The Influence of Error Correction on the Development of the English-Speaking Skill

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Abstract

In order to analyze the influence of error correction on the development of the English-speaking skill in the seventh-grade students at Sagrado Corazon School in Esmeraldas, a descriptive investigation was carried out. To do this research, thirty students of the seventh grade out of ninety and ten teachers out of eleven were selected as samples and target material using the Analysis and Synthesis, and the Hermeneutics methods. In addition, techniques such as an observation and a survey were applied to the samples mentioned before. The results revealed that error correction has a positive influence on the students taking into consideration they may improve their speaking skill and it may encourage them to communicate meaningful ideas in the target language. This research coincided with several investigations related to the error correction and its influence on the development of the English-speaking skill. That is why, it is concluded that error correction has a considerable influence in the development of the oral ability.

Keywords: Error Correction, Influence, Language Teaching, Speaking Skill, Strategies

Introduction

As English has become an international language, it is vital in many fields like Medicine, Technology, Sports, Entertainment, Communications, Media, and especially in Education. It is a lingua franca used mostly for many people to communicate with each other. Based on these facts, it is relevant students learn English in their schools and it is common they make mistakes when they are learning a second language. For those reasons, the influence of error correction on the development of the English-speaking skill is important to consider in the teaching learning process.

One of the concerns for all teachers is error correction. There are always advantages and disadvantages to make this activity in class. Students need to be corrected because they are acquiring a new language and it is normal to have errors especially with the productive skills like speaking and it is part of the learning experience. Learners also need to be encouraged to use the language actively. It is true that correcting students while they are trying their best to use the language might often discourage them. That is why teachers must select the appropriate time to correct errors creating a positive atmosphere as much as possible.

Correction affects student's confidence and has a great influence on a class environment. For students, being corrected constantly can be really de-motivating. There is a classic saying that is "You learn from your mistakes". Instead of being expected to produce error-free utterances in the foreign language, today's students are encouraged to communicate meaningful ideas in the target language. Teachers are reminded that people make errors when learning a new skill and they learn from their mistakes when they receive constructive and supportive feedback. According to Hendrickson (1978), correcting oral errors improves second language learners. There are language teachers who attempt to correct all of their students' errors, while others only focus on correcting errors that are directly related to the topic being addressed in a particular lesson, or errors that inhibit communication.

When somebody is learning another language, it is common to make mistakes. Children make it all the time when they are learning the mother tongue, everybody corrects them, and they do not care about it.

But school is another field: second language learning and student's age are important factors to consider. Some students feel bad when teachers interrupt the class to correct mistakes and they do not want to talk again in front of the class losing motivation and destroying the flow in class. Also, the problem of this investigation is: how does error correction influence on the development of the English-speaking skill in seventh grade students at Sagrado Corazon School in Esmeraldas?

This investigation is concerned to analyze the influence of error correction on the development of the English-speaking skill in seventh grade students at Sagrado Corazón School in Esmeraldas. The specific objectives refer to diagnose the most common errors students from 7th grade at Sagrado Corazón make in the oral ability to determine what strategies the teachers of English use to correct errors in class and which aspects of the speaking-skill improve applying those strategies in the 7th grade students at Sagrado Corazón.

The Socio-Cultural Approach to Language Teaching

According to the Vygotsky's theory (1931), children who are in the zone of proximal development for a particular task may almost perform the task independently, but not quite there yet. They need some help in order to perform the task successfully. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development underscores Vygotsky´s conviction that social influences, particularly getting instructions from someone, are meaningful on the cognitive development of children. In other words, this theory prioritizes the vital role of the learners' community to become competent in a language.

Definition of Mistake and Error

Researchers believe an-error is distinguished from a mistake. An error is a systematic deviation made by learners who are lack of knowledge of the correct rule of the target language. It shows a lack of language competence and it reflects a learner's current stage of L2 development. Therefore, a learner can hardly self correct an error. Whereas a mistake is caused by the lack of performance attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. A learner can self-correct it when a mistake is pointed out. However, some authors think that in the real context of language learning, special the classroom, it is not simple and necessary to distinguish errors and mistakes.

Error Correction Theories

According to Khansir and Pakdel (2018), error correction is a way to develop the competence of language learners in a second or foreign language. It can be used in order to attain conscious knowledge of a second or foreign language, and learning the languages rules. Another theory of error correction is in the book of Hendrickson (1978). He mentioned Brooks (1960) with an important theory "The principal method of avoiding error in language learning is to observe and practice the right model a sufficient number of times" (p. 58).

Types of Error Corrections

According to Budden (2008), there are three different forms of corrections. They are: self correction, peer correction and general correction. The first one is that corrections can be made by the students themselves. Students can often correct themselves when they realize they have made a mistake. Sometimes, the mistake is simply a 'slip' and they are aware of the correct version. Educators should give students chance, and time, to correct themselves. Often by just rising the eyebrows or repeating the mistake students will notice what teachers mean and backtrack to correct the error themselves. Some teachers create all sorts of hands signals to indicate the type of error. Pointing the back is a classic form to indicate students they should have used a past tense.

Students can also correct one another. Peer correction often helps to create a positive class atmosphere as students realize teachers are not the only source of error correction and they are able to learn a lot from

one another. Mosbah (2007) argued teachers are focused on phonological, grammatical, and lexical errors and came up with a model of corrective feedback types such as recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, clarification, repetition of error, and metalinguistic feedback. Also, error correction may be grouped as "self-" or "peer-repair" and "teacher-repair". General correction is, when a teacher corrects a whole class errors in an oral lesson and provides the appropriate pronunciation of the words or terms.

Common Errors in Oral English

Based on Mullighan (2001) most students are simply not aware of the level of their mistakes. Any approach to correct errors in phonology, intonation and stress, or lexis, morphology and syntax, must take into account the overall educational experience of the students, bearing in mind the need for sensitization and awareness-building, as well as practical solutions. There are some examples of common errors people make when they speak English.

Error number one: Use of double negative. We say - I don't know nothing, but the correct one is I don't know anything.

Error number two: Use of the wrong tense. We say - I didn't cried when I saw the movie. The correct one is I didn't cry when I saw the movie.

Error number three: Does v/s do. We say - Why does they bother you a lot? The correct form is - Why do they bother you a lot?

Causes of Oral Errors

Touchie (1986) stated there are mainly two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source is interference from the native language (L1) while the second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. The native language of learners plays a significant role in learning a second language. Errors due to the influence of the native language are called interlingual errors. Interlingual errors are also called transfer or interference errors. The view that the native language plays a mostly negative role was emphasized as early as the forties and tile fifties by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957). Although recently researchers tend to minimize interlingual errors and emphasize intralingual and developmental errorsDulay and Burt (1974), negative transfer or interference is still acknowledged as an important factor in second language learning Jordens (1977); Kellerman (1979); Touchie (1986). Intralingual and developmental errors are due to the difficulty of the second/target language. Another study made by Zublin (2011) stated the influence of learners" age, level of proficiency, and learning style lead them to react differently to error correction. To prevent students, feel misled and confused, teachers should avoid over-correction providing positive affective feedback, reduce the tension caused by error correction, and encourage all their students to improve their works.

The Influence of Oral Errors

Teaching oral competence is a challenge for teachers in the area of languages. The reason could be that in the majority of cases students do not have an opportunity to practice their new language out of the English class (Bañuelos, 2016). Communicative activities are an essential component in the EFL classroom that engage learners in understanding, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language (Nunan, 1995). These activities need to be conducted in a pleasant and supportive classroom environment in order to keep students motivated (Dörnyei, 2001). For the reasons mentioned before, error correction activities could affect the normal flow of the students in class.

The Role of Teachers in Correcting Errors

Based on a study by Carranza (2007), there is a controversy regarding the best ways to handle errors of students. There are language teachers who attempt to correct all of their students' errors, while others only

focus on correcting errors that are directly related to the topic being addressed in a particular lesson, or errors that inhibit communication. Forbes, Poparad & Mc Bride (2012) stated "Teachers who observe, encourage and teach self-correcting behavior create opportunities in their classroom for their students to develop effective [learning] processes" (p.570).

Another study for error correction was done by Tedick and de Gortari (1998) who offer four general suggestions for teachers. They are:

- Consider the context: Before educators plan systematic error correction practice, it is vital to consider the context in which student language use and errors occur because students in the early stages of cognitive development and language acquisition need to be encouraged to produce language that communicates meaning.

- Become aware of your current practices: Immersion teachers can benefit from taking the time to find out how they currently address student errors. Ask a colleague or classroom aide to observe your class while focusing specifically on your feedback techniques or audio records several of your lessons and reflect on the recording.

- Practice a variety of feedback techniques: Good teachers understand that one size does not fit all. Individual learners may well differ in terms of the particular error correction technique most appropriate for their unique language development needs.

- Focus on the learner: It is important to let the learner self-correct. As teachers, often feel an urge to rush in with the correct response before students have had enough time to process the information. Let us provide them the appropriate time and cues for the learner to self-repair.

Corder (1973) argued that studying student's errors also has immediate practical applications for foreign language teachers: Errors provide feedback; they tell the teachers something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus has not been adequate learned or taught and need further attention.

Definitions of English-Speaking Skill

English club site defines speaking as the delivery of language through the mouth. It is probably the language skill that most language learners wish to perfect as soon as possible. It used to be the only language skill that was difficult to practice online. This is no longer the case. English learners can practice speaking online using voice or video chat and services like Skype. They can also record and upload their voice for other people to listen to. Speaking can be formal or informal: Informal speaking is typically used with family and friends, or people you know well. Formal speaking occurs in business or academic situations, or when people meet for the first time.

"Along the history of foreign language teaching and learning, speaking has always been considered as the most essential skill to be mastered for several reasons. First, approaches and methods for teaching speaking have long been major focuses of language teaching researchers and conferences. Besides, a huge number of conversation and other speaking course books, audios and videos are continuously published. In addition, many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. They define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire", (Nazara, 2011 p. 30).

The Importance of Accuracy and Fluency in English-Speaking Development

According to Budden (2008), it is better if before teachers begin an activity, bear in mind whether they are concentrating on accuracy or fluency. For a class discussion for example, fluency would be

appropriate. The important thing is that students are expressing themselves and thinking on their feet. However, if students have had time to prepare a role-play and are then going to perform it, teachers may want to encourage accuracy. They must be clear of the aims of the task and make sure students are aware of what it is expected from them. Avoid presenting an activity as a fluency task and then pick them up on every single mistake.

Some investigations have been done before about the error correction process. One of them is the impact of immediate and delayed error correction on EFL students Oral Production by Rahimi (2012) that stated the importance of errors and their correction has never been ignored by teachers of second languages as well as practitioners in first language acquisition. On the contrary, there is a fact that over-correction or poor correction techniques can be demotivating learners and, especially when oral performance is focused, may lead to reluctant speakers who may never try out a new language or even to speak at all. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of when to correct learners' errors so that learners' speaking abilities will promote without damaging their confidence.

Other meaningful study about error correction is titled Error Correction in Oral Classroom English Teaching by Jing, Xiadong, and Yu (2016) which affirms that language error occurs in the process of learning English. When meeting the students' error, a teacher should find the causes of the errors. It usually finds some unbelievable errors which occur in students' spoken English, because students are not able to master the whole knowledge that teacher introduced. They must go through a long process to master the whole knowledge. Thus, teachers should use the right way to correct these errors of their students.

There is a study about error correction made by Coskun (2010) which states that the issue of oral error correction should be approached from a historical perspective to see the progress made so far. Traditionally, when the audio-lingual approach to teach foreign languages was popular among English teaching professionals, errors were seen as something to be avoided. However, today the contemporary research seems to agree on the fact that rather than expecting students to produce error-free sentences, students were encouraged to communicate in the target language and making errors is a natural part of second language acquisition.

Based on Budden research (2008), there are three different forms of corrections. They are: self correction, peer correction and general correction. Learners are able to correct themselves when they realize they have made a mistake. Peer correction occurs when classroom partners may correct each other. Finally, general correction is about when teacher writes all errors students make in an oral lesson and at the end of it, the educator provides the correct pronunciation of the words or terms.

The ZPD (Zone of the Proximal Development) Vygotsky (1931) refers to the learner's ability to successfully complete tasks with the assistance of more capable other people, and for this reason it is often discussed in relation to assisted or scaffold learning. The creation of ZPDs involves assistance with the cognitive structuring of learning tasks and sensitivity to the learner's current capabilities.

Method

For this research about the influence of error correction in the development of the English speaking skills, it was necessary to apply several methods as qualitative, quantitative, Analysis and Synthesis, and Hermeneutics. The Qualitative method helped to support, analyze and justify the great influence of error correction on the development of the English–speaking skill through concepts and theories. The Quantitative method was used to express in graphs how error correction has an impact on the English–speaking development. Furthermore, analysis was applied to make a deep study of the nature of error correction and determine essential features of this process. Synthesis was useful to explain the different factors which are involved in the error correction process making an overall view with advantages and

disadvantages of this phenomenon. The Hermeneutics method helped to make interpretation and provide a better understanding of the results.

In addition, it was useful details from books, articles, journals, and the Internet to get clear ideas of this phenomenon. Another important aspect was to select the school to develop this investigation. The chosen educational institution was Sagrado Corazón Primary section. This school is one of the representative institutions in Esmeraldas which has a Catholic education over 50 years with more than two thousand students and more than three hundred teachers. The population in seventh grade are ninety students about eleven and twelve years old with fifties female students and forties male learners approximately and the sample was thirty students. The population of teachers was eleven and the chosen sample for this study was ten teachers of English who worked in the Primary section. All of the participants in the sample were selected intentionally since they are in the same schedule with the researchers.

This investigation obtained the manner to state teachers develop error correction may have an influence on student's English speaking skill. The techniques applied for this research were Observation and Survey. The observation was used to collect information about error correction in the classroom, for this reason, eight lessons were observed for fifteen days in February 2020. In addition, a five questions survey was used in order to find out information from students and teachers. A questionnaire was applied in this investigation which consisted of five open questions and one close. Another useful instrument applied was the observation guide. The whole information collected through this research was processed by using the manual percentage method. To show the gotten Outcomes, the Microsoft Excel program was used.

Results

Regarding the influence of error correction on the development of the English– speaking skill (Figure 1), the results revealed that the highest percentage that is 67% of teachers answered there is much influence of error correction on the development of oral ability.
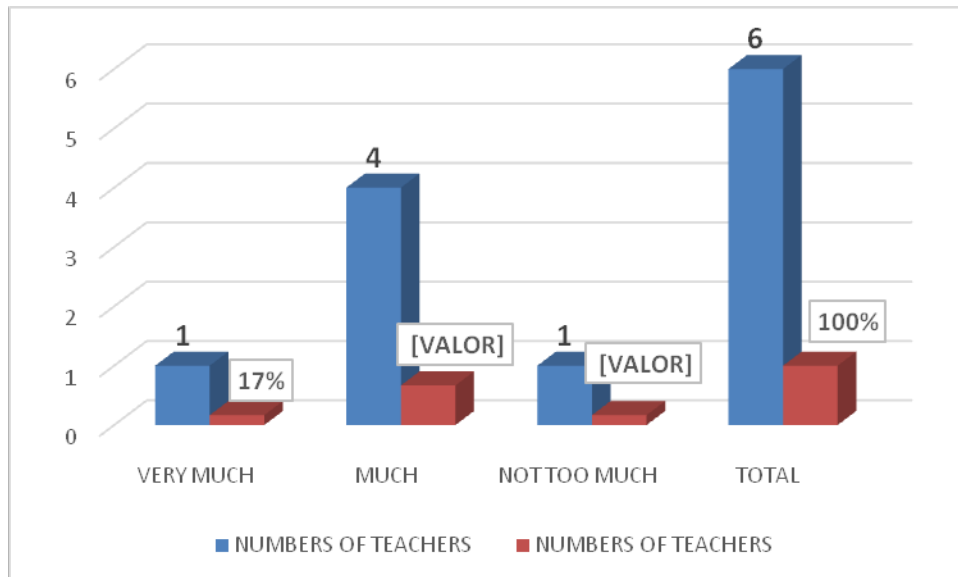

Figure 1. Influence of error correction

Source: Survey applied to teachers

In respect to the most common errors students make in the oral ability (Figure 2), the results showed that the highest percentage which is 38% is for the weak stress of M. That is why the majority of students confuse the sound of m with n. Besides, there was an equal percentage for the different pronunciation of **a**

and mispronunciation of **h**. In the case of pronunciation of **a**, this problem occurs taking into consideration in L1 (Spanish) there is one form to pronounce the letter **a** and this causes interference at the moment to pronounce words in English with this sound. On the other hand, there are two forms to pronounce the letter h, in L2: with the sound of j (jota) in Spanish like in **horse** and with no sound as in Spanish too like **hour.** The lowest percentage was for the sound of c, which is similar in L1 and L2 to pronounce like **casa** and **coast.**
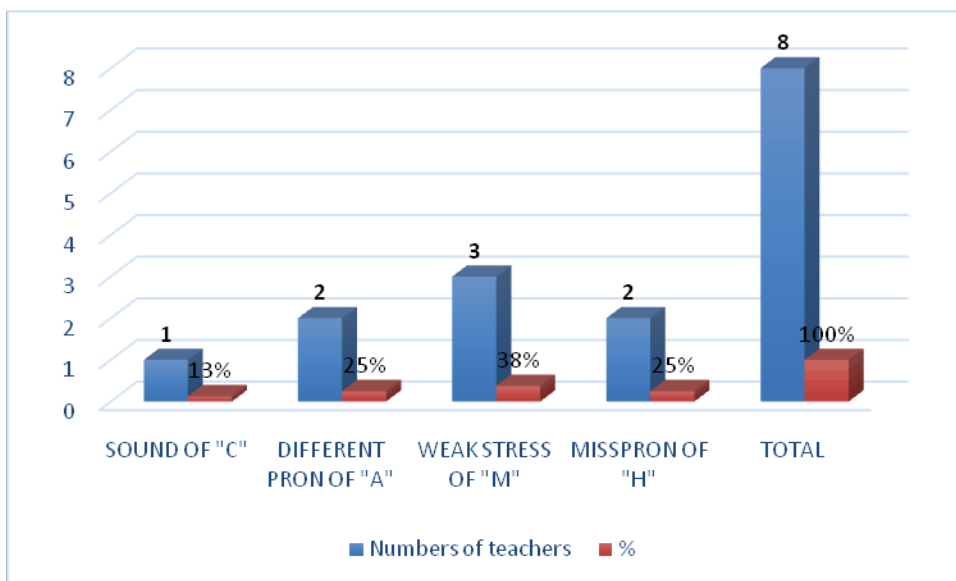

Figure 2. Frequent errors student make when they speak

Source: Observation made to the students

Concerning strategies teachers apply in class to make error correction (figure 3), the results told that the highest percentage was for general correction which is when educators take notes of all spoken errors and make feedback pronouncing correctly the terms. Furthermore, there was a similar percentage for peer and teacher correction.
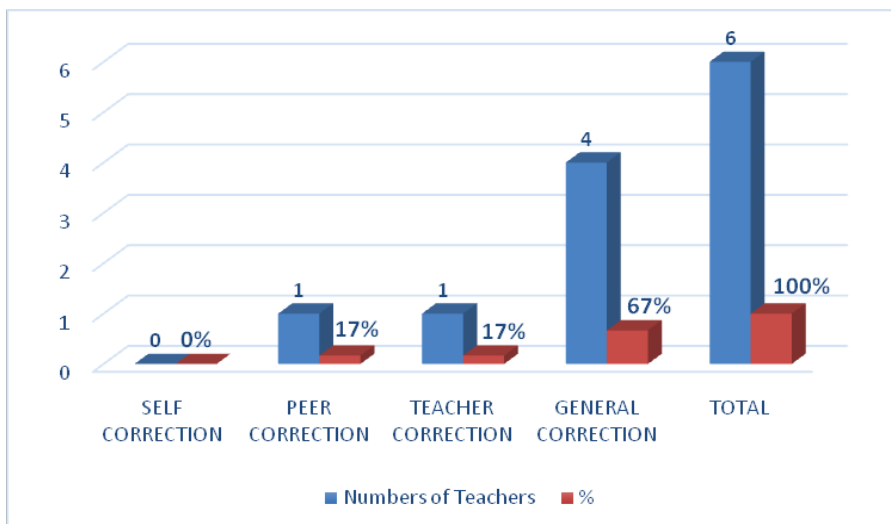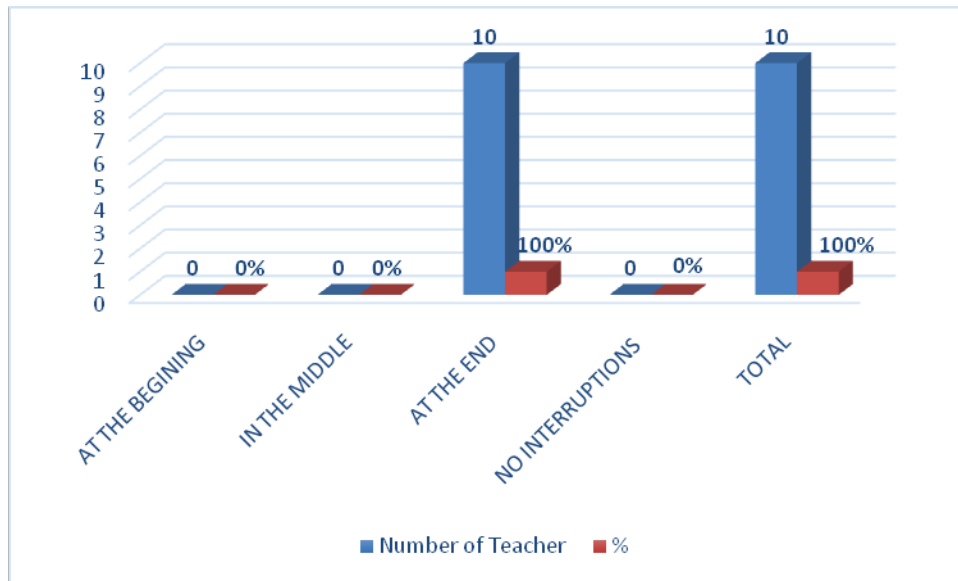
Figure 3. Strategies to make error correction

Source: Survey applied to teachers

Referring to the best moment of the lesson which is better for error correction (Figure 4), the results disclosed that the best one is at the end of it. They stated that at the end, learners are able to express their thoughts and opinions with no interruptions which affect the fluency.

Figure 4. Moment of the lesson to make error correction

Source: Survey applied to teachers

Relating to the frequency teachers take notes of errors (Figure 5), that are relevant to improve the English-speaking skill, the outcomes showed 50 % of observed teachers sometimes apply this activity as a meaningful form to develop the oral ability.
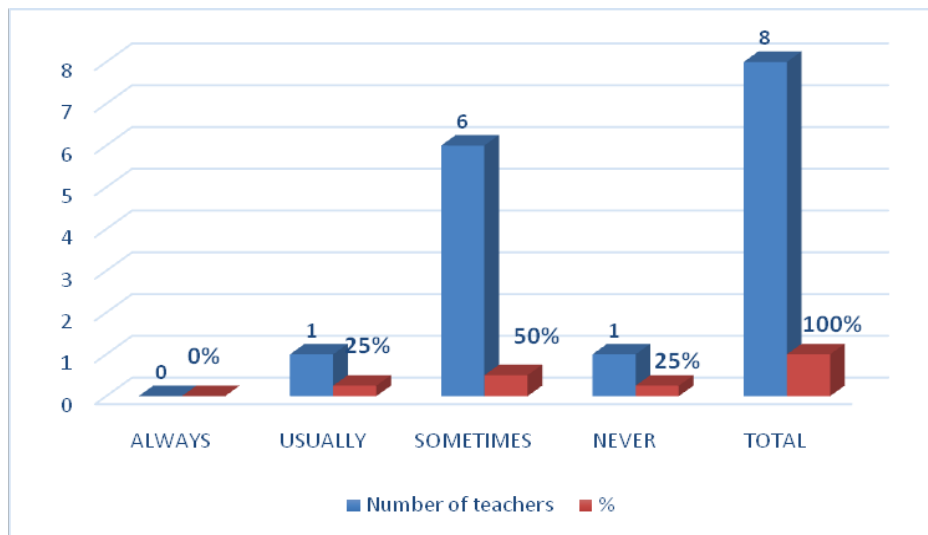

Figure 5 Notes about relevant errors to improve English-speaking skill

Source: Observation made to the teachers

Discussion

Error-correction process could be a positive or negative experience for learners. It is better if it is positive and meaningful for them. The success of this activity depends entirely on the teacher. The techniques applied by educators to make error correction will make the difference between a positive and negative process. There were some investigations to collect information about this topic (error correction and its influence).

One of the results of the present study revealed that error correction has a great influence on the speaking-skill development as a research made by Coskun (2010) stated that students should be encouraged and motivated to communicate in the target language and making errors is a natural part of second language acquisition. Most of the interviewed teachers believed error correction process may have an impact (positive or negative) according to the teachers' error correction activities. Besides, educators must realize that the error correction process plays an important role to increase and develop the English-speaking production.

The outcomes about the most common errors student make in oral ability that is the pronunciation of the letter m, agreed with a study done by Rahimi (2012) which concluded that errors have never been ignored by teachers to avoid misunderstandings and fossilization. Moreover, the research made by Jing, Xiadong, and Yu (2016) affirms that language error occurs in the process of learning English and the teacher should find the causes of the errors. It usually finds some errors which occur in students' spoken English, because they are not able to master the whole knowledge that teacher introduced at once. Therefore, teachers should use the appropriate way and time to correct these errors.

Another study that is in line about mispronunciation with the sound of **m**, was done by Khansir (2013). He pointed that errors are evidence of learners' strategies of acquiring the language. That means, it is common to make errors and they are a proof of the language acquisition as the results showed. They confuse the sound of m instead of n. These errors demonstrate students are learning and acquire the target language.

The theory done by Lev Vygotsky (1931) and his concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) regarding to the learning process of children, first with the help of teachers then, learners are able to work alone, is agree with the outcomes about teachers take note of relevant errors, and design the corresponding feedback, it improves students oral ability. Also, the outcomes showed the moment of the lesson to make error correction is at the end of it to avoid interrupting student's performance. Later, learners will realize and remember, as a guide, the correct pronunciation of the words by themselves.

Based on the results, general correction proposed by Budden (2008) is the best form to correct errors in class making a helpful feedback which will be meaningful for learners as the outcomes revealed.

Conclusions

In this research it was analyzed in depth the great influence error correction process has on the development of the English-speaking skill since learners are able to improve it through correct strategies educators must apply in class.

Through this investigation it was found that the most common error students make in oral ability is the weak stress of the letter m due to there is a similar pronunciation with the letter n. This misunderstanding could affect the adequate development of the speaking skill.

This study has revealed that general correction is one of the most useful strategies applied by teachers, which shows it is a common and helpful tool to apply in class to increase the oral ability in students.

Taking notes of the relevant errors as a form of error correction procedure, build on the development of the English-speaking skill and as a result, learners might have more self-confidence when they use the language orally.

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