

PEER-CORRECTION: SUPPORT OR DISCOURAGEMENT?
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF PEER ERROR
TREATMENT FROM THE CORRECTEE'S PERSPECTIVE AT
SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY LEVELS

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Correcting your peers is like setting a trap for someone –
forgetting that you may as well find yourself in it.

Peer-correction is probably one of the most natural ways
of making your friends aware of their mistakes.

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at Adam Mickiewicz University

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in learner-centered approaches in foreign language teaching. Humanistic concepts, together with the idea of 'learner-centeredness', re-organized the teaching process, giving the student an opportunity to influence their learning to the highest possible degree. The student became the most prominent figure in the classroom, and, as it is assumed, quite reasonably I guess, a valid and reliable source of information for the teachers themselves.

Generally speaking, the idea for my investigation into the problem of peer-correction arose from the difficulties and affective hindrances I encountered while learning English. You may, of course, wonder about the relevance of my experience to the topic of this paper, but I can assure you that I have some. Throughout the nine years of my English instruction, both at secondary school and at university, my teachers and I tried to improve my language skills – with

some success, I think we can assume. For all those years, I was exposed to different error correction techniques, including peer correction, to execute the task. The memories from the classrooms and the negative (!) emotions generated by the techniques inspired me, in a way, to investigate the area of error treatment.

This psychologically-oriented paper is a compilation of some fragments of my MA thesis which dealt with several aspects of peer-correction as seen by a university student correctee, namely: its effectiveness, frequency of occurrence, anxiety created, student preferences, etc. and similar research I have quite recently conducted with a group of secondary school students. Here, however, I would like to focus *only* on humanistic and affective aspects of peer-correction.

1.1. Why a correctee?

As the title suggests, what especially interested me in my studies was the correctee's perception of peer-correction, i.e. his/her subjective views on the topic. In my opinion a correctee is the person most entitled to comment on peer-correction, particularly to criticize it, as, being the target of somebody else's critique or evaluation, he/she is the most active and involved participant of this type of error treatment. A correctee is usually exposed to classmates' comments (objective or not) that may threaten his/her self-esteem and psychological comfort. That is why it is important to be particularly sensitive to the correctee's feelings.

1.2. The purpose of the studies

The purpose of my studies was to find out how an adult and proficient second language learner feels about being corrected by fellow students, as compared with the feelings of a less proficient teenage secondary school student. Having distributed a questionnaire among a group of university students (AS=adult students) and a group of secondary school students (TS=teenage students), I collected a battery of reliable and up-to-date materials. Using this data, I will attempt to answer a few questions: (1) Is peer-correction supportive or discouraging in foreign language learning with reference to learners' psychology?; (2) How do foreign language learners feel about being corrected by their peers?; and (3) Do the AS and TS perceptions differ? If yes, how can the differences be justified?

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Subjects

Two hundred students were the subjects of this study – the first group was made up of 100 university students enrolled in the first- and second-year spoken General English courses at the School of English of Adam Mickiewicz University (AS group), and the second – 100 first- and second-grade students from several Poznań's secondary schools (TS group).

1.3.2. Procedure

The data for this study came from a questionnaire distributed among university students in mid-December 1994 and high school students in May 1997.

The Questionnaire

The author-designed 15-item *Oral Peer-Correction Students' Attitude Questionnaire* took approximately 20 minutes for students to complete. The questionnaire was designed to assess the attitudes and perceptions of university and high school students concerning peer-correction in their English classes. To complete this task, both "closed" and "open" question formats were used. On Question 1, students responded on a scale (0-1-2-3-4-5) evaluating the usefulness of peer-correction in the spoken General English/English classes (university students/secondary students, respectively). On Questions 2-4, students responded by choosing one option from a multiple choice answer. On Questions 5-10, students were asked to select from one of the following choices: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) No Opinion; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly Disagree. On Questions 11-13, students responded by choosing one of the two options, and then, by justifying their choices. Finally, on Questions 14 and 15, students responded on a scale (0-1-2-3-4-5) indicating their attitudes towards particular matters related to peer-correction.

2. The analysis

The Questionnaire

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire distribution consisted of two procedures. Firstly, I examined the data globally in order to determine the students' overall responses to every question. Secondly, I analyzed the students' answers and comments by grouping them into four larger units, each referring to a separate problem. The subjects of these blocks were as follows:

UNIT 1: The students' evaluation of peer-correction in terms of its effectiveness and frequency of occurrence.

Questions 1, 5 and 12.

UNIT 2: The students' evaluation of peer-correction in terms of stress and anxiety it causes.

Questions 2, 9, 11 and 15.

UNIT 3: Peer-correction with respect to affective and personal considerations.

Questions 3, 4, 7, 8 and 13.

UNIT 4: General students' attitudes towards the concept of correction, peer-correction in particular.

Questions 6, 10 and 14.

Below is a proportional summary of the students' answers (questions 11, 12 and 13 were descriptive and, therefore, explanations and comments are not included in the list). For the purpose of this paper, however, I would like to focus on UNITS 2 and 3 (questions 2; 3; 4; 7; 8; 9; 13; and 15) and analyze them in detail.¹

ORAL PEER-CORRECTION STUDENTS' ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of the following questions circle the answer that reflects your personal opinion about peer-correction.

1. How useful do you think peer-correction in the spoken General English class (for AS)/ English class (for TS) is:

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| a. | 0 | 6/0% |
| b. | 1 | 9/10% |
| c. | 2 | 19/16% |
| d. | 3 | 24/28% |
| e. | 4 | 28/28% |
| f. | 5 | 14/18% |

2. I feel that the use of peer-correction in the spoken General English class/ English class increases the level of anxiety in the classroom:

- | | | |
|----|------------|--------|
| a. | yes: | 16/18% |
| b. | sometimes: | 68/70% |
| c. | no: | 16/12% |

3. When I am corrected by my peers, I feel:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| a. | willing to accept the correction: | 23/5% |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------|
| b. | fairly willing: | 25/43% |
| c. | indifferent: | 18/20% |
| d. | angry: | 8/12% |
| e. | humiliated: | 6/10% |
| f. | embarrassed: | 15/10% |
| g. | other: | |

- | | | |
|--|----------------|------|
| | stupid: | 1/0% |
| | frustrated: | 2/0% |
| | uncomfortable: | 2/0% |

4. Peer-correction is something that:

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--------|
| a. | I enjoy: | 6/10% |
| b. | I am reluctant to accept: | 24/24% |
| c. | I benefit from: | 56/52% |
| d. | I do not find helpful at all: | 9/14% |
| e. | other: | |

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------|
| | I accept but I do not like: | 3/0% |
| | gets on my nerves: | 2/0% |

For each of the following statements decide whether you strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree, or strongly disagree and circle the appropriate choice.

5. Peer-correction is a commonly used practice during spoken General English classes/ English class.

- | strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1/0% | 24/70% | 14/18% | 58/12% | 3/0% |

6. The only correction I accept is one that comes from the teacher.

- | strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 4/14% | 28/22% | 5/8% | 57/46% | 6/10% |

7. Peer-correction makes me nervous and discourages me from participating in the classroom activities.

- | strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 10/4% | 21/20% | 19/24% | 40/42% | 10/10% |

8. It is my impression that I am ridiculed rather than peer-corrected.

- | strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1/0% | 18/24% | 20/26% | 55/40% | 6/10% |

9. I am an active participant in peer-correction.

- | strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 3/3% | 26/47% | 30/18% | 33/18% | 8/14% |

¹ The results of the two surveys are presented comparatively, the first number refers to the university students' responses (AS), the second refers to the secondary school subjects' responses (TS).

10. If I were a teacher, I would use peer-correction in my classroom.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| strongly agree | agree | no opinion | disagree | strongly disagree |
| 10/12% | 50/54% | 20/8% | 15/12% | 5/4% |

Read and answer (or complete) the following.

[For questions no. 11, 12, 13 choose one option and give as many reasons for your answer as you can think of.]

11. I correct my peers 50% (21 sometimes)/76%
(20 sometimes)
 I don't correct my peers (because...) 50/ 24%
12. Peer-correction is effective 60% 'yes'; 5% mixed feelings;
4% no opin./ 71% 'yes'; 8% no opin.
 isn't effective (because...) 25%/ 21%
13. I like being corrected by my peers 42% 'like'; 12% mixed feelings;
5% no opin./ 68% 'like'; 4 mixed
feelings
 dislike being corrected by my peers 41%/ 28%
 (because...)
14. Indicate your attitude towards peer-correction rating it from 5 (totally accept) to 0 (totally reject) in the following situations:
- a. with you as a corrector:
- | | |
|---|--------|
| 0 | 7/4% |
| 1 | 9/6% |
| 2 | 18/10% |
| 3 | 33/35% |
| 4 | 20/18% |
| 5 | 13/27% |
- b. with you as a correctee:
- | | |
|---|--------|
| 0 | 16/10% |
| 1 | 27/10% |
| 2 | 22/22% |
| 3 | 24/36% |
| 4 | 5/12% |
| 5 | 6/10% |

15. In which of the following is peer-correction most/ least stressful?
 [Rate them from 0 /not stressful at all/ to 5 /extremely stressful/.]

	0	1	2	3	4	5
class work	7/6%	12/12%	12/8%	30/16%	26/19%	13/39%
group work	20/35%	8/20%	31/20%	28/8%	12/10%	1/7%
pair work	45/41%	27/28%	13/15%	7/8%	7/6%	1/2%
individual presentation	6/10%	9/4%	7/15%	16/15%	17/17%	45/39%

2.1. Questions: 2, 9, 11, 15

This block of four questions encouraged the students to evaluate peer error treatment with reference to the amount of stress and anxiety it produces. A critical analysis of their answers and comments will undoubtedly contribute to the discussion about the psychological aspects of peer-correction in the two groups of learners.

Question 2.

I feel that the use of peer-correction in the spoken General English class/English class increases the level of anxiety in the classroom.	yes	sometimes	no
number of students	16/18	68/70	16/12

The results speak for themselves, given the balance between the number of 'yes' and 'no' answers, as well as the striking similarity between the AS and TS responses. But, all in all, the majority of the students in the two groups stated that peer-correction increased the level of anxiety – 16/18 learners claimed that the use of peer error treatment was always accompanied by anxiety, while 68/70 believed that only under certain circumstances could the use of such a form of error treatment be anxiety-provoking.

Question 9.

I am an active participant in peer-correction.	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
number of students	3/3	26/47	30/18	33/18	8/14

As far as the students' participation in error correction is concerned, some differences can be observed between the AS and TS responses. In the AS group, 29 of the subjects (3 strongly agree) declared their active involvement in peer error treatment; whereas, in the TS group, no fewer than 50 students (3 strongly

agree) said that they actively participated in peer-correction, which indicates their positive attitude towards this technique of error treatment.

Question 11.

I correct/don't correct my peers because...	I correct	I sometimes correct	I don't correct
number of students	29/56	21/20	50/24

What struck me most while analyzing the subjects' answers to this question was the fact that there is a totally reverse tendency in the positive and negative answers observed in the AS and TS responses. It seems logical to assume that the lack of correlation is a reflection of two opposing attitudes towards peer-correction shared by the group members. The AS are more hesitant and reluctant, not only to the concept of peer-correction, but also to its actual realization in the classroom. The TS, on the other hand, do not feel this kind of psychological bonds and mistrust. At this point it is also interesting to comment on the fact that, although the question made it clear to choose between two drastically contrasting options, a great number of students (in both groups) decided on the third possibility (which was not, in fact, included in the above question) i.e. 'I sometimes correct' – with the emphasis on the word "sometimes". That is why it is very difficult to clearly distinguish between the number of students that correct their classmates and those that correct 'only sometimes'. Some of the learners included the I-sometimes-correct proviso, while others did not. The fact that some of the I-correct answers lack the proviso may mean one of two things: students might have either fully agreed with the statement or, amongst those who agreed only partially, might have not included the proviso. The figures clearly show, however, that 50 students in the AS group decided on the 'I-don't correct' alternative (as compared with 24 students in the TS group), expressing, in this way, their passivity in peer-error treatment or maybe even their reluctance to it, which supports my previous claims.

Below, I present some of the students' arguments (printed without corrections) for either correcting or not correcting their classmates.

The AS group

I correct my peers because:

I cannot help it and I like it.

I want to share my knowledge if I know that it may help somebody.

I like to 'help' the teacher.

I believe that it is less stressful for them to be corrected by me than by the teacher.

I really enjoy it very much.

I want (in the most pleasant way) to make my peers pay attention to their own mistakes.

I think we learn in this way.

it comes naturally.

it helps both sides: for me it means that I have to be attentive and pick up errors other people make; and for the other side – those who make mistakes – correction should help them to be aware of their problems.

it helps me with my English.

it encourages them to work on their spoken language.

it revises my knowledge.

I feel that they want me to.

it is a way of increasing communication in the classroom,, as well as students' cooperation., it shows me that I also know English grammar and structures.

The TS group

I correct my peers because:

it shows me that I also know English grammar and structures.

it perfects my language.

I only whisper the right answers to test myself.

I think it is less stressful than the teacher's correction.

it improves my grade.

I have fun of it.

it is good for me.

I want to avoid making the same mistakes.

my friends can learn something from it – they won't make this mistake again.

the teacher asks us to do it.

they make mistakes which are very basic and we should not make them.

I want to help them get a better grade.

I want to show my friendly attitude towards them.

it's nice to know that I would not do this mistake myself.

The AS group

I don't correct my peers because:

I have an impression that they don't like it and they think I'm a big-headed creature.

I don't want to be cheeky.

it may confuse them.

it disturbs them from speaking.
 I'm not sure if I'm definitely right.
 correcting them is like setting a trap for someone – forgetting that you may as well find yourself in it.
 it embarrasses them (they may even feel humiliated).
 I don't like correcting people at all – even in every day life.
 my knowledge is not sufficient.
 it's the teacher's job and he/she will do it better.
 I don't want to be corrected by them.
 they may be angry at me.
 I don't like it.
 the teacher is usually faster.
 I feel embarrassed and ashamed.
 I hate being superior and make someone else's speech less important or valuable.
 I find it a bit rude.
 there is no such practice during our classes.

The TS group

I don't correct my peers because:

I'm not too good in English and it's the teacher's job to correct.
 they say what they want to say and it's not my business.
 I don't like when they correct me.
 it's not very friendly to correct somebody in front of others.
 I hate when somebody corrects me and I think that only the teacher has the right to do it.
 it makes them angry and nervous.
 I'm not sure if I'm right.
 I know what I feel when someone corrects me.

The 'I-correct' quotations listed above may be interpreted as showing more willingness for peer-correction amongst the TS group, although both the AS and TS groups correct their peers for similar educational or affective reasons.

Moreover, many AS and TS in the 'I-don't-correct' group stressed the fact that, although peer-correction might be useful, it is, first of all, very stressful. Stress involved in this activity applies both to the correctee and the corrector; the former being the target of the classmates' critique, the latter being uncertain if this critique is well-grounded and accurate.

Question 15.

In which of the following situations is peer-correction most/least stressful?	0 not stressful at all	1	2	3	4	5 extremely stressful
class work	7/6	12/12	12/8	30/16	26/19	13/39
group work	20/35	8/20	31/20	28/8	12/10	1/7
pair work	45/41	27/28	13/15	7/8	7/6	1/2
individual presentation	6/10	9/4	7/15	16/15	17/17	45/39

What is evident at a glance is the fact that it is pair work and group work that score lowest, which means that only here is it possible for the AS and TS groups to peer correct with the least negative influence on the correctee's psychological well-being. These two instances of peer-correction are characterized by a relaxed and favorable atmosphere. On the contrary, during individual presentations as well as class work, peer-correction is, as the numbers reveal, the most stressful instance of peer-error treatment for both student groups who, under these circumstances, regard it as a very anxiety-provoking procedure.

2.2. Questions: 3, 4, 7, 8 and 13

These questions were aimed at disclosing the subjects' judgments about peer-correction in terms of affective and personal considerations. In other words, they were focused on those feelings and impressions of the learners that most often accompanied peer-error treatment.

Question 3.

When I'm corrected by my peers, I feel:	number of students
willing to accept the correction	23/5
fairly willing	25/43
indifferent	18/20
angry	8/12
humiliated	6/10
embarrassed	15/10
other	(5)/0
stupid	1
frustrated	2
uncomfortable	2

What are the correctees' attitudes towards peer-error treatment at the very minute of correction? As indicated in the table, these feelings are very diverse, even clashing at times. It comes as no surprise that both the AS and TS perceptions of peer-correction are varied since all of them relate to individual

characteristics of the students. What is surprising, however, is the fact that almost 50% of the students in both groups declared their positive attitudes towards being corrected by their classmates (willing/ fairly willing to accept peer-correction). On the other hand, only 6 students in the AS and 10 in the TS groups (out of 100) confessed that peer-correction is a cause of their strong psychological discomfort, such as humiliation.

Question 4.

Peer-correction is something that:	number of students
I enjoy	6/10
I benefit from	56/24
I am reluctant to accept	24/52
I do not find helpful at all	9/14
other	(5)/0
I accept but I do not like	3
gets on my nerves	2

Here, the figures seem to confirm the numerical results obtained in *Question 3* (see above). Generally, as many as 65 AS and 62 TS stated their positive attitudes towards peer-correction (I enjoy; I benefit from; or I accept but I don't like). The helpfulness of this technique is what is most appreciated. On the other hand, a similar number of students in both groups 35 (AS) and 38 (TS) showed their reluctance, distrust, or irritation caused by this form of error treatment.

Question 7.

Peer-correction makes me nervous and discourages me from participating in the classroom activities.	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
number of students	10/4	21/20	19/24	40/42	10/10

The AS and TS responses to *Question 7* will undoubtedly be valid for further discussion because they contribute a great deal to determining if peer-correction acquires a supportive or discouraging value in the eyes of the correctees. As can be seen from this table, the overall tendency is that of disagreement with (AS 50%; TS 52%) or indifference to (AS 19%; TS 24%) the statement included in *Question 7*. This means that, on the whole, peer-correction neither makes students nervous nor discourages them from participating in the activities. It should be noted, however, that 31 AS and 24 TS agreed with the statement and, in this way, manifested their conviction of the deterring influence of peer-correction upon learners.

Question 8.

It is my impression that I am ridiculed rather than peer-corrected.	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree
number of students	1/0	18/24	20/26	55/40	6/10

As with the preceding question, this one also offers a lot of valid and reliable information as far as the actual correctee's attitude towards peer error treatment is concerned. It is striking that 62% of the subjects in the AS and 50% in the TS groups disagreed with the statement, believing that peer-correction is aimed at helping and guiding a correctee rather than 'making fun of him/her'. While 20 AS and 26 TS students could not define their impressions, 19 AS and 24 TS confessed that they had the feeling of being the target of classmates' ridicule and mockery.

Question 13.

I like/dislike being corrected by my peers because...	I like	mixed	on opinion	I dislike
number of students	42/68	12/4	5/0	41/28

Here again, as in *Question 11*, which was also descriptive, the subjects extended the range of possible answers adding two more options, namely 'I both like and dislike being corrected by my peers' and 'I have no opinion about it'. Generally speaking, student opinions in favor of and against peer-correction were almost balanced in the AS group (42 'likes' to 41 'dislikes') and contrasting in the TS group (68 'likes' to 28 'dislikes'), which means that there is a strong and clear discrepancy between the groups' responses which show a more positive attitude towards peer-correction in the TS group. This may have various psychological and affective premises. Most of the AS and TS subjects stressed the importance of the classroom atmosphere – its friendliness and relaxation. Some of them stated precisely that the most important factor in peer-correction is the corrector's attitude towards the correctee. Others claimed that the size of the group is most significant – the smaller the group, the less stressful and the more efficient the correction.

Listed below are some of the students' 'whys and wherefores' justifying their responses on *Question 13* (printed without corrections).

The AS group

I like being corrected by my peers because:

it is less stressful than being corrected by the teacher.
as every kind of correction, it is helpful.

it's probably one of the most natural ways of making your friends aware of their mistakes.

it stimulates me to work harder.

it gives a sense of competition.

it reminds me of my imperfections.

it makes me put more attention to what I'm saying.

it gives me an opportunity to correct them as well.

sometimes they grade me higher than the teacher does.

when I'm corrected I know that I'm listened to.

there are no consequences of it – no marks and so on.

it like a piece of advice given by friends – I don't feel I'm ridiculed.

The TS group

I like being corrected by my peers because:

my language will be better.

I want to be aware of my mistakes.

I'm better motivated to improve.

I remember my mistakes better – I know who corrected me and why.

they are my friends and they like me.

it doesn't worsen my grade.

I can compete with my friends.

because I enjoy correcting them too.

it makes me more careful about my language.

it improves participation – everybody is active.

The AS group

I like being corrected by my peers because:

I prefer being corrected by the teacher.

it discourages me from participation.

it makes me feel inferior.

I don't trust them.

I can't be sure if they are right or wrong.

it makes me nervous and embarrasses me.

I feel humiliated – as if I was making the same mistake all the time.

they seem to patronize me.

I feel ashamed of my pronunciation.

it makes me realize how many mistakes I make.

it is embarrassing – every one is looking at you as if you were a complete fool.

I'm not too much in love with myself but correction decreases my self-esteem – I think I'm too selfish.

it make me nervous and embarrassed.

I feel they mock me and laugh at me.

I want to be corrected by teachers.

I don't trust them.

I feel worse than my friends – they know what's correct and I don't.

I blush and feel awful.

they are evil and force me to feel bad.

To conclude, questions 3, 4, 7, 8 and 13 disclosed the subjects' attitudes towards peer-correction with reference to personal and affective factors. Not surprisingly, it turned out that there is a discrepancy in the students' affective judgments of peer-error treatment in both groups. Some of the subjects claimed to be 'open' to peer-correction, while others were not only unenthusiastic about it, but even reluctant or hostile towards it. A distinguishable group of the students, however, appreciated the profitability of this form of error treatment – a few of them even enjoyed it.

3. Summary of the results

The questionnaire, by investigating the perception of peer-correction by a correctee, was aimed at answering the question of a psychologically supportive or, on the contrary, the discouraging influence of peer-correction upon two types of learners: a mature and proficient foreign language student and a teenage intermediate foreign language learner, both of whom are exposed to foreign language instruction under classroom circumstances.

The main finding of the study in terms of classroom management rather than classroom psychology is that peer-correction is either completely absent from the AS lessons or rarely employed by their teachers, while TS are well acquainted with the technique as it is often used in the classroom. There is also not much diversity in the AS activities (whole-group work and individual presentations seem to be the only ones present in the lessons) and, as a result, the students have little chance to practice this type of oral correction, which accounts for their higher degree of passivity on the occasions when the technique does appear.

Theoretically, the majority of the AS and TS shared a positive attitude towards this particular form of error treatment. Their answers and comments appreciated the effectiveness of the use of peer-correction. Furthermore, as far as the questionnaire data is concerned, the AS and TS remarks on peer error treatment, as referred to anxiety and stress generation, revealed that only on occasion is peer-correction responsible for the increased level of nervousness and distress – especially when it is performed in unfavorable for a AS or TS correctee circumstances, such as individual speech deliveries or whole-class work. The

comments on the affective and personal influence of peer-correction upon the two groups of learners suggest, however, that it is not, by all means, indifferent to the students' psychological comfort. In both groups, peer-correction is, in fact, a cause of a wide variety of feelings ranging from acceptance to anger and humiliation (extreme cases). It should be noted, however, that on average, neither the AS nor TS were discouraged from participation by the use of peer error treatment. A large number of AS and TS expressed the opinion that peer-correction was not (or is not) accompanied by classmates' ridicule and mockery. It is worth mentioning, though, that the number of 'mocked' students was higher in the TS group. Finally, the subjects' assessment of peer-error treatment as a correction technique was mostly favorable – they found it useful and applicable in a foreign language classroom.

4. Implications

As revealed in the study, peer-error treatment, with reference to its psychological aspect, was perceived as both supportive and discouraging by the two groups of students depending on the circumstances, its actual execution in the classroom, and, most of all, the type of learner participating. The younger and less proficient students (TS) were less hesitant and more willing to take part in this activity. They openly stated that they like being corrected by their peers for a number of reasons. The adult learners, on the other hand, were less enthusiastic about peer-correction and more willing to avoid it rather than participate in it. What is characteristic for both groups, however, is the precision with which the AS and TS referred to the educational advantages and disadvantages of peer-correction, as well as the emotionally-marked side of the activity. They could accurately sketch the picture of the atmosphere in their classrooms and the relationship between students.

At this point, I would like to present some psychologically advantageous aspects of using peer-correction in the English lessons based on the AS and TS descriptive comments (questions 11 and 13). Many of the benefits listed below apply to peer-error treatment in general, i.e. its incorporation in almost any teaching-learning setting. However, there are some which are particularly related to the maturity of the students (the AS group). The term 'maturity', as it is used here, describes not only the biological development of the learners, but also their cognitive capacities, as well as their psychological complexity.

Affective Advantages

1. The students' motivation, as well as competitiveness increase. The learners are much more willing to contribute and engage in more spontaneous conversations. They get the impression of being the real 'subjects' of the teach-

ing-learning process who have their own personal and individual shares in classroom procedures.

2. The students' confidence and respect for each other increase. They are able to rely on their own knowledge, as well as trust the knowledge of their peers; they are less dependent on the teacher.
3. The students are offered the opportunity to practice speaking in front of a very critical and sensitive audience. Their self-confidence increases and 'coping' skills are strengthened.
4. The solidarity of the group develops and positive relations among the learners are created. Since the students find themselves in similar situations and share similar experience, they perceive themselves as each other's equals.
5. Tolerance and objectivity are developed. The flexibility of roles the students take on in peer-correction (i.e. a correctee or a corrector) increases their empathy for each other. In other words, they correct to help not to hurt.
6. Thanks to peer-correction, the learners 'hold the floor' more often; therefore, they are more responsible for themselves and their classmates in a purely linguistic, as well as in a psychological sense.

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