

Conference Abstract

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 23-26 June, 2005: Reflective Practice – The key to innovation in international education

To err is human – but do they learn?

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This paper examines the relationship between learner awareness and the effectiveness of error correction in the second language classroom. Over the past four decades, attitudes of theorists, researchers and practitioners towards the practice of error correction have swung from prescription to proscription, before coming to rest in an uneasy state of fibrillation between qualified support and claims of ineffectiveness. Adopting the stance that bad habits (ie, fossilisation) require at least as much rehearsal as native-like acquisition, this study set out to demonstrate that much of the thinking that motivated an obsession with error correction was ill-founded. Moreover, the practice was ineffective and wasted valuable classroom time which could be spent on more productive activity.

In the study, a 50 minute Japanese language class was video taped and error correction activity by the teacher was recorded and analysed by the researcher. Three students were selected from the class to view the video and to record and similarly analyse the error correction activity by the teacher. A comparison of the two analyses provides quite an eye opener to teachers who assume that their activity results in student learning. It also lends support to Schmidt's (1990) claim that conscious noticing is a necessary precondition for input to become intake.