

The Author's Comments on Attitudes Toward Error Correction

- **Power Hierarchy:** Power hierarchies may in some circumstances be necessary, productive and fully compatible with good human relationships. In the classroom, the fact that the teacher is an authority with the power to assess and correct student errors undeniably gives him or her a position of power. It is important to be aware of this in order to be careful not to exploit such a position.
- **Potentially Humiliating:** The issue here is not whether assessment humiliates, but if there is or is not such a potential. As with the previous item, this is a question of awareness: we need to be aware that we have the power to humiliate a student in order to take care to not do so!
- **Correction may Demoralize:** It is true that a lot of corrective feedback with no compensating praise may result in demoralization and even antagonize; however, too little may lead to frustration or even irritation on the part of students. Most students expect the teacher to correct them as part of the normal classroom process.
- **Notice Things that are Right:** Many teachers simply do not think of drawing attention to students getting things right. It is seen as a sort of default situation, not needing to be noticed. But surely getting it right should not be taken for granted: a student who produces an accurate bit of language deserves to be noticed and praised.
- **Correcting each other:** It is true that students do not really like being corrected by one another. This is not so much because of embarrassment or distress, but because they do not rely on one another to provide the appropriate correction and prefer to get it from the teacher. In some situations, however, helping each other get things right can be a positive experience for all.
- **Public Correction:** In general, it is important to provide oral corrective feedback publicly, in order for the whole class to benefit. But obviously it is essential for the teacher to provide such feedback in a clearly objective and supportive way, making it clear that the criticism is aimed at the mistake, not at the student personally.