

# Correct me if I'm wrong

TESOL Arabia Professional Development Certificate Course

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## *Agree or disagree?*

- 1 Mistakes are an inevitable part of language learning.
- 2 Most errors are the result of differences between the learner's first language and their second language (interference).
- 3 If teachers don't correct learners' mistakes they will become bad habits.
- 4 Correcting mistakes makes students shy and afraid to speak.
- 5 Rather than correcting students, it's better to get students to correct themselves.
- 6 The teacher should be selective when correcting mistakes.
- 7 Correction doesn't make much difference to the learning process.
- 8 Learners' mistakes can provide useful material for teaching.

Some research findings on error correction:

1. Teachers are generally tougher on error than non-teachers.
2. Non-native-speaker teachers are generally tougher on error than native-speaker teachers.
3. Teachers do not treat all the errors that occur.
4. Learners often say that they want more error correction than is usually offered.

Researchers found that “... learning becomes better if conditions are arranged so that students make errors.... Getting the answer wrong is a great way to learn.”

*Scientific American* October 20, 2009

“We need classes that develop the courage to err.”

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge, p 178.

The following short text was produced by a Mexican learner of English in response to the question: *Do you use English in your work (or your studies)?*

Identify and classify the learner's errors:

Yes I use all time because I'm trying to apply to some position at university or some college and I need the idiom urgently. Of course I need the traduction by my career. I need quickly learn English and my next months, I think need to dedicate time to learn this language.

Learner: *My brother is a good cooker.*

Teacher:

1. *No.*
2. *No. My brother is a good cook.*
3. *My brother is a good cooker?*
4. *My brother is a good....?* [with rising intonation]
5. *No. Cooker is the equipment. For a person, say cook.*
6. *Your brother is a good cooker?*
7. *Your brother is a good cook, is he?*
8. *I'm sorry?*
9. *Oh, really? What kind of things does he cook?*
10. *Good.*

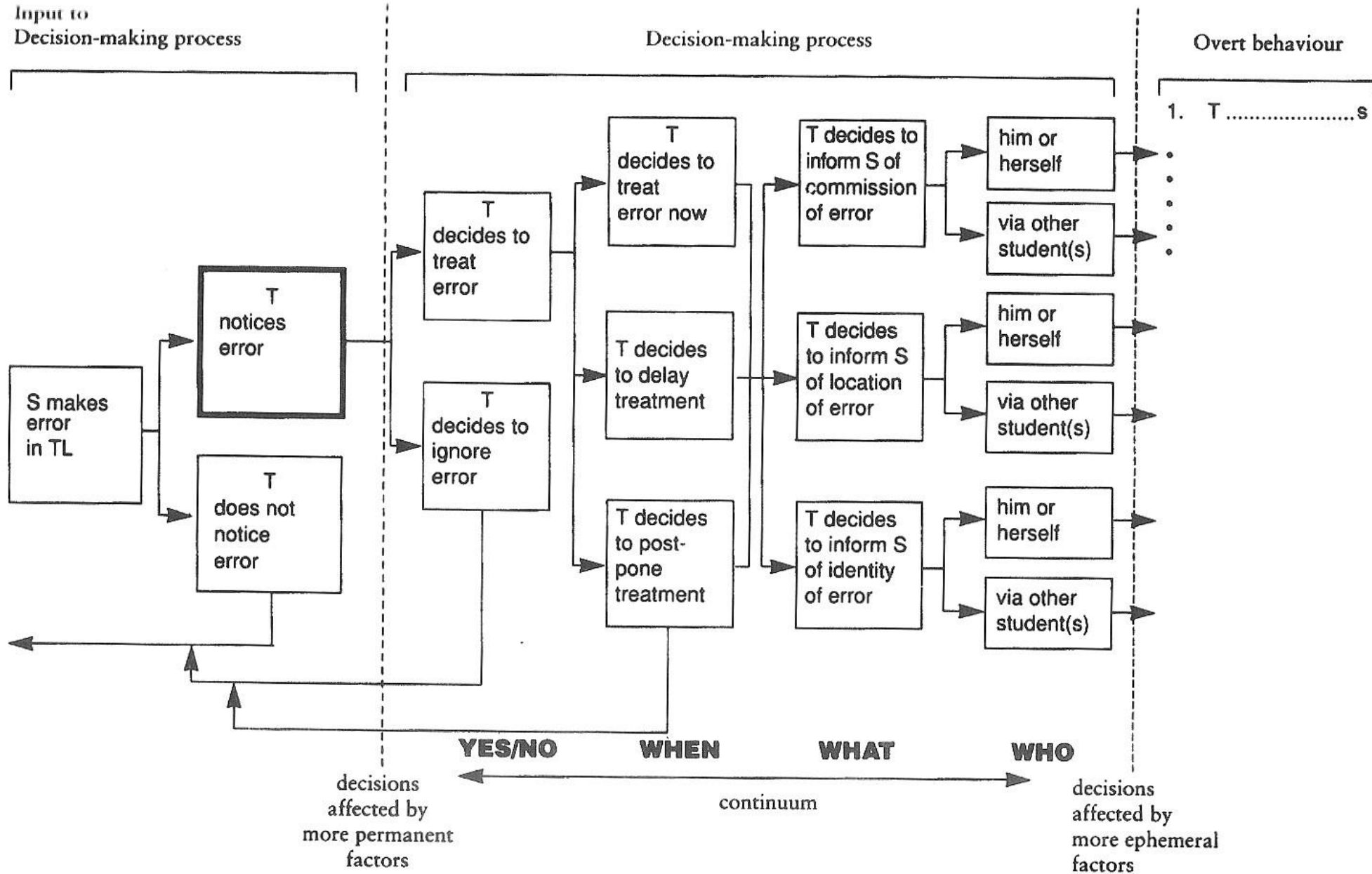


Figure 4 Long's model of the decision-making process prior to the teacher feedback move (1977:289)



T: after they have put up their tent, what did the boys do?

L: they cooking food.

T: no, not they cooking food, pay attention.

L: they cook their meal.

T: right, they cook their meal over an open fire.

(Tsui, 1995, cited in Seedhouse P. (2004) *The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom: A conversational Perspective*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 171)

Learner 1: On Sunday what did you do?

Learner 2: Oh, er I stayed in home.

→ Teacher: At home.

Learner 2: On Sunday I stayed at home and  
watched the Wimbledon Final. What did  
you do on Sunday?

Learner 1: On morning

→ Teacher: In the morning

Learner 1: In the morning I took a bus...

Seedhouse, P. 1997. Combining form and meaning. *ELT Journal*, 51/4:  
342

*José:* I think that the worm will go under the soil.

*Teacher:* I *think* that the worm *will* go under the soil?

*José:* (no response)

*Teacher:* I *thought* that the worm *would* go under the soil.

*José:* I *thought* that the worm *would* go under the soil.

Doughty, C., and Varela, E. 1998. Communicative focus on form. In Doughty, C. and Williams, J. (eds.) *Focus on form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.

(The central heating boiler has just re-ignited)

Mark: oh popped on

Mother: pardon?

Mark: it popped on

Mother: it popped on?

Mark: yeh

Mother: what did?

Mark: er – fire on

Mother: the fire?

Mark: yeh ... pop the. fire popped it fire

Mother: oh yes. the fire popped on didn't it?

Mark: yeh

(Wells, 1981)

- 1 T: Vin, have you ever been to the movies? what's your favorite movie?
- 2 L: big.
- 3 T: big, OK, that's a good movie, that was about a little boy inside a big man, wasn't it?
- 4 L: yeah, boy get surprise all the time.
- 5 T: yes, he was surprised, wasn't he? usually little boys don't do the things that men do, do they?
- 6 L: no, little boy no drink.
- 7 T: that's right, little boys don't drink.

(Johnson, 1995, p. 23)

[An elementary class has been working on the language of making suggestions]

S1. What about go to mountains?

T: What about...?

S1: What about going to mountains, we can do "barrancking"

[Ss laugh]

T: What's "barrancking"?

S2: Is a sport.

T: Yes, but what do you do exactly?

S3: You have a river, a small river and [gestures]

T: Goes down?

S3: Yes, as a cataract

T: OK, a waterfall [writes it on board] What's a waterfall, Manel? Can you give me an example? A famous waterfall [draws]

S1: Like Niagara?

T: OK. So what do you do with the waterfall?

S4: You go down.

T: What? In a boat?

S4: No, no, with a ... *¿como se dice 'cuerda'?*

S3: Cord.

T: No, rope, a cord is smaller, like at the window, look [points]

S4: Rope, rope, you go down rope in waterfall.

S2: You wear ... black clothes ... “Especial clothses”

T: Special clothes. Repeat [student repeats] ... [...]

This sounds dangerous, is it dangerous?

Ss: No no

**S3:** Is in summer, no much water

T: Sorry?

S3: *Poco ... poco ...* little water, river is not strong

T: OK ... and you have done this? What's it called in Spanish?

S4: *Barranquismo*. In English?

T: I don't know. I'll have to ask somebody.

S2: It is good, you come? *¿Com es diu?* Let's go together.

T: I don't think so [laughs]



## ***Instructional conversation***

The task of schooling can be seen as one of creating and supporting instructional conversations... The concept itself contains a paradox: “Instruction” and “conversation” appear contrary, the one implying authority and planning, the other equality and responsiveness. The task of teaching is to resolve this paradox. To most truly teach, one must converse; to truly converse is to teach.

Tharp, R.G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching, Learning, and Schooling in Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.p. 111)