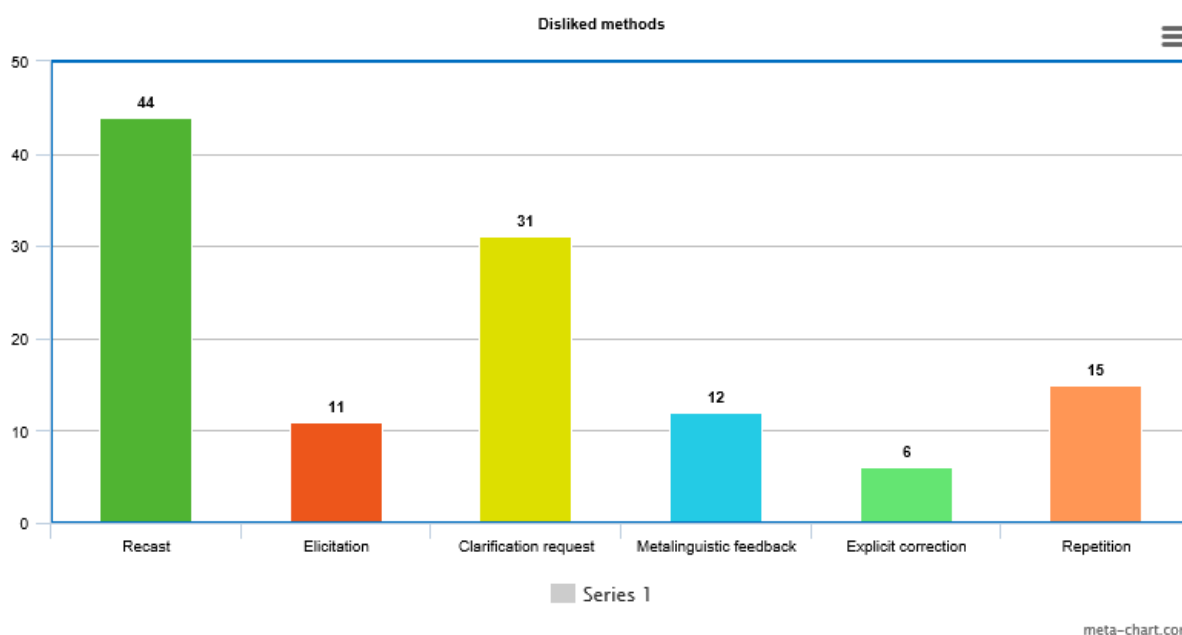
**Recast** and **clarification request** were rated the lowest, with only 7 participants opting for each technique. The reason why recast is liked is:

- “I realize what I did wrong without making a big deal about it/without feeling exposed” (N=4)

while clarification request:

- “makes you think” (N=2)
- is “similar to real life situation” (N=2)

**Table 3. Participants' disliked techniques of oral error correction**



When asked to comment on the least liked technique and to provide some reasons, the participants indicated as follows (see Table 3):

The most disliked technique is **recast** (N=44) because:

- “it does not tell you what is wrong” (N=14)
- “there is no explanation as to why something is wrong” (N=5)
- “it is not precise enough; I do not know which part of the sentence is wrong” (N=5)
- “there is a possibility I will not realize I have made a mistake and it will not stick in my memory” (N=5)
- “I see it as mocking by the teacher; he/she is pointing out that I do not know the language” (N=3)
- “it does not make any sense if the teacher does not help me to get to the right answer” (N=2)

A participant stated that this technique is the same as “saying nothing”.

The second in line is **clarification request** (N=31) because:

- “I do not know where the mistake is” (N=6)
- “the teacher is being rude for no reason” (N=3)
- “it does not make any sense if the teacher does not help me to get to the right answer” (N=3)
- “I feel stupid” (N=3)
- “if I already made a mistake, there is no need to waste more time” (N=2)
- “unnecessary complication” (N=2)

Moreover, one participant stated that “clarification request makes me wonder if I did something wrong or was I just not clear enough, and then, even when I realize I made a mistake, I do not know where the mistake was”.

It is also very interesting to see that in question 19, when asked to rate each method on a scale from 1 to 5, clarification request was mostly rated with number four (4).

**Repetition** is disliked by 15 participants because:

- “I feel like I am being mocked by another students/teacher and I get demotivated as an outcome” (N=2)
- “I can’t read mind”/” it’s unprecise”/”I can’t do well under pressure”/”it indicates anger and dissatisfaction” (N=1)

**Metalinguistic feedback** (N=12) is the fourth technique that was disliked by the participants for the following reasons:

- “I use common sense/hearing and not grammar rules” (N=3)
- “it confuses me even more” (N=2)
- “it is too complicated and too hard” (N=2)
- “it is making me feel stupid, I already know grammar rules”/”I do not like grammar rules”/”I forget the rules easily”/”it sound dry and like the teacher is not interested” (N=1)

The technique that received almost the same number of comments is **elicitation** (N=11) because:

- “I find it hard to get to the solution by myself” (N=4)
- “if I get confused I need the teacher to tell me where the mistake is” (N=2)
- “it is confusing and dull; I lose motivation and concentration” (N=1)

The least disliked technique by the participants (N=6) is **explicit correction** because:

- “the mistake is only corrected, but not explained”/”it’s not useful” (N=1)

Question 22 elicited many different answers which were categorized thematically. Some of the participants only stated whether the teacher’s correction helped them in their process of learning English, without providing examples or reasons *how* it helped them, which was the main focus of this question.

Generally, 23 participants believe that teacher's correction helps them a lot. For some of them, correction is helpful depending on a situation, because they do not always remember the correct version (N=6). One participant even said that "of course it helps, but, if the mistake was not relevant enough, I probably will not listen". Some believe it helps them sometimes but they still prefer to self-correct (N=2). Some believe it does not help them that much because it raises certain insecurities and it demotivates them (N=3).

Rather different answers were provided to the question: *how* does correction help students?

First of all, most of them believe that it helps them not to repeat the same mistake (N=28). Also, it helps them to "learn what they have done wrong in the past (regarding language)" (N=25). Moreover, similar answer was provided by 8 participants, saying that it "helps them for the future; it gives them a sense of progress". Some of the participants focused mainly on vocabulary, saying that correction helps them to "expand their vocabulary" (N=4).

The rest of them reported that correction:

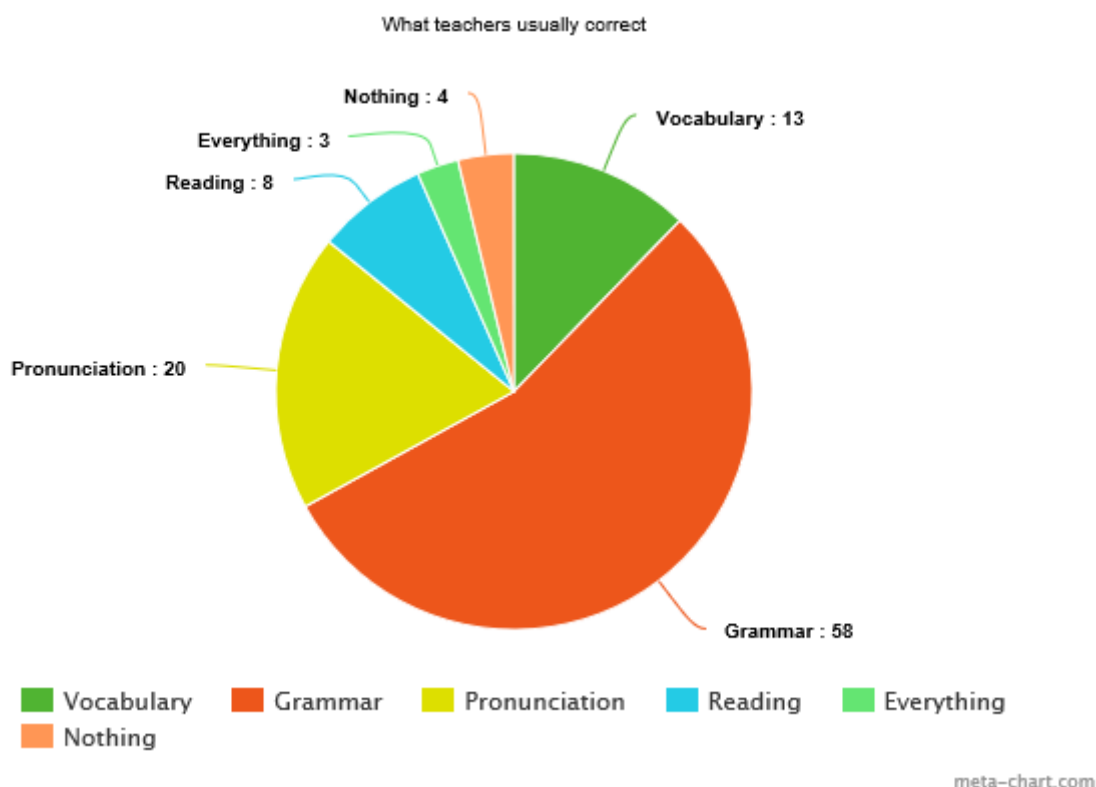
- "helps them to better understand the rules of language" (N=2)
- "helps them to realize what they need to work on in the future in order to show progress in language learning" (N=2)

The majority of participants believe that teacher's correction does not slow down their process of learning (N=89). The rest of them think that it does (N=3), 2 of them believe that it depends on the situation, while 1 of them says that he/she is indifferent regarding this question.

The ones that said that correction possibly slows down their process of learning offered the following reasons.

Firstly, one participant stated that he "will not remember the correction if the teacher embarrasses him" while two other participants said that they lose interest for the language if correction happens all the time because it will make them stop believing in their abilities. Two participants said that "it can slow down their process of learning if they lose their train of thought due to correction".

**Table 4. Most corrected aspects of language**



When asked which aspects of English their teachers usually correct and how they do so, the participants answered as follows (see table 4):

It seems that teachers usually correct students' grammar (N=58), pronunciation (N=20), vocabulary (N=13), reading (N=8) or all of that (N=3). Four (4) participants believe their teachers do not correct anything.

**Grammar** is usually corrected either explicitly (N=8) or by pointing out what is wrong but not giving the answer (only explaining how to 'get' to the right answer) (N=15). Furthermore, occasionally the teacher explicitly corrects but also explains why something was wrong (N=7). Some participants stated that their grammar mistakes were mostly corrected after their presentation (N=5). The technique of repetition is also used while correcting grammar (N=6). Lastly, some of them said that:

- the teacher tends to repeat their incorrect sentence, give them the correct one and ask for the difference between the two (N=1)
- the teacher translates their mistake to Croatian (N=1)

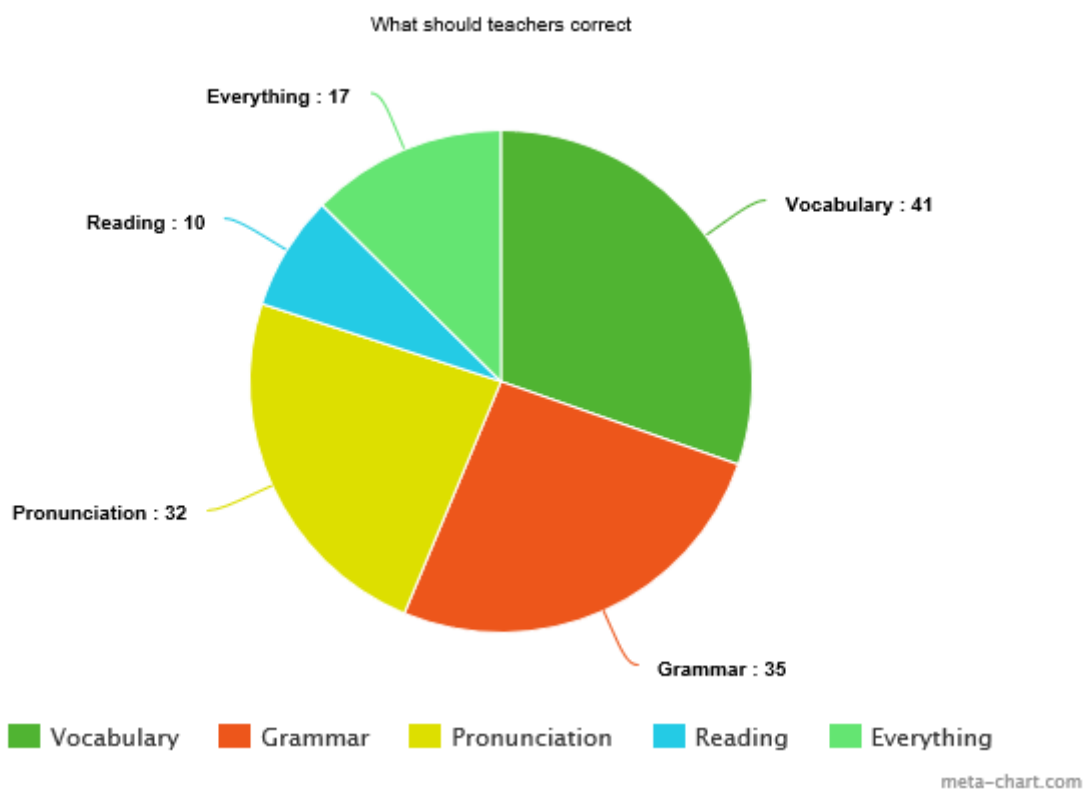
**Pronunciation** is usually corrected by simply saying the right word (explicitly, N=7) or/and after the presentation (N=2).

**Vocabulary** is mostly corrected explicitly (N=7). Some other ways are:

- providing the synonyms (N=2)
- correcting and explaining why a mistake was made (N=2)

**Reading** is either corrected by explicitly repeating the word correctly and having the student repeat the correct utterance (N=2) or explicitly (N=1).

**Table 5. What aspects of language should teachers correct?**



When asked which aspects of English they believe are the most important ones to correct and why, the participants answered as follows (see table 5):

Vocabulary seems to be the most important aspect of language that needs to be corrected, according to participants (N=41), after which follows grammar with 35 participants. Pronunciation is important to 32 participants, while 17 of them believe every aspect of language should be corrected. Last is reading, with 10 participants saying that it should be corrected.

Participants believe that **vocabulary** should be corrected because:



- “it is the most important aspect of language for communication/transmission of the message/understanding each other” (N=15)
- “it is the key aspect for appropriate language use” (N=12)

One participant explained this by saying that “it is important to correct vocabulary because, in a foreign country, we will do better with a good vocabulary and bad grammar, than vice versa”.

Like vocabulary, **grammar** should be corrected because:

- “it is the key aspect/the most important aspect for appropriate language use/for learning language” (N=13)
- “it is the most complex aspect of language” (N=2)
- “it is easily fixable” (N=2)
- “the most important thing is to speak grammatically correct” (N=2)

**Pronunciation** is almost as equally important as grammar, according to the participants, and there are numerous reasons as to why they believe it is the most important aspect of language that should be corrected. Those reasons are:

- “because it is most important for proper speaking” (N=9)
- “because it is important to understand the interlocutor/not to get misunderstood” (N=8)
- “because it is more important than grammar and vocabulary” (N=2)

Also, several other reasons, each by one (1) participant, were mentioned, such as:

- “because we use it the most”
- “because it needs to be considered more”

There are 17 participants that believe **every aspect of language** (depending on a situation) should be corrected because:

- “everything is equally important for proper language use” (N=8)
- “it is the only way to learn” (N=2)

Finally, **reading** should be corrected because it is “the most beneficial” (N=2) and “correcting reading helps the most while learning the language” (N=2).

While more than half (52) of the participants believe that they **do not encounter any problems** when the teacher corrects them, the rest face problems such as:

- losing the train of thought/forgetting what they were saying (N=20)
- they can't remember a certain word (N=3)
- they feel embarrassed in front of their teacher (N=3)
- they get confused (N=3)
- they feel like they are being critiqued and they react inappropriately (N=2)
- they get anxious (N=2)

Interestingly, there are several situations that the participants experience when the teacher corrects their oral mistake (N=1):

- they tend to focus their attention to the mistake and not on how to correct it
- sometimes they can't figure out where the mistake is
- sometimes they do not understand why something is wrong
- they find it hard to get to the right answer by themselves

When asked to provide suggestions as to how oral error correction could be improved, so many different answers were elicited that it was extremely difficult to categorize them. Therefore, they will be listed in terms of frequency, i.e. the ones most frequently mentioned by the participants.

First, let us examine the participants perspective on what their teacher should *be like*. The largest number of participants said that they would like their teacher to be “nicer” and “gentler” while correcting the students (N=12). Also, they want the teacher to be “concrete and clear” (N=7) as well as “polite/not rude” (N=5). Lastly, the participants would like the teacher to be “patient and reasonable” (N=5).

Secondly, they indicated *when* the students should be corrected. The participants opted for “not correcting during their presentation (if not necessary)” (N=7), with only 1 participant saying that “the teacher needs to correct as soon as he notices the mistake”. Generally, the teacher needs to think about when to correct because the students can get “easily confused” (N=2).

Thirdly, reference was made to *which* mistakes the teacher should correct. All the mistakes should be corrected, according to 5 participants. Sometimes, the focus should be on grammar and vocabulary (N=2), while other times, pronunciation is the most important aspect

of language that needs to be corrected (N=1). Also, 1 participant believes that not all mistakes need to be corrected since that can be demotivating.

Fourthly, some of the participants focused on the question “*How* should errors be corrected?”. According to the participants, the teacher needs to:

- be clear in explaining what was wrong and why (N=7)
- consider his tone (N=4)
- put the emphasis on communication/everyday use (N=2)
- correct the student in such way so that he learns from his mistakes (N=2)
- use examples (N=1)
- repeat multiple times (N=1)
- point out to positive sides, too (N=1)

Finally, some of the participants provided several general statements that could answer the question “What does the teacher need to consider while correcting errors?”:

- proficiency level (N=4)
- error “size” (N=4)
- student’s character (N=3)

Three participants said they are happy with their teacher and have no suggestions.

After having looked at the results of the study, we will now switch our focus onto discussion and comment section of the results in regard to literature review.

#### 4.5. Discussion

There are several interesting points that were yielded from this study. Some of them clearly corroborate in the literature, while others differ in many respects from the findings.

First of all, most of the participants believe they need to be corrected after they have finished talking, in addition, they state that they do not face any problems if the teacher corrects them in that manner (e.g. they do not have problems remembering where they have made the mistake). This is in line with Livingstone (2015) who disagreed with the statement that students should be corrected at the very moment they make a mistake (cf. Baz, Balçıkanlı, & Cephe, 2016).

When it comes to *how* the students want to be corrected or which techniques they prefer, the results indicate that most of the participants like elicitation, followed by explicit

correction and metalinguistic feedback. Clearly, the most disliked techniques are clarification requests and recasts. This is in complete disagreement with Alamri & Fawzi (2016) (as well as with Ur (2014)), who said that recast was favored by the majority of their students, with elicitation as the least effective technique. Also, the study by Alhaysony (2016) differs with our findings, where clarification request was the most favored technique. However, in the study by Coskun (2010) recasts are singled out as the least effective technique. The majority of problems the participants encounter while being corrected evolve around losing their train of thought (if corrected while talking). When it comes to peer assessment, the majority of the participants clearly dislike peer assessment and prefer to be corrected by the teacher, which is in accordance with Baz, Balçıkanlı & Cephe (2016) and Alhaysony (2016), but disagrees with the study by Livingstone (2015) who found that 2/3 of his participants liked peer assessment.

Most of the students say that their teachers usually correct grammar by explicit correction, which differs with the study by Coskun (2010) who said that he mostly used repetition as a technique (while self-observing). Moreover, Ur (2014) mentioned that it is important to acknowledge the positive parts of students' oral presentation, and our study shows that they prefer nodding as the best way to show them what is correct in their oral presentation.

It seems that politeness is a big issue in the classroom (in the student-teacher relationship) since the majority of the students would like their teachers to be more polite/gentler/not rude/nicer. This is also evident in the study by Ur (2014) who clearly said that this relationship has the tendency to only be *potentially* humiliating for the student, and from the results it is obvious that the students believe their teachers should act differently. Also, this is in accordance with the study by Ustaci & Ok (2014) who found that 90% of their participants wanted to be corrected politely, without having their feelings hurt. Baz, Balçıkanlı, & Cephe, (2016) completely agrees, in regard to the citation from his study we have mentioned in the literature review.

#### 4.6. Practical implications

First of all, I find it important to mention that even though this study yielded numerous practical implications for the EFL classroom which can be beneficial for teachers teaching all age groups, there are areas that had contradictory results (in the study itself and in regard to the literature) and would merit further research. Nevertheless, on the bases of the

findings, it is possible to suggest some ideas for teachers. For example, every teacher needs to take into consideration the student's character and interest for the language. This study has shown that students tend to believe in their abilities and overestimate their language skills. In fact, most of the participants believe they do not make mistakes, and that, even if the teacher does not point out to a mistake, they would be able to recognize it. This is something to consider, as well as the student's proficiency level, the error "size" and whether it impairs communication. The latter is connected to the difference in fluency and accuracy tasks, and the fact that the objective of the task should be explicitly stated so that both the teacher and students know what they need to focus on, and better understand the error correction process, or the lack thereof.

Generally, this study has shown that there is no need to interrupt the student and that it is always better to correct students after they have finished talking. However, if the teacher believes immediate correction is necessary, it is important to mention that students generally seem to be able to continue with talking without losing their train of thought. As for which aspects students like to have corrected, vocabulary correction is the most appreciated (although grammar and pronunciation errors are not that far behind). Also, students prefer their teacher's correction over their peer's correction. Since elicitation and explicit correction are equally preferred (but completely different), teachers can use both techniques, but again, depending on the context, situation, student and so on. Elicitation generally seems to be more beneficial, since it asks the student to correct himself/herself, which can have a positive impact on his/her learning. On the other side, recast and clarification questions as techniques should be used less frequently since the students do not realize that they have actually made a mistake or that the mistake was corrected. As for clarification questions, students feel that they are being mocked by their teacher so this needs to be done with care. This is in complete alliance with the fact that, when correcting, the teachers should be polite, nice, patient and calm, and should not raise their voice or humiliate the student. As already mentioned, teachers have the ability to make the relationship with students potentially humiliating, and should, therefore, avoid condescending comments or facial expressions at all costs. As the study shows, students benefit most from focusing on the positive parts of presentation, i.e. on what they can actually do. The preferred way to reinforce such behavior is by nodding and using short motivational words. It seems fair to conclude that teachers need to be gentle, clear, consider their tone of voice, focus on important errors, use examples while correcting, and put emphasis on everyday language use and communication.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Error correction always was and as it seems, will always be one of the most controversial topics in the EFL classrooms. Even though multiple studies have been conducted on this topic over the last few decades, we still have not reached an agreement on some of the most important points regarding this topic. Disagreement regarding error correction techniques is the most common one, followed by the question of time or when the teacher should correct and also, which errors should be corrected as opposed to the ones that can be overlooked. Therefore, it is often difficult to provide some practical implications for their teaching since each study seems to yield something new and different when compared to prior research in the field. This shows us that it is beyond necessary for each teacher to get to know his/her students and how they function individually and as a group so that he/she can correct the students in a way that would be beneficial for both parties. Still, the potentially humiliating and negative relationship that may arise from the teacher's correction of a student's mistake needs to be considered and addressed accordingly. Although the goal of foreign language learning is not native speaker competence, inevitably all learners strive towards accuracy and fluency in speaking. Moreover, one of the indicators of language proficiency, or the lack thereof, are errors. Therefore, in most contexts, accurate use of all language aspects, including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is essential for everyday communication.

There are still some areas that need to be researched, possibly as a follow-up to this study. For example, it remains to be answered how are both elicitation and explicit correction receiving similar praise from the students when they are completely different techniques of correction. Also, this study has not answered the question "why do the students prefer to be corrected after the presentation although they claim to have no problems if interrupted?". Interestingly, the students believe they tend to not make mistakes while speaking and that they only need to be corrected once in order to remember the correct form and use it next time, but this too needs to be further examined and confirmed. Finally, and probably most importantly, it would be interesting to examine the difference between the four groups of students that participated in the study (math, language and two general tracks) so as to investigate whether (and to what extent) the fact that they all have different English teachers has affected their answers. In other words, to better understand the teacher's role in error correction, and to

examine the influence of teacher characteristics on the efficacy of error correction in the language classroom.

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## APPENDIX

### 1. Appendix A - Original questionnaire in Croatian<sup>9</sup>

#### UPITNIK

Svrha je ovog istraživanja ispitati stavove učenika prema **ispravljanju usmenih pogrešaka** na nastavi **engleskoga jezika**, stoga te molim da što iskrenije odgovoriš na sljedeća pitanja. Ovo ispitivanje je anonimno, a tvoji će podatci biti korišteni isključivo u istraživačke svrhe.

Unaprijed zahvaljujem na suradnji!

Datum: \_\_\_\_\_ Spol: M Ž Dob: \_\_\_\_\_ Razred: \_\_\_\_\_ Škola:

\_\_\_\_\_

Ocjena iz engleskog jezika na kraju prošle školske godine: \_\_\_\_\_

**Zaokruži broj koji najviše odgovara tvom mišljenju.**

	Uopće se ne slažem	Uglavnom se ne slažem
1. Često griješim prilikom usmenog izlaganja.	1	2
2. Kada mi nastavnik ne bi ukazao na greške prilikom usmenog izlaganja, svejedno bi ih mogao/la sam/a identificirati.	1	2
3. Kada me nastavnik ispravi tijekom izlaganja, često zaboravim gdje sam stao/la i prekine mi se misao.	1	2
4. Kada me nastavnik ispravi tijekom izlaganja nastavim s izlaganjem bez problema.	1	2
5. Ustručavam se govoriti kako ne bih napravio/la pogrešku.	1	2
6. Ne pridajem pozornost greškama; najvažnije mi je da pogodim smisao onoga što želim reći.	1	2
7. Odmah zapamtim točan oblik i sljedeći ga put upotrijebim iz prve.	1	2

<sup>9</sup> the questions from 1 to 18 had a Likert scale from 1 to 5, but the layout of the questionnaire itself was horizontal so there are no numbers 3, 4 and 5 here

8. Nastavnik me treba više puta ispraviti kako ne bih ponovio/la istu grešku.	1	2
9. Korisno mi je kada mi nastavnik klimanjem glave ukaže na pozitivne dijelove mog usmenog izražavanja.	1	2
10. Korisno mi je kada mi nastavnik kratkim potvrdnim motivacijskim riječima ukaže na pozitivne dijelove mog usmenog izražavanja.	1	2
11. Preferiram kada mi nastavnik sve greške spomene nakon što završim s izlaganjem.	1	2
12. Kada me nastavnik ispravi na kraju izlaganja, ne sjetim se u kojem se dijelu nalazila određena greška i brzo zaboravim točnu verziju.	1	2
13. Korisno mi je kada mi nastavnik ispravi vokabular.	1	2
14. Korisno mi je kada mi nastavnik ispravi izgovor.	1	2
15. Korisno mi je kada mi nastavnik ispravi gramatiku.	1	2
16. Korisno mi je kada me nastavnik ispravi na hrvatskom jeziku.	1	2
17. Radije bih da me ispravi prijatelj iz razreda, nego nastavnik.	1	2
18. Korisno mi je kada moram ponoviti točan oblik za nastavnikom.	1	2

19. Ocijeni sljedeće tvrdnje (a-f) ocjenom od 1 do 5 (1-ne sviđa mi se, 5-jako mi se sviđa) kako bi procijenio/la koliko ti se navedena metoda ispravljanja usmenih grešaka sviđa. Nastavnikovo je ispravljanje **napisano debelim otisnutim slovima**. Svoju ocjenu napiši pored slova tvrdnje.

- a) Nastavnik tijekom izlaganja implicitno ispravi pogrešku koju sam upravo izrekao/la, bez objašnjavanja što je krivo (npr. Women are kind than man – **Indeed, women are kinder than man**)
- b) Nastavnik mi ukaže na grešku ali želi da sam dođem do rješenja. (npr. Once upon a time, there lives a girl – **Once upon a time, there...**)
- c) Nastavnik me zatraži da pobliže objasnim što sam mislio/la. (npr. I eat yesterday - **Excuse me?; I don't understand**)
- d) Nastavnik koristi gramatička pravila da mi pobliže objasni grešku (npr. I eat yesterday – **moraš koristiti past simple kada govoriš o prošlom vremenu, uz prilog yesterday koristimo past simple od glagola eat**)

e) Nastavnik izričito naglasi što je krivo. (npr. I eat yesterday – **Trebao bi reći „I ate yesterday“**)

f) Nastavnik ponovi moju grešku s podizanjem intonacije, kako bi mi ukazao da nešto nije u redu, te čeka da se sam/a ispravim.

20. Objasni koje metode u prethodnom zadatku najviše voliš i zašto.

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21. Objasni koje metode u prethodnom zadatku najmanje voliš i zašto.

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22. Kako ti nastavnikovo ispravljanje pogreške pomaže u procesu učenja engleskoga jezika?

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23. Odmaže li ti nastavnikovo ispravljanje pogreške u procesu učenja engleskoga jezika?

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24. Ako ti odmaže, objasni na koji način.

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25. Što nastavnici najviše ispravljaju prilikom tvog usmenog izlaganja ( gramatiku, vokabular, izgovor, čitanje...) i na koji način to najčešće čine?

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26. Koje vrste usmenih pogrešaka bi nastavnici najviše trebali ispravljati ( gramatiku, vokabular, izgovor, čitanje...). Objasni zašto.

27. S kojim poteškoćama se susrećeš kada ti nastavnik ispravi usmene pogreške?

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28. Što misliš o čemu nastavnik treba voditi računa prilikom ispravljanja pogrešaka, tj. što bi ti predložio nastavniku?

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## 2. Appendix B - Questionnaire in English

### QUESTIONNAIRE

The focus of this research is to examine **students' attitudes** regarding **oral error correction** in the **EFL classroom**. This research is anonymous, and your information will be used exclusively for the purpose of this research.

Thank you for participating!

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M F Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School:  
\_\_\_\_\_

English grade at the end of the last school year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the number that suits your opinion the best.<sup>10</sup>**

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1 - I completely disagree. 2 - I mostly disagree. 3 - I neither agree nor disagree.

4 - I mostly agree. 5 - I completely agree.

---

1. I often make mistakes while speaking.

2. I could identify the mistake I make even if the teacher does not point it out.

3. When the teacher corrects me during presentation, I often forget where I was and I lose the train of thought.

4. When the teacher corrects me during presentation, I continue without any problems.

5. I hesitate to talk so that I do not make a mistake.

6. I do not care about mistakes; the most important thing is to get the message across.

7. I remember the right word/correction immediately and the next time I use it right away.

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<sup>10</sup> I will not write numbers of the Likert scale in this translation.

8. The teachers needs to correct me multiple times so that I do not make the same mistake repeatedly.
  9. I find it useful when the teacher nods to point to the positive parts of my presentation.
  10. I find it useful when the teacher points to the positive parts of my presentation by saying short motivational words.
  11. I prefer when the teacher mentions all my mistakes after I have finished talking.
  12. When the teacher mentions all my mistakes after I have finished talking, I can not remember in what part of my presentation the mistake was and therefore, I forget the correct version.
  13. I find it useful when the teacher corrects my vocabulary.
  14. I find it useful when the teacher corrects my pronunciation.
  15. I find it useful when the teacher corrects my grammar.
  16. I find it useful when the teacher corrects me in Croatian.
  17. I would rather be corrected by a peer than a teacher.
  18. I find it useful when I have to repeat the correct version after the teacher corrects me.
- 

19. Grade the following statements (a-f) with number 1 to 5 (1 – I don't like it, 5 – I like it a lot) to express how you feel about techniques of error correction in oral assessment. The teacher's correction is in **bold**. Write the number next to the letter of a statement.

- a) The teacher implicitly corrects the mistake I have made, without explaining what was wrong. (e.g. Women are kind than men – **Indeed, women are kinder than men**)
- b) The teacher points out to the mistake, but wants the student to correct himself. (e.g. Once upon a time, there lives a girl – **Once upon a time, there...**)
- c) The teacher wants me to explain what I meant. (e.g. I eat yesterday – **Excuse me?; I don't understand**)

d) The teacher is using grammar rules to explain the mistake (e.g. I eat yesterday – **you have to use past simple when you are talking about past, with an adverb yesterday we use past simple out of the verb eat**)

e) The teacher explicitly points out to the mistake. (e.g. I eat yesterday – **You should have said “I ate yesterday”**)

f) The teacher repeats my mistake with a raising intonation, to show me that something is wrong, and waits for me to correct myself.

20. Explain which techniques from the previous question you like the most and why.

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21. Explain which techniques from the previous question you like the least and why.

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22. How does the teacher’s correction help you in the process of learning English?

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23. Does the teacher’s correction slow down your process of learning English?

24. If your answer is yes, explain in what way.

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25. What do teachers usually correct during your oral presentation (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading...) and in what way are they doing that?

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26. What types of oral mistakes should the teachers correct the most (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading...). Explain why.

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27. What problems do you face when the teacher corrects your oral mistakes?

28. What do you think your teacher should pay closer attention to when it comes to error correction, i.e. what would you suggest to the teacher?

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