

Mistakes Made by a Group of Albanian Students of English during their Classroom Oral Interactions

Arburim Iseni, PhD.

Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language and Literature, State University of Tetova, Macedonia
E-mail: arburim.iseni@unite.edu.mk

Abstract

In oral interactions, if the main aim is to communicate, then errors mustn't be corrected exhaustively, otherwise the communication flow will be broken. In other words, if the message is understood, only the errors that constitute an impediment to the effectiveness of communication should be corrected. Oral interaction in the classroom is very important, because sometimes it is the only opportunity for students to use the foreign language. Thus being the case, teachers will have to plan activities that enable students to practice their communicative intentions applied to different contexts. When a student starts learning a foreign language, he/she already possesses some rules in his/her unconscious. Those rules are used naturally in our mother tongue. However, in a foreign language, this is an artificial process, requiring an abstraction from our native language and/or culture. Moreover, the knowledge of other languages may lead students to make wrong inferences. Also, one must not forget that written language implies an organization different from that of spoken language. In writing, logic and coherence are essential for communication, whereas in speaking, this may compensate the eventual gaps with paralanguage, which renders communication much more efficient. As teachers, we very often forget that students' only chance to communicate in a foreign language is inside the classroom. Outside it, they tend to use the foreign language to listen to songs, to play computer games, and sometimes in chat-rooms.

Keywords: mistakes, errors, classroom oral interactions, FLL, recasts, Albanian students, etc.

Introduction

S.Pit Corder (1973) as regards mistakes that learners make, points out that "When attention is drawn to the mistake, he may make a further mistake in trying to correct himself or does not always recognize the mistake. The majority of learners' errors are linguistically different from those made by a native speaker". (p. 256). According to Brown (2007) "a mistake is simply a slip of the tongue." (pp.257-259). A mistake happens when students fail to perform their competence, that is, random performance slip caused by the lack of attention, stress, fatigue, indecision, carelessness, excitement. The fact is that all students experience the phenomenon of slips of the tongue when they are tired, excited, confused or distracted in some way. Perhaps, if in doubt, the teacher should need the advice of Lynch (1997), "the best answer to the question of when to intervene in learner talk is: as late as possible". (pp. 317-325) Brown (1994) examining the effect of personality factors in language acquisition, claims that anybody learning a language is aware that "second language learning actually necessitates the making of mistakes". (p.140) In their willingness to communicate in the foreign language, students don't speak either that language or their native one: the final output is a hybrid language, a mixture of two linguistic systems. Thus being the case, error production is an inevitable but natural process. When detecting an error in production the teacher is faced with the consideration of when to correct the fault, in other words whether to treat the error immediately, in one of the above ways, or to delay treatment until a more appropriate moment.

The 'opportune' moment will depend on a number of factors, the most significant being the type of language activity that the student is involved in when the error is committed. An exhaustive correction can inhibit students, especially the shy ones. On the other hand, not correcting students' errors can lead to their fossilization. This linguistic phenomenon occurs in a student's language production when various erroneous features may be detected in what is otherwise a reasonably fluent command of the language.

Fossilization may be manifested by the imposition of an L1 accent onto the target language or the frequent observation of syntactic or lexical errors in L2 production. This relatively permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person's second language competence is known as fossilization but should be regarded as a normal and natural stage for most students. As said before, errors should be corrected, even though teachers should promote *self-correction* or *peer correction*, instead of an exhaustive correction by the teacher. Nevertheless, teachers must pay attention to correction strategies, as classes are very heterogeneous: what is good for one class may not work with another. As far as the pertinence of error correction is concerned, Schmidt and Frota (1986) suggest that, "just as interrupting L2 dialogue in the classroom to repair an error is influential feedback, so is allowing errors to go uncorrected because students may assume that the spoken L2 is accurate." (pp. 237-326) Related to this issue, Rivers (1981) suggests that "People are more likely to continue a conversation when other people agree than when they disagree. The student who is continually corrected by the

teacher for every little mistake will withdraw from the unequal contest”. (p. 226) Among corrective strategies *recasts* are the most popular ones, because they provide immediate results. There are arguments in favor and against the correction of all errors. On the one hand, error correction enables students to distinguish between what is correct from what is wrong. From this perspective fossilization can be reduced. On the other hand, correcting everything may cut the communication flow, thus inhibiting students (Ancker, 2000).

Feedback as recasts or clarifications is important to develop the communicative competence. Students’ uptake exhibits their intent of working with the received feedback (Bargiela, 2003). Some authors, however, defend that recasts do not usually lead to uptake, especially in oral production (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). There are, in addition, certain advantages to using recast. According to Loewen (2007) “they are relatively implicit and unobtrusive and thus do not generally interrupt the flow of communication.” (p. 3) On the other hand with elicitation the teacher does not give the correct form so the students are involved in deeper mental processing and thus may have a greater impact on learning although they may not have previous knowledge of the structure or word required no amount of prompting will help.

Generally speaking, at a threshold level, students produce interlingual errors, because they are unable to correct themselves, adopting an insensitive attitude towards correction. In the researcher’s opinion, this kind of error should be corrected in such a way as not to prevent the flow in communication. When students are talking in a foreign language, they are making an effort to express themselves and that is why teachers must not only correct their errors but also reinforce students’ success through positive feedback. However, when the student hesitates in the production of the L2 long enough to show inability to continue, or has made a mistake in pronunciation or structure which hinders comprehension or is clearly not conveying the meaning intended, the teacher may apply appropriate correction techniques in line with the strategies mentioned above. These gentle incursions by the teacher if used sensitively need not break up the flow of intended communication and would serve as natural conversation in that the teacher is joining the activity as just one participant more. In this event the correction may be applied as soon as the error is deemed to be a barrier to the communicative activity continuing. Rivers (1981) suggests that “For consistent errors within the group which impede communication (incorrect verb forms, tenses, misuse of articles, pronouns, mispronunciation of phonemes which a native speaker would find unacceptable or misleading) the teacher should make unobtrusive notes, and the points should be explained at the end of the activity”. (p. 126) Thus we can appreciate that the teacher’s intuition and the students’ feedback are both crucial in deciding when the appropriate moment to introduce error correction should occur. As from the researcher’s experience, it is known that some students may have an aversion to not being corrected before their peers. When postponing error correction the teacher is able to display the typical errors committed during the activity without signaling the author of these. In this way the students are not exposed to a loss of face before the rest of the group. Indeed as Littlewood (1983) points out “When a learner has been concentrating on the communication of meaning, it is unlikely that he will remember what specific language forms he produced. It is also unlikely that a ritual correction of these forms will benefit his future performance”. (p. 55) The practice of post-activity correction brings with it various benefits. Firstly, in postponing error correction the teacher is able to permit the students to use various communicative strategies without overt guidance from the teacher. The student will have to try out alternative forms and structures if it becomes apparent that he is not getting his message across to his interlocutors. Once the teacher has decided that an error in the production of the L2 has been committed, then he or she must decide how to bring the student’s attention to this. As it is seen, the teacher must be clear as to how, when and by whom the errors is to be corrected. The normal, non-EFL teaching speaker of English tends to judge a foreigner’s knowledge of the English language by the number and sort of mistakes he makes. The layman probably assesses a foreigner’s ability to speak English by how haltingly he speaks this language and by how good his pronunciation is. He tends to equate a poor pronunciation with a general lack of knowledge of the language and that a halting speech is confined to those who do not know the language well; however these specific judgments may be revised after a longer exposure to the foreigner’s speech. There is, however, a danger inherent in the teacher paying too much attention to students’ errors. Whilst errors do indeed reveal a system at work, the EFL teacher can become so preoccupied with noticing errors that correct utterances in the foreign language go unnoticed. Care must be taken to reinforce, in a positive way, the production of clear, free communication. The ideal situation is for the student to realize that he or she has made a mistake in production and to correct the mistake himself. In this way the teacher’s intervention is seen as a positive act and not as a reprimand. In order to permit the student to reflect on the mistake, time must be allowed for thought and the teacher must manage the situation carefully so that sufficient time is given to the student. When it is evident that the student is not able to correct his or her own mistake then the teacher must decide whether to invite the rest of the group to contribute to correcting the mistake. If the rest of the group is unable to produce the correct form then it is left to the teacher to supply this information. Obviously, when working with large groups of students, it is impossible to cater for the preferences of each individual student and the teacher will have to assess the wishes of the majority in determining a response to the need for error correction, but when working

with smaller groups the teacher may adapt the response to the preference of each student. Thus, for this issue a small group of twelve students was chosen and their responses were adapted into different categories of mistakes that were remarked from them in their interviews. During the selection of the student's written works and their correction, interviews with them, and other assignments, it can be easily noticed that there are quite a lot of words that belong to different parts of speech which do not contribute to the correct meaning and clarity of their composition sentences. The most frequent words that caused difficulties for the Albanian students as regards parts of speech were: *prepositions, nouns, articles, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.*

2. Mistakes in the use of prepositions

Usually many students when they have to wrestle with certain prepositions they are confused. As a matter of fact, even when they understand one version of the preposition, the next version or example remains unknown to them. In researcher's drills and experience, all of the twelve selected students were aware while interviewing them that the preposition *about*, means *around* (in Albanian: *përreth*). Thus, "They were talking about you" in Albanian: "Ata flisnin rreth teje" is obvious to everybody. But the following example: "We walked about the town" was clear only to St.1 and St.4. They understood that this example meant: "We walked all around the town" (In Albanian: *Shëtitnim nëpër qytet.*) However, only St.6 tried to catch the meaning of the idiom: "To beat about the bush" while the other students took literally the meaning, mentioning the "bush" as an obstacle, student 6 almost got the point, saying that this idiom means *to do something indirectly*. Nonetheless, the right meaning of this idiom is *not to come straight to the point*. (In Albanian: *Të mos përmendet çështja drejtpërsëdrejti*) as in: "I wish you would tell me what you want and not beat about the bush", (In Albanian: *Dëshiroj të më thuash troç, e jo t'i biesh rreth e rrotull*). The preposition *above* in Albanian means: *sipër, lartë, mbi, përmbi*. So, the sentence: "The aeroplane is flying above our heads" (In Albanian: *Aeroplani po fluturon mbi kokat tona*), was clear to all students.

However, the following sentence with an idiom such as: "He finds it difficult to keep his head above water" was not so easy to understand. Student 7 tried to interpret it as: "He is in troubles." While St.12 understood it as: "He is endangered." However, its meaning is: "to keep safe", "to manage to exist" and "to survive". With the preposition *above* there were further misunderstandings. The following sentence: "I don't know why he should be so much above himself" was translated literally. When the researcher explained to the group of selected students that in this case, "to be above oneself" means *to be self-conceited or give oneself airs*, then St.1 interpreted the above mentioned idiom in this way: "S'di ç'i duhet atij t'i rris mendt", while St.5 interprets it in this way: "S'di pse duhet të krekoset." Of course, both were equivalent translations. In this clause: "He is at work" all the students understood it correctly, which in Albanian it is interpreted as: "Ai është në punë". However, the following clause: "What are you at?" caused confusion. St.3 thought that the meaning of it was "Where are you?" while St.5 and St.7 believed it was "What's your job?" Only St.10, who had attended a short course of grammar managed to interpret it "What are you doing?" Then, none of the twelve selected students knew that the idiom "They are always at loggerheads" meant "They are always in a state of hostility" (In Albanian: "Ata grinden përherë.") Next, the preposition *between* is often used to denote *a place, a time, an order*, etc. But, the meaning of the idiom: "Between two fires" was familiar to St.3, St.5 and St.10 as "Attacked on both sides" (In Albanian: "I sulmuar nga të dyja anët.") However, the idiomatic phrase: "Between the devil and the deep blue sea" was interpreted as "to be in awkward situation" by St.1, while the right meaning is very close: "No escape possible" (*S'ka rrugëdalje, s'ka mundësi*). Last but not least, the following example: "Between the cup and the lip" surprised all of them; while St.2 translated it as "Having a tea", and student 8 as "Having a coffee", the real meaning of this idiom is "Before a thing is accomplished." There were new surprises in dealing with some other uses of prepositions. For instance, the preposition "against" is used for: *facing, opposing to, contrast, comparison, collision*, etc. For example: "I saw him over against the church" (it means: *opposite the church*). This example was clear to almost everybody. In the meantime, when these selected students were asked to interpret the following sentence: "She ran up against him at the theatre", only two students gave the right answers, St.4 and St.5. They interpreted it as: "She met him at the theatre", while all other students thought that it meant "She quarreled with him" Students have fewer dilemmas with this sentence: "He saved money against a rainy day." In this case a metaphor "rainy day" instead of being interpreted as: "difficult time" was literally interpreted by almost all of them, except by St.7, who interpreted it in a correct way: "He saved money in preparation for hard times" (In Albanian: "Ai kurseu para të bardha për ditë të zeza") It goes without saying that the preposition *by* means *near, close, to, at, at hand*, etc. (In Albanian it is translated: *afer, pranë, me, nëpër, sipas, nga, etj*). In their discussions, three students: St.4, St.8 and St.9, the idiom "by all means" interpreted: "Me çdo mjet" while the others caught the right meaning: *certainly*. (In Albanian: *patjetër, në çdo mënyrë*) After this example, all students knew that "By no means" meant, *not at all, certainly not* (In Albanian: *kurrësesi*.) But, the idiom: "By heart" when used alone it was not clear to them and they interpreted it "me gjithë zemër" However, when it was used in the following sentence: "He learnt everything by heart", then it was clear to St.10, who interpreted it as: "He learnt everything very well." Afterwards, the researcher argued out

and discussed with students the use of the preposition *for*, which is usually used for *a benefit, favor, end, aim, wish, distance, time, etc.*, when discussing the sentence: “*Please, do it for my sake*” the students did not have difficulties to catch the meaning of it. Such a sentence “*He would not say anything for fear of hurting him*” was clear only to *St.7* who mentioned the word *cause*. In Albanian the translation was: “*Ai nuk tha kurrjë për shkak se kishte frikë të mos e lëndonte.*”

It was not so easy to understand the use of this preposition in this sentence: “*For all his learning, he is rather stupid.*” There was a wrong interpretation by *St.2* “*He was learnt and rather stupid*” while *St.10* interpreted it in a correct way with phrases, “*in spite of*”, “*in respect to*” or as he interpreted it into Albanian “*Përkundër dijes së madhe që kishte, ai ishte mjaft i marrë.*” The use of the preposition *from* seems rather easy, because it means: *rest, apart, prohibition, origin, source, difference*. Although the following sentence confused them: “*He gets his looks from his father*” many of them interpreted it like this: “*Ai merr shikime nga i ati*”. Only two students, *St.4* and *St.7* were not wrong. They interpreted it correctly: “*Ai i përngjan babait të vet*”.

Apart from this, a couple of selected students were bewildered and surprised with this sentence: “*I don’t know him from Adam.*” They got the wrong impression and interpreted it as: “*Nuk e njoh atë nga Adami.*” So, they didn’t catch the point. However, *St.1*, *St.4* and *St.10* understood it and interpreted it as: “*Unë nuk e dalloj atë nga Adami.*” Frankly speaking, the preposition *in* has a large variety of uses in English. Depending on the word order it can change its meaning. However, in our study, students were taken by surprise when it appeared in this sentence: “*I didn’t think he had it in him.*” Unfortunately, students were not able to guess its meaning. Then, when the researcher mentioned words “*capacity*” and “*ability*”, *St.5* got the point and interpreted it as: “*I didn’t think that he was capable of doing it*” (In Albanian: *Nuk mendoja se atij i shkonte dorësh ta bënte atë.*) Another sentence with a little surprise for students was the following: “*He spoke in my defense.*” Students, in general, interpreted it as: “*Ai më mbrojti*”, but *St.6* had another version: “*Ai foli në favorin tim.*” The preposition *of* is used for *source* or *origin*, i.e., “*He is of royal blood.*” This sentence was interpreted by one group of students as: “*Ai ka prejardhje mbretërore*” whereas by another group was interpreted as: “*Ai ka gjak mbretëror*”. Likewise, when tackling the following sentence: “*He often comes here of an evening*” *St.2*, *St.7*, *St.10* and *St.12* interpreted it as: “*Ai shpesh vjen këtu natën*” while other students, *St.4*, *St.6* and *St.11* added the word *time* “*Ai shpeshherë vjen këtu në kohën e mbrëmjes.*” Then students, *St.1*, *St.3*, *St.8* and *St.9* added another version, the word: *during*. For example: “*Ai vjen këtu shpeshherë gjatë natës.*” While all students were familiar that the preposition *on* is used for *time*, i.e., “*He will come on Sunday*” they were not completely sure how to interpret this sentence: “*They advanced on the town.*” According to many students, its meaning in Albanian was: “*Ata shkuan në qytet.*” However, *St.7* interpreted it better: “*Ata iu afruan qytetit.*” The following sentence in which *on* is used bewildered the students: “*I will tell you on the quiet.*” All students, except *St.5*, interpreted it as: “*Unë do t’ju tregoj atë në qetësi.*” Whereas *St.5* added the expression “*when we are alone*”, so he interpreted it as: “*I will tell you when we are alone*” or in Albanian: “*Unë do t’ju tregoj atë kur të jemi vetë.*” Finally, *St.7* and *St.9* were able to interpret the following sentence correctly: “*He lives on writing*” (In Albanian: *Jeton nga të shkruarit*) which shows a dependence. Usually the preposition *to* is used for *movements, progress, change, etc.* It was not so difficult to understand this preposition when it was used for starting an action: “*Let us get to work*” (In Albanian: *T’i përvishemi punës*). But, this sentence was not easy to interpret: “*To my horror, the man was dead.*” The literally interpretation by the majority was: “*Për tmerrin tim, njeriu kishte vdekur.*” However, *St.1* and *St.7* interpreted it more adequately: “*U tmerrova, kur e pashë se njeriu kishte vdekur.*” As an assignment to see where students omit prepositions, while interviewing, the researcher asked them straightway to interpret some sentences from Albanian into English having the prepositions to use. For example, the sentence in Albanian: “*Sa pagove për librin?*” *St.4*, *St.5* and *St.8* interpreted this into English incorrectly, as: “*How much did you pay the book?*” whereas only *St.3* gave the correct interpretation for it, as follows: “*How much did you pay for the book?*” The reason why *St.4*, *St.5* and *St.8* omitted the preposition *for* is that they had no information that ‘*a person can pay another person*’ He or she can also pay *a bill, an account, or a subscription*. He/she pays for a thing that he or she buys. Later on, they were asked to interpret the following sentence from Albanian into English, as follows: “*Të lutem ma përkujto atë më vonë*” *St.1*, *St.2*, *St.3*, *St.7* and *St.10* interpreted it into English, as follows: “*Please remind me that later.*” This was interpreted wrongly because of the mother tongue interference. The correct version of interpretation was given from *St.4*, *St.5*, *St.6*, *St.8* and *St.12*, as follows: “*Please remind me of that later.*” Another preposition that was omitted from the students was the preposition *with*. For example, the researcher gave to his students the following sentence to interpret from Albanian into English, “*Shoku im ndau librin e tij me mua.*” Only *St.9* interpreted it correctly by using the preposition *with*, as follows: “*My friend shared his book with me*” whereas other students interpreted it as follows: “*My friend shared me his book.*”

Also, students omitted the preposition *for* when it is about the use of the word *wait* in the sentence. In this regard, they were given the following sentence to interpret from Albanian into English: “*Do të pres te kinemaja.*” Only *St.4*, *St.7*, *St.9* and *St.10* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: “*I’ll wait you at the cinema.*” This omission is because of the mother tongue interference. Whereas other students seemed to know the prepositional

verbs in English much better, and they gave a correct interpretation using the preposition *for*., e.g: “*I’ll wait for you at the cinema.*” Another sentence that confused the researcher’s students while interpreting it was the sentence: “*Do t’i shkruaj asaj nesër.*” Almost all the students got confused while interpreting it and ten of them omitted the preposition *to*. Only *St.2* and *St.11* interpreted it correctly by using the preposition *to*, as follows: “*I’ll write to her tomorrow,*” whereas other students interpreted it as follows: “*I’ll write her tomorrow.*” Teachers should inform students that the preposition *to* is omitted only when the direct object of the verb *write* is expressed. Another assignment that researcher’s students were given was to detect cases when they unnecessarily use some words with prepositions. This assignment was also based on the interview. The researcher interviewed his students by asking them to interpret straightway the following ten sentences that he thought might give them a hard time. He started with the first sentence: “*Të lutem përgjigju në pyetjen time.*” Only *St.4*, *St.6* and *St.9* could interpret it correctly, as follows: “*Please answer my question.*” Whereas *St.1*, *St.2*, *St.3*, *St.5*, *St.7*, *St.8*, *St.10*, *St.11* and *St.12* unnecessarily added the preposition ‘*to*’ to this sentence, for example: “*Please answer to my question.*” During our classes, the researcher informed his students that when the word is used as a noun, it takes the preposition ‘*to*’, whereas when it is used with the verb there is no need for a preposition. Afterwards, students were given the following sentence to interpret into English: “*Mos iu afro asaj shtëpie!*” Only *St.2*, *St.6* and *St.12* could interpret it correctly, as follows: “*Don’t approach that house!*” whereas other students gave the following interpretation: “*Don’t approach to that house!*” The third sentence that the researcher gave them was: “*E pyeta arsimtarin për atë çështje.*” Many students guessed it except *St.9*, *St.11* and *St.12* who gave the wrong interpretation. Their interpretation was “*I asked to the teacher about it*” whereas other students interpreted the sentence correctly as “*I asked the teacher about it.*”

The fourth sentence given to the students was the following: “*Libri përmban pesë kapituj.*” All the students interpreted it wrongly by adding the preposition ‘*of*’ to it unnecessarily, except *St.7* and *St.9* who interpreted it correctly, as follows: “*The book comprises five chapters.*” *St.9* gave another version of interpretation for this sentence which we can consider as a correct interpretation: “*The book is comprised of five chapters.*” The fifth sentence was “*Ne hyrëm në klasë.*” *St.1*, *St.4* and *St.6* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: “*We entered into the classroom.*” The other students interpreted it correctly knowing that one can enter into a conversation, a debate, or a discussion but not into a classroom. Their version was the following: “*We entered the classroom.*” The sixth sentence that the researcher gave to his students to interpret into English was the following: “*Ylli u largua nga Britania javën e kaluar.*” Half of the students interpreted it correctly by not adding a preposition ‘*from*’ to this sentence. Their correct version was the following: “*Ylli left England last week.*” Whereas other half number of the students interviewed interpreted it, as follows: “*Ylli left from England last week.*” The seventh sentence that was given to the students looked like this: “*Ne arritëm herët në shkollë.*” Only *St.6*, *St.9* and *St.11* interpreted it correctly, as follows: “*We reached the school early.*” Whereas two versions of interpretations were given by the rest of the students, for example *St.1*, *St.3*, *St.7* and *St.12* gave this version of interpretation by adding the unnecessary preposition ‘*to*’, as follows: “*We reached to the school early.*” Whereas *St.2*, *St.4*, *St.5*, *St.8* and *St.10* gave another version of interpretation by adding the unnecessary preposition ‘*at*’ to it, for example: “*We reached at the school early.*” The eighth sentence which was chosen from the researcher for his students to interpret was the following: “*A i ngjanë ajo babait të saj?*” There were many versions of interpretation given to this sentence. One group of students interpreted it correctly and these students were *St.2*, *St.3*, *St.5* and *St.7*. Their version of interpretation into English was the following: “*Does she resemble her father?*” Another group of students gave incorrect version of interpretation by adding the preposition ‘*to*’. These students were *St.1*, *St.4*, *St.8*, *St.9*, *St.10* and *St.11*. Their sentence looked like this: “*Does she resemble to her father?*” In the third group of students were only two, *St.6* and *St.12*, who gave another version to this sentence by using the word *look like* instead of the word *resemble* and also adding wrongly the preposition ‘*to*’ for example: “*Does she look like to her father?*” The word *look like* in this version of interpretation from the *St.6* and *St.12* is not wrong but it is used more in informal situations although it has a similar meaning to the word *resemble*. The ninth sentence that was given to the students to interpret also caused confusion to them. From this interpretation, three versions were received, two of which were wrong. The correct version of the sentence: “*Toka sillet rreth diellit*” given by *St.2*, *St.5*, *St.6* and *St.12* was “*The Earth goes round the Sun,*” whereas *St.1*, *St.4*, *St.8*, *St.10* gave an incorrect interpretation by adding the preposition ‘*of*’ to it, for example: “*The Earth goes round of the Sun.*” It is interesting that two students from another group, *St.3* and *St.11* gave the word *around* instead of the word *round* which is similar in meaning and use, and it can be considered a correct one, but they made another mistake by adding the preposition ‘*of*’, the same as the other group of students. Their interpretation into English looks like this: “*The Earth goes around of the Sun.*”

Finally, the tenth sentence that was given to these students to interpret from Albanian into English was the following: “*I thash të vij menjëherë.*” Even to this sentence were given more than one version of interpretations. For example, *St.1*, *St.2* and *St.5* managed to interpret this sentence correctly into English, as follows: “*I told him to come at once.*” Whereas *St.3*, *St.4*, *St.7* and *St.11* interpreted this sentence wrongly by

adding preposition 'to' in front of the *objective pronoun*, as follows: "I told to him to come at once." Three other students, *St.6, St.8, St.9* and *St.12*, gave this version of interpretation: "I told him to come immediately." The confusion here is with the verb in infinitive because it is spelled with *came* and not with *come* and the word *immediately* which doesn't cause any problem since its meaning is similar with the phrase *at once*. During the students' parser the researcher concluded that each of them have different language acquisition capacity. Thus, some students very quickly acquired the topics and definitions of the English language and were very clear and accurate in their speaking, whereas other students had more difficulties and language deficiencies. Prepositions often confused by the students were as follows: preposition 'to' confused with 'at'; 'in' with 'at'; 'on' with 'at'; 'for' with 'at'; 'among' with 'between' and vice-versa; 'beside' with 'besides'; 'with' with 'by'; 'by' with 'from'; 'of' with 'from'; 'about' with 'for'; 'for' with 'since'; 'since' with 'from'; 'in' with 'after'; 'within' with 'in'; etc. As regards preposition 'to' confused with 'at', we gave our students the following sentence to interpret from Albanian into English: "Ne vijmë në shkollë çdo mëngjes." *St.1, St.2, St.4, St.5, St.6* and *St.12* interpreted it wrongly into English, as follows: "We come at school every morning" whereas *St.3, St.7, St.8, St.9, St.10* and *St.11* interpreted it correctly as follows: "We come to school every morning." Also, students confused preposition 'to' with 'at' and they were given the following sentence to interpret from Albanian into English: "Dikush po qëndron tek dera." *St.3, St.4, St.6* and *St.9* wrongly interpreted this sentence into English as follows: "Someone is standing to the door." Whereas, *St.1, St.2, St.5, St.7, St.8, St.10, St.11* and *St.12* interpreted it correctly in this way: "Someone is standing at the door." It seems that our students have forgotten the rule the researcher taught that preposition 'to' is used to express a motion from one place to another, whereas 'at' is used to denote position. Another confusion that our students had, was when they had to use preposition 'in'. They often have confused this preposition with preposition 'at'. This was purely because of the mother tongue interference. For example, the researcher gave them to interpret the following sentence from Albanian into English: "Lumi ka banesë në Paris." *St.1, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.9*, and *St.11* interpreted it correctly as follows: "Lumi has a flat in Paris" whereas *St.2, St.7, St.8, St.10* and *St.12* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: "Lumi has a flat at Paris." Theoretically, the researcher's students knew that 'in' is used to describe the physical location of something as part of a larger thing or place, and preposition 'at' is used when we are talking about an address, a public place or building, but nevertheless there were a few students who made a mistake. The most frequent prepositions that these students confuse are prepositions of time 'on', 'at' and 'in'. For example, students often confuse 'on' with 'at', as follows: "Xhaxhai im do të arrijë të shtunën." Only a couple of students, *St.7* and *St.9* interpreted it correctly into English, as follows: "My uncle will arrive on Saturday" whereas *St.1, St.2, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.8, St.10, St.11* and *St.12* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: "My uncle will arrive at Saturday." Another sentence where these students confused the same pair of prepositions was the following: "Unë zakonisht zgjohem në orën shtatë." *St.2, St.3, St.7* and *St.11* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: "I usually get up on seven o'clock" whereas students *St.1, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.8, St.9, St.10* and *St.12* interpreted it correctly, as follows: "I usually get up at seven o'clock."

Next, 'in' was confused with 'at' in a sentence like: "Ajo del për të shetitur gjatë pasdites." Only one student was confused while interpreting this sentence into English and that was student 3. This student interpreted this sentence into English as follows: "She goes for a walk at the afternoon." While the other 11 students interpreted this sentence correctly, as follows: "She goes for a walk in the afternoon." Knowing that these prepositions are the most common ones that confuse these students, the researcher has repeated to his students very often that preposition of time 'on' is used with the days of the week or month, 'at' is used with the exact time, and 'in' is used with a period of time. In spite of these rules, they still made mistakes. Another preposition that was confused by these students was 'for' with 'at' and vice versa. These two prepositions are used when we have to tell the sum, or how much something costs. *St.3, St.5, St.6, St.8*, and *St.11* interpreted wrongly the following sentence "Bleva një libër për 50 denarë" into English, as follows: "I bought a book at 50 denars." On the other hand, *St.1, St.2, St.4, St.7, St.9, St.10* and *St.12* interpreted this sentence into English correctly, as follows: "I bought a book for 50 denars." On the other hand, these students confused preposition 'at' with 'for', for example: "Nuk mund ta blej me atë çmim të lartë." *St.1, St.2, St.7, St.8, St.10* and *St.12* interpreted it wrongly into English, as follows: "I can't buy it for such a high price" whereas *St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.9* and *St.11* interpreted it correctly, as follows: "I can't buy it at such a high price." These students made such mistakes maybe because they didn't remember that preposition 'for' is used if the actual sum is mentioned, whereas preposition 'at' is used if the actual sum isn't given.

Another preposition that was confused from the students was preposition 'among' with 'between' and vice versa. The researcher gave the following sentence to his students to interpret into English, as follows: "Ndane mollën të tre më mes veti." *St.1, St.3, St.5, St.6, St.8, St.9, St.10* and *St.12* interpreted it wrongly, as follows: "Divide the apple between you three." Whereas, *St.2, St.4, St.7* and *St.11* interpreted it correctly, as follows: "Divide the apple among you three." On the other hand, preposition 'between' was confused with 'among'. In order to get this our students were given the following sentence to interpret into English: "Kishte një rrahje në mes të dy

djelmohave.” *St.9, St.11* and *St.12* interpreted this sentence wrongly into English, as follows: “*There was a fight among two boys.*” Whereas *St.1, St.2, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.7, St.8* and *St.10* gave the correct interpretation, as follows: “*There was a fight between two boys.*” Although these students knew that ‘*between*’ is used for two only and ‘*among*’ is used for more than two, nevertheless, they still confused these prepositions. Furthermore, preposition ‘*beside*’ was confused with ‘*besides*’, as in the following sentence: “*Gëzimi qëndronte pranë meje.*” Most students were confused with this sentence. *St.1, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.7, St.8, St.9, St.11* and *St.12* used it wrongly, as follows: “*Gëzim was standing just besides me.*” Whereas two students used this preposition correctly, as follows: “*Gëzim was standing just beside me.*” Later on, our students also confused preposition ‘*with*’ with ‘*by*’ in the following sentence: “*Njeriu e vrau zogun me pushkë.*” *St.1, St.6, St.7, St.9* and *St.10* interpreted it wrongly into English, as follows: “*The man shot the bird by a gun*” whereas *St.2, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.8, St.11* and *St.12* interpreted it correctly, as follows: “*The man shot the bird with the gun.*” Thus, although these students knew from their lectures that ‘*with*’ is used when someone wants to show the means or the instrument with which the action is done, whereas preposition ‘*by*’ denotes the doer of the action, for example: “*The bird was shot by the man.*” Only the following phrases take preposition ‘*by*’ and not ‘*with*’, for example: *by phone, by hand, by post, by one’s watch, by the hour, by the dozen, by the metre, etc.*

Another preposition that was confused by the students was ‘*by*’, which was confused with ‘*from*’. For example, our students were given the following sentence to interpret “*Shpresa u ndëshkua nga babai i saj.*” Only *St.2, St.7* and *St.9* interpreted it correctly, as follows: “*Shpresa was punished by her father.*” Other students, like *St.1, St.3, St.4, St.5, St.6, St.8, St.10, St.11,* and *St.12* couldn’t give the right preposition to this sentence when they interpreted it. Their wrong version to this sentence was as follows: “*Shpresa was punished from her father.*” Students were taught to use preposition ‘*by*’ (not ‘*from*’) after the passive form to show the doer of the action. But, they still made a mistake when they had to use these two prepositions in a sentence. Other prepositions that were confused were preposition ‘*of*’ confused with ‘*from*’, as follows: “*Ai është shumë më i gjatë nga gjithë djelmohat tjerë.*” Only *St.2* and *St.8* gave the correct interpretation using the preposition ‘*of*’, as follows: “*He’s the tallest of all the boys*” whereas the rest wrongly interpreted this sentence, as “*He’s the tallest from all the boys.*” Although students knew that adjectives and adverbs are preceded by the definite article ‘*the*’ and preposition ‘*of*’ or sometimes even with the preposition ‘*in*’, but not with the preposition ‘*from*’. This confusion was due to L1 interference. Students confused the preposition ‘*about*’ with ‘*for*’, as follows: “*Mësuesi foli rreth shprehive të këqija.*” Again, only three students, *St.1, St.5* and *St.9* interpreted this sentence using the correct preposition, as follows: “*The teacher spoke about bad habits.*” Whereas the other students, interpreted this sentence using the wrong preposition, as follows: “*The teacher spoke for bad habits.*” Students were also taught not to use preposition ‘*for*’ in the sense of ‘*about*’. The main use of preposition ‘*for*’ is to convey the idea of being in favor of. If we say that the teacher spoke for bad habits, it’s like saying that he or she spoke in favor of bad habits. Another preposition which was very frequently confused by these students was ‘*for*’ with ‘*since*’, as follows: “*Ajo ka jetuar këtu për dy vjet.*” Only *St.11* could use it correctly in a sentence while interpreting it, for example: “*She’s lived here for two years*” whereas other students used ‘*since*’ for ‘*for*’, as follows: “*She’s lived here since two years.*” These students were taught to place the preposition ‘*for*’ before words or phrases denoting a period of time, for example: *for three days, for six weeks, for two years, for a few minutes, for a long time.* Nevertheless, these students made mistakes. Subsequently, the students also confused ‘*since*’ with ‘*from*’, as follows: “*Ahmedi ka qenë i sëmurë që nga e premtdja e kaluar.*” Here the situation is much better. Here, *St.3, St.6, St.8, St.9* and *St.12* were able to use it correctly the preposition ‘*since*’, as follows: “*Ahmedi’s been ill since last Friday*” whereas *St.1, St.2, St.4, St.5, St.7, St.10* and *St.11* confused it with ‘*from*’, as follows: “*Ahmedi’s been ill from last Friday.*” Students were taught to place the preposition ‘*since*’ before words or phrases denoting a point in time, for example: *since Monday, since yesterday, since eight o’clock, since Christmas.* Whereas, when preposition ‘*since*’ is used, the verb is usually in *present perfect tense*, but it may be also in *the past perfect*, for example: “*I am glad to see Tom. I hadn’t seen him since last Christmas.*” Also, preposition ‘*from*’ can denote a point in time, but it must be followed by prepositions ‘*to*’ or ‘*till*’, for example: “*He works from eight o’clock till one o’clock without a break.*” Notwithstanding this, these students still made mistakes because of their L1 interference. When speaking of a period of time in the future preposition ‘*in*’ should be used and not preposition ‘*after*’. These students confused the preposition ‘*in*’ with preposition ‘*after*’, as follows: “*Mund të jem në gjendje të shkoj pas një jave.*” Only two students out of twelve selected could use correctly the preposition ‘*in*’. Thus, *St.1* and *St.9* used the preposition ‘*in*’ correctly, as follows: “*I may be able to go in a week*” whereas others remained, used it wrongly by confusing the preposition ‘*in*’ with the preposition ‘*after*’, as follows: “*I may be able to go after a week.*”

The last sentence which was given to these students during this interview was to interpret into English the following: “*Do të kthehem brenda një ore*” Here, they confused the preposition ‘*within*’ with ‘*in*’, as follows: “*I’ll come back in an hour*” which was wrong and only *St.8, St.9,* and *St.11* confused it, whereas other students used it correctly, as follows: “*I’ll come back within an hour.*” Students were told that the preposition ‘*in*’ means:

after the end of, whereas preposition 'within' means: before the end of.

Conclusions

The principle difference between a native speaker and a L2 learner is that the native speaker is usually better able to repair the mistakes which have been made. However, in oral utterances these corrections are important in the way that teachers are given the opportunity to answer students' doubts right away. The reason why Albanian students make mistakes as regards prepositions is because there is no equivalent translation for each preposition of English in their mother tongue. Rather, while speaking in English or translating from Albanian into English, they their most frequent mother tongue equivalent which is 'në' for many of the English prepositions. Sometimes teachers do not correct errors immediately to avoid interrupting the flow in communication. When they do, it can be done explicitly, through recasts, clarifications, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation or repetition. If the student is unwilling to try out his language for fear of making mistakes, then fluency will never be attained. Students must understand that they can only achieve fluency by making errors and learning how to deal with them competently. Mistakes are inevitable and many of them are most certainly due to the distinct relationship between the phonological system of oral communication and the graphic representation of written language. In order to make a progress in this direction, teacher must practice the corrective feedback which is always useful, especially where there is negotiation of form. This negotiation is much better than providing the correct form, as it stimulates the development of connections in students. Recasts, on the contrary, do not lead to self-repair, because learners just repeat the teachers' corrections. When language competence is concerned, many mistakes on prepositions were produced. Explicit rather than implicit corrective feedback was used and students were actively engaged in their self or peer correction. As we have seen from our long teaching experience, the teacher has a vital role to play in the treatment of errors. The teachers must make it clear to their students that even native speakers make mistakes in the forms of *mispronunciation*, *false starts*, *backtracking*, *stuttering*, etc. The teacher also needs to help students recognize that it is quite natural to make mistakes in production of the L2 as it is a normal part of communication. As we have seen, there are many factors to be taken into account when dealing with mistakes. Some of these factors are *linguistic considerations*, others are *affective* and *psychological*, and yet some others are simply of the desirability of correction or non correction. The teacher must therefore be sure of his or her strategies for remedial work in error correction and intuition and feedback from the students each play a very important role in shaping these strategies. The current EFL teacher is not concerned with simply correcting mistakes and errors as and when these are committed, but must decide on the *if*, *what*, *by whom*, *when* and *how much* aspects of the correction. Our study has shown clearly that EFL students at the State University of Tetova – Study Program of English Language and Literature, at least, welcome correction and believe that it is beneficial to their learning and that they learn from their mistakes and do not normally make the same mistakes again. The majority of them prefer to have their errors pointed out but to do their own correction which is in harmony with the research literature advocating self correction.

References

1. Ancker, W. Errors and Corrective Feedback: Updated Theory and Classroom Practice. English Teaching Forum, vol. 38, No 4, October 2000: pp. 20 – 24
2. Bargiela, M.M. (2003). "Teacher Feedback and Learners' Uptake", in *Revista Linguagemem (Dis)curso*, 4(1), Jul/Dez.
3. Brown, H.D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
4. Brown, H.D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Pearson Longman, New York.
5. Corder, S.P. (1973). *Introducing Applied Linguistics*, Penguin Education.
6. Iseni, A. (2010). Error Detection in the Albanian Speakers' English Writings. With Special Emphasis on Morphological Errors. *SUT Scientific Observer*, 1, 18- 25.
7. Iseni, A. (2011). Assessment, Testing and Correcting Students' Errors and Mistakes. *Language Testing in Asia*, 1, 160-90. A Springer Open Journal.
8. Littlewood, W. (1983). *Communicative Language Teaching – An Introduction*, Cambridge: C.U.P.
9. Loewen, S. (2007). Error correction in the second language classroom, *CLEAR 11(2)*, 1-5. Michigan: Michigan State University.
10. Lynch, T. Nudge, nudge: teacher interventions in task-based learner talk. *ELT J* (1997) 51 (4): 317-325 doi:10.1093/elt/51.4.317
11. Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms, in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 20, 37-66.
12. Rivers, W. (1981). *Teaching Foreign Language Skills*, University of Chicago Press.
13. Schmidt, R., & Frota, S.N. (1986). Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese. In R. R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second*

- language acquisition (pp. 237-326). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
14. Valero, L. A., et al. (2008). Teachers' attitudes towards correcting students' written errors and mistakes, in *Porta Linguarum*, 10, 21-30.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

