UNDERSTANDING THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHERS' THEORIES AND THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICES:
An investigation of teachers' attitudes towards error correction and their classroom error correcting behaviour.

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Introduction

The importance of teacher attitudes and their influence on teacher behaviour and the learning process is gradually being recognised by a number of teacher educators and educational researchers (Breen 1991, Burns 1990, Grotjahn 1991, Johnson 1994, Nunan 1990, Wright 1990). Teachers' attitudes, having been formed on the basis of previous teaching and learning experiences, prejudices and beliefs (Freeman & Richards 1993, Richards & Lockhart 1994), influence how teachers interpret new information, influence teachers' judgement and decision making which in turn influences what teachers say and do in classrooms. Particularly in the case of educational innovations where a new teaching method is introduced and a subsequent change in teaching practices and classroom role relationships is required, teachers' attitudes play a significant role in determining the success or failure of the innovation. If incompatibilities between the philosophy of the innovation and teachers' attitudes exists, then rejection or misimplementation of the innovation may ensue (Brindley & Hood 1990, Markee 1993). But are teachers expressed attitudes always reflected in their classroom practices? Do teachers always do what they say they do?

This paper reports the results of a comparison carried out between teachers' expressed attitudes towards error correction and their actual error correcting behaviour in the classroom. This comparison comprised part of a larger study (Karavas 1993) aimed at investigating the degree of implementation of a communicative learner-centred curriculum and accompanying series of textbooks developed for the first three years of Greek secondary education. The curriculum and textbooks were introduced in 1987 replacing a rigid structural curriculum and textbooks from foreign publishing companies which teachers chose according to their own judgement and preferences. Within the new textbooks, called Taskway English 1, 2, 3, the learners are expected to develop their linguistic repertoire, sociolinguistc skills and interactive strategies in order to express the meanings they wish to share. Students through the various activities are encouraged to discover knowledge, make choices and actively participate in the learning process. Teachers, within the teachers' guides, are urged to make learners the centre of attention by encouraging them to take initiatives and providing

learners with opportunities to practise authentic spontaneous communication in authentic contexts. Teachers are advised to be facilitators, guides, and co-communicators rather than transmitters of knowledge and evaluators of students' knowledge.

Acknowledging the fact that successful implementation of any innovation depends not only on the teachers' use of the innovation in the classroom but also on their understanding of and commitment to the underlying principles of the innovation, the 14 randomly selected secondary school English language teachers who took part in the study were not only observed (and their lessons recorded and transcribed) but their attitudes towards the principles of the communicative learner-centred approach were also elicited via an attitude scale, a questionnaire and interviews.

The analysis of teacher error correcting behaviour in the classroom was chosen as a focus of investigation because of the importance given to the judicial correction of learner error within the teachers' guides to the textbooks. Page 12 of the teachers' guide (Dendrinos 1985) clearly points out that "...the teacher must not intervene constantly at every error... the teachers' attitude must change. First of all, grammatical-syntactical errors which do not impede communication must not concern teachers to the degree that concerned them until now. The teacher's main aim is to ensure that the students understand the necessary expressions and can express the ones they wants" (translation from Greek). Moreover, the teachers' guides for the first and second year textbooks, give explicit guidelines to the teachers concerning the type of feedback each task in the book calls for. It was thus felt that the investigation of this issue, for which the teachers have been given clear guidance and information, would provide a reliable indication of whether the teachers are using the textbooks as intended by their authors. Teachers' error correcting practices were investigated through an analysis of lesson transcripts, while teachers' attitudes towards error correction were investigated through various questions in the attitude scale, questionnaire and interviews. The following sections of this paper will focus on the types of learner error identified in the 14 classrooms, the frequency of teacher reaction to learner error and the teachers' expressed attitudes towards error correction.

Definition of "error" and "error correction" employed in the study

For the purposes of this study, a learner error is any grammatical, phonological, syntactic or lexical deviation from the norms of a standard variety of English objectively identified in the speech of learners, any evident misconstrual of factual information, any violation of the rules of classroom discourse or behaviour, and any verbal or non-verbal behaviour that the teacher reacts to negatively or indicates that an improvement of student verbal or other behaviour is required (a similar definition of

learner error has been employed by Chaudron 1977, and Long 1977 in their study of teacher error correcting practices).

This "broad" definition of error was selected in an attempt to classify all learner errors whether linguistic, content or behavioural and whether or not they were reacted to by the teacher. This would allow for the examination of the percentage and types of errors teachers ignore, and the investigation of those student utterances and behaviour to which the teacher reacts negatively, yet are not in any way inappropriate or inaccurate (Fanselow 1977, Nystrom 1983, Walmsley 1980,1982). However, even with this seemingly straightforward definition of error it is acknowledged that for the identification of any error, the context of the utterance and the intent of the teacher is absolutely essential (Chaudron 1977).

It should be noted at this point, that no distinction is made in the analysis between errors (due to learners' developing and faulty interlanguage) and mistakes (errors of performance due to lack of attention, tiredness etc.) (Corder 1974).

As far as error correction is concerned, Chaudron's (1977) (and most commonly employed by researchers) definition of error correction was employed. According to Chaudron (ibid: 24), "a corrective reaction is any reaction by the teacher which transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of a student's behaviour or utterance". This conception of error correction encompasses those instances in which the teacher simply informs the learner of the fact of error (without pursuing correction further and by providing the correction him/herself) and those in which the teacher explicitly attempts to elicit a correct student response.

Error types employed in the study

Eight types of learner error were identified within the lesson transcripts. These are:

- Pronunciation errors
- Grammatical errors
- Syntax errors
- Content errors
- Discourse errors
- Behavioural errors
- Non-acceptance errors

Criteria for the identification of these error types as well as examples from the data for each error type can be found in the Appendix.

The classification and quantification of the various types of errors in the data was initially carried out in April 1992. As a means of establishing the reliability of the classification, errors were classified and quantified for a second time in September 1992. The correlation coefficient between the two sets of results was r=0.99.

Teachers' error correcting behaviour in the classroom

The error counts shown in Table 1 represent the total number of instances of error in the 14 classrooms. The total number of errors identified in the data is 742 (M=53 per lesson, SD=19.7). Errors appeared with differing frequencies in the 14 teachers' lessons; errors ranged from as low as 17 in C1's class to as high as 83 in KO2's class.

ERROR TYPE	FREQUENCY	%
Grammar	197	26.55
Pronunciation	103	13.88
Syntactical	10	1.35
Discourse	153	20.62
Lexical	45	6.06
Content	142	19.14
Behavioural	74	9.97
Non-acceptance	18	2.43
TOTAL	742	100

Table 1.: Frequency of 8 types of error identified in the 14 language classrooms

The most frequent type of error students made were grammatical errors (n=197), constituting 26.5% of the total number of errors, followed by discourse errors (20.6%) and content errors (19%). Pronunciation errors also figured frequently in student's speech (n=103, 13.8%), while syntactical errors were quite irregular (n=10). Behavioural errors were quite frequent (n=74, 10% of total errors), exemplifying the fact that teachers do not tolerate "improper" student behaviour. Non-acceptance errors, on the other hand, were infrequent (n=18), being absent from some teachers' classes.

The error correcting (and non-correcting) behaviour of the 14 teachers who participated in this study is shown in Table 2. It becomes evident from the table that all the teachers had the tendency to correct at least two thirds of their students' errors (Teacher K3, L3 and L2 correcting the least, 71%, 62.5% and 78% of the time respectively). Teacher P3 and C2 and G1 exhibit very high levels of correction, correcting almost all their students' errors (98%, 97% and 98% of student errors

respectively). Teachers do seem to adjust the frequency of their corrections to the level of their students: thus, first year teachers tend to correct the most (91.5% on average) followed by second year teachers (89.6% on average) and third year teachers (81.9% on average)

Teachers	1st year Teachers				2nd year Teachers						3rd year Teachers			
	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3
No.of errors	74	17	75	48	37	70	57	83	77	32	28	48	46	50
No.of err.corr.	63	14	72	47	33	68	52	79	60	27	20	30	45	46
% of err.corr.	85	82	96	98	89	97	91	95	78	84	71	62	98	92
No.of err.ignored	11	3	3	1	4	2	5	4	17	5	8	18	1	4
% of err.ignored	15	18	4	2	11	3	9	5	22	16	29	38	2	8

NB:Percentages have been rounded.

Table 2: Frequency and percentages of errors corrected and ignored by the 14 teachers in the study.

Teachers seem to differ greatly in the frequency with which they ignore errors: Half the teachers (D1, G1, C2, K2, KO2, P3 and S3) tend to ignore less than 10% of their student errors, while teachers K3 and L3 choose to ignore almost 1/3 of their students' errors.

The frequency with which teachers reacted (or not) to the various types of error identified in the data is shown in Table 3.

Error Type	Total No.	No.Correct.	% Corrected	No. Ignored	% Ignored
Pronounc.	103	68	66	35	34
Grammar	197	166	84	31	16
Syntax	10	5	50	5	50
Discourse	153	151	99	2	1
Lexical	45	40	89	5	11
Content	142	135	95	7	5
Behaviour.	74	73	99	1	1
Non-Accep.	18	18	100		

Table 3: Frequency of correction (and non-correction) of 8 types of error.

Teachers do not seem to have specific priorities when correcting student errors; grammar, discourse, lexical, content and behavioural errors are corrected with similar frequencies (ranging from 84% for grammar errors to 99% for discourse and behavioural). It is evident that teachers do not seem to favour "content" over "form"; their main tactic appears to be "when an error is made, correct it". Although there is a tendency for teachers to ignore more grammar errors (16%) than content errors (5%), this difference (11%) becomes insignificant in view of the fact that teachers are

(supposed to be) working with communicative materials in which "communication" errors are considered much more serious than linguistic ones. Finally, the frequency with which teachers interrupted students' utterances to correct their errors was also quantified. The results of this analysis is indicative of the extent to which teachers allowed spontaneous communicative interaction to take place in their classrooms. Table 4 shows the percentage of teacher interruptions.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3
No. of errors corrected	63	14	72	47	33	68	52	79	60	27	20	30	45	46
No. of error corrections	63	14	72	46	33	66	51	76	60	27	20	30	45	44
% of interruptions	20	0	25	37	33	51	35	35	37	37	26	31	58	39

NB: Percentages have been rounded.

Table 4: Frequency of teacher interruptions.

As can be seen from the table, teacher interruptions to correct learner errors tend to occur quite frequently in all 13 lessons (with the exception of teacher C1 who did not interrupt). All teachers regardless of student level tend to interrupt their students from 20% of the time (A1) up to 58% of the time (P3).

The results of the analysis of teacher error correcting practices have shown that teachers seem to exhibit rather high levels of error correction, correcting almost all types of learner error with similar frequencies. Despite the guidance and information in the teachers' guide that errors should be corrected selectively and that serious errors are those to do with appropriacy rather than linguistic accuracy, teachers tend to view all student errors as worthy of correction. In the following section the teachers' attitudes towards error correction as well as a comparison between their attitudes and their classroom behaviour will be presented.

Teachers' expressed attitudes towards error correction

Four statements in the attitude scale dealt with error correction. Statements 6 and 14 are favourable (i.e consonant with the principles of the communicative approach as advocated by the curriculum) while statements 1 and 10 are unfavourable. Table 5 shows teachers responses to these statements.

Seven teachers were consistent in responding to the statements regarding error correction; teachers C1, D1, A2, C2, K3, S3, L3 were, on the whole, favourable (i.e. they agreed with the favourable statements and disagreed with the unfavourable statements). A look at Table 5, however, reveals that the other half of the teachers (i.e. A1, K2, KO2, G1, P3, L2, T2) were not consistent.

Table 5.: Teachers' responses to attitude statements relating to error correction.

To take one teacher's responses as an example, teacher L2 was uncertain whether grammatical correctness is the most important criterion to judge language performance and was also uncertain whether much correction is wasteful of time. However, she agreed that all student grammar errors should be corrected and also agreed that the teacher's feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of students' responses.

Another interesting result of the analysis of teachers' responses to statements on error correction is that not one of the teachers strongly disagreed, disagreed, or was uncertain about statement 6 (not even the teachers who were generally unfavourable). This may be due to the special meaning of the term "appropriateness" which may not be completely understood by all the teachers, despite the fact that the teachers' guide provides a detailed definition of appropriacy. For some of the teachers an appropriate response could well be understood as any utterance that is both grammatically correct and sociolinguistically "appropriate".

However, inconsistencies appeared not only as regards teachers' responses to the attitude statements, but also when teachers' responses were compared to their

classroom practices. Since many teachers' responded inconsistently to the attitude statements, these teachers were not included in the comparison. The comparison was thus carried out only with the teachers who were consistently favourable (or unfavourable) towards error correction. As was mentioned above, 7 teachers responded consistently; five of the seven teachers' attitudes contradicted their classroom practices (see Table 6).

Teacher	Attitude	% of E.C.	% of G.C.
C1	Favourable	82	80
D1	Favourable	96	95
A2	Favourable	89	78
C2	Favourable	97	90
S3	Favourable	92	95

Attitude: Attitude towards statements relating to the undesirability of error correction.
% of E.C.: Percentage of errors corrected in the classroom.
% of G.C.: Percentage of grammar errors corrected in the classroom.

Table 6: Inconsistency between teachers' error correcting attitudes and their classroom practices

Teachers C1. D1, A2, C2, S3 were consistently favourable towards a communicative approach to error correction, i.e. they were against overcorrection, and believed that appropriacy and not linguistic accuracy should be their main focus when correcting. As can be seen from the table, however, their percentages of error correction and grammar error correction in the classroom contradicted their attitudes.

Next, a comparison was carried out between teachers' reports of the timing of their corrections and the frequency with which they interrupted students to correct. Question 19 (in the questionnaire) asked teachers of their "interrupting" behaviour. Only half (A1, C1, D1, A2, K2, T2, P3) the teachers' responses to question 19 were compatible with their classroom practices (see Table 7).

Question 19: When you correct students' errors do you usually:

> A. Correct the student the moment he/she makes the error so that he/she will remember and not repeat it in the future.
>
> B. Correct the student after he/she has finished his/her sentence.
>
> C. Correct the student after the activity has finished.
>
> D. Correct the student after the activity has finished, and only if the error is serious.

Teacher	When do you interrupt?	% of Interruptions
A1	It depends	21
C1	After S. has finished sentence	0
D1	After S. has finished sentence	25
G1	After S. has finished sentence	37
A2	Moment S. makes error	33
C2	After S. has finished sentence	51
K2	Moment S. makes error	35
KO2	After S. has finished sentence	35
L2	After S. has finished sentence	37
T2	Moment S. makes error	37
K3	Activity finished, error serious	26
L3	Activity finished, error serious	31
S3	Activity finished, error serious	39
P3	Moment S. makes error	58

Table 7: Comparison of teachers' responses to question 19 and their "interrupting" behaviour in the classroom.

To take a few examples of inconsistent teachers, KO2, L2 and G1 claimed to correct students after they had finished their sentence; however, these teachers interrupted to correct over 1/3 of their students' errors. The greatest disparity appeared with teachers K3, L3, S3. These teachers claimed that they corrected students' errors after the end of the activity and only in case the error was serious, but, in fact, they also interrupted to correct almost 1/3 of their students' errors.

Finally, teachers' error correction beliefs were also dealt with in the interviews where teachers were asked about their error correction priorities and practices. It became clear in the interviews that teachers had rather confused notions about many communicative language teaching principles (including error correction) and had an incomplete understanding of the practical implications of the approach they were asked to implement. Thus, although almost all teachers felt that errors impeding communication, i.e. errors impeding the message students want to express, were most serious, they still believed that it was necessary to correct all students' errors. Teacher L2 summarised the position of many teachers on error correction:

"...if he can get his message across even with errors, OK...in other words, big errors. I don't care if he says "he write" and he hasn't put the "s". I will correct it of course immediately but it's not so important to me, but if he can't get his message across, then yes"

It thus seems that teachers are aware of the fact that their attention should be on those errors that impede communication, yet they still regard all errors as worthy of correction. Students errors tend to be viewed by the teachers as reflections of faulty learning (even, possibly, faulty teaching) as "crisis points" (Allwright 1975) in the lesson, that must be eradicated the moment they appear.

Discussion

The analysis of teacher error correcting behaviour revealed that teachers, in their majority, tended to follow an "audiolingual" approach to error correction where student errors are regarded as signs of imperfect learning (the teachers corrected over 80% of student errors) that needed to be rectified the moment they occurred (the teachers interrupted nearly 1/3 of student utterances to correct errors). The teachers' inconsistent pattern of responding to attitude statements concerning error correction, revealed that a number of teachers had rather confused notions about the quality and quantity of error correction in the classroom. With those teachers who did express attitudes towards error correction consonant with the principles of the communicative approach (as advocated by the Greek English language curriculum) another kind of inconsistency appeared; this time between their attitudes and their classroom practices.

Inconsistency between teachers' theories/beliefs and their classroom practices or within teachers' theories is not a finding unique to this study. A number of researchers (Beretta 1990, Burns 1990, Johnson 1994, Long & Sato 1983, Mitchell 1988, Nunan 1987, Walz 1989) have investigated teachers who professed commitment and adherence to a communicative approach but who had a partial understanding of the approach and/or who did not follow principles of a communicative approach in their classrooms. The crux of the issue, however, lies not only in identifying these inconsistencies, but, most importantly, in identifying their possible causes.

As far as the fourteen teachers in this study are concerned, the causes of their inconsistencies lie with the quality and quantity of training they received. Prior to, during and after the introduction of this particular innovation no in-service teacher training dealing specifically with the requirements and demands of the new curriculum and textbooks was provided to the Greek English language teachers. Apart from occasional local workshops organised by foreign language advisors and an annual or bi-annual conference dealing mostly with theoretical aspects of the communicative approach (in all of which attendance was optional) systematic in-service training was largely non-existent. The value and importance of on-going teacher training particularly in the case of educational innovations, although often downplayed by curriculum developers, is immense. Systematic teacher training is an essential means of acquainting teachers with the theoretical and practical aspects of the innovation. Teacher training should aim at clarifying the principles underlying the innovation and at demonstrating what innovative principles entail in practical terms right down to the level classroom activities, classroom management processes and student assessment (Wagner 1991, White 1987). As Brindley & Hood (1990: 245) point out "If teachers are being asked to change some aspect of their classroom behaviour they need professional development activities which enable them at the same time to use an

innovation and to work through the implications of the change with colleagues. This requires an on-going program in which teachers commit themselves to classroom action followed by reflection and theory as necessary". Thus, transmission of knowledge on the theoretical and practical meanings of the innovation should be one of the main foci of teacher training since lack of knowledge on the teachers part will result in teachers misinterpreting the conceptions and intentions of curriculum developers or ignoring essential aspects of the innovation (Brindley & Hood ibid, Brown 1980, Brown & McIntyre 1978).

It becomes quite clear that the lack of systematic teacher training focusing on the meanings and classroom requirements of the new curriculum in the Greek case accounts for the teachers' confused or partial understanding of many principles of the communicative learner-centred approach and indeed of error correction. But, what of those teachers who were consistent in their attitudes towards error correction and yet, exhibited a disparity between their attitudes and their classroom behaviour? How does one account for such discrepancies?

It should be noted that even those teachers who responded consistently to the statements concerning error correction in the attitude scale, contradicted themselves when their error correction beliefs were elicited in the interviews. Although most teachers were aware of the fact that errors impeding communication were most serious they still felt it was necessary to correct all student errors. The source of this contradiction once again can be sought in the nature and content of the teacher training programme. Although knowledge of the meanings of an innovation will certainly contribute towards effective implemention, it can prove useless if teachers do not have the appropriate frame of reference in which to receive new ideas, if teachers theories of language teaching and learning are not compatible with the underlying principles of the innovation. As Kennedy (1988:329) explains, within the context of curriculum innovations, "...it is not enough for people to act differently, which is a surface phenomenon, they may also be required to change the way they think about certain issues which is a deeper and more complex change". In other words, in any pedagogical innovation which proposes a change in teaching practices it will be necessary for teacher to revise, refine or change their attitudes if effective implementation is to occur. Therefore, teacher training prior to and after the introduction of a new approach should have as its main aim the refinement of teacher attitudes. Training courses, apart from transmitting knowledge of the innovation to teachers, must primarily strive to uncover the knowledge and beliefs teachers hold and make teachers aware of these (Breen et al 1989, Lamb 1995). Teacher training must have at its heart not changing teachers' attitudes but clarifying them (especially those dogmatically held) and subsequently accomodating new elements within teachers'

existing theories (Breen 1991). One-off teacher training sessions in which teachers are bombarded with theoretical exhortations of a new approach and where teachers' existing language teaching and learning theories are largely neglected (as was the case in the Greek context) will only result in a superficial understanding of the principles of the new approach on the part of the teachers. When teachers subsequently return to their classrooms they will misinterpret new ideas and translate them to conform with their existing classroom routines.(Lamb 1995, Wagner 1991).

The role of extensive teacher training within the context of educational innovations is crucial. The primary and main concern of teacher educators should be to uncover teacher attitudes, identify potential contradictions within them and make teachers ware of these. It is only when teachers are aware of their attitudes and of elements within them that can be less readily justified, that teachers will be able to clarify their attitudes. It is only when teachers have clarified their attitudes that they become ready to accept and experiment with new ideas and subsequently make them part of their daily classroom practices.

APPENDIX

The criteria for the identification of error types listed below have been adapted from Chaudron (1977b pp. 28-28). The examples for each error type have been taken from the data.

Types of error identified in the data are:

1) **Pronunciation errors:** For the purposes of this study pronunciation errors include errors of pronunciation, intonation and stress. More specifically,

a) incorrect pronunciation of vowels or consonants. Many student pronunciation errors identified in the data were to due to direct transfer of the students' mother tongue vowel pronunciation. For example,

> S: eh../ æ zi:æ /
>
> T(A2): Asia , yes, yes.

b) instances in which students have stressed a word on the wrong syllable have been classified as pronunciation errors. E.g.,

> (Teacher A1)
>
> (A student is reading his part in a dialogue)
>
> S: "There bathroom..I 'understand

c) instances in which a student has mistakenly intonated a word(s) in a sentence have been classified as pronunciation errors:

> (A student is reading aloud a "speech" bubble in a photograph. The photograph depicts a woman, who is a journalist, talking on the phone to her editor)
>
> S: Yes eh.. "What I'm going to write on? Well..-
>
> T(C2): "What I'm going to write on?" Repeat.

d) Finally, inability of a student to pronounce a word (i.e. when a student hesitates in pronouncing a word) was also counted as a pronunciation error since the teachers in such instances immediately perceived the student's difficulty and reacted to it by providing the correct pronunciation. E.g.,

> S: He was the king of...of...
>
> T(K2): /Mi:ki:ne/....number?-

2) **Grammar errors**: These include omission or incorrect use of articles or prepositions, incorrect omission or addition of bound morphemes, incorrect or omission of inflection for number or gender.

> S: First of all, its the producer who eh... has the idea and eh... the money
> are* given

3) **Syntactic errors**: These are errors of word order.

> S: We are going to learn about the danger hide the sea*

4) **Lexical errors**: These errors include student utterances in which an inappropriate word was provided or those instances in which the student has failed to remember the appropriate English word.

> T(A1): What's this (showing the picture of a bookcase)

> S: Library

5) **Content errors**: Those student utterances which show incomplete or incorrect knowledge of the concepts relevant to the subject (e.g. incorrect classification of words into grammatical categories, incorrect expression of a grammatical rule). Also, in this category, those student answers which are inappropriate in relation to the information expected in the teacher's question, are included.

> (Teacher L3 has asked students of examples of adjectives ending in - less)

> S: [miss](raising hand) ... uncareless*

6) **Discourse errors**: This category of errors was first used by Mehan (1974) and has not been included in many investigations (e.g. Beretta 1989, Courchene 1980), probably because such errors can only be orally manifested and are, by nature, procedural referring to the rules of interaction rather than to lack of linguistic or subject matter knowledge. Errors in this category include the use of L1 translations by the student, failure of the student to speak loudly enough, taking up a response or a question out of its order, speaking without recognition (i.e. without having been nominated a turn by the teacher) and use of incomplete but semantically clear phrases. Also, in the data instances in which students hesitated to reply to teachers' questions were classified as discourse errors, since in these instances the students' inability to respond immediately was negatively reacted to by the teachers, probably as a means of eliminating the possibility of students losing attention or diverting from the topic at hand. Since these errors are related to the rules of classroom interaction, it was felt that a quantification of these errors and the percentage of teachers' reactions to them

would give an indication of the degree to which teachers value rigid and consistent classroom procedures.

> *(student reads out the headings of a task)*
>
> *S: [professional conversation]*
>
> *T(C2): In English please.*

7) **Behavioural errors**: The majority of these errors in the data are due to lack of "discipline": e.g. students not paying attention, talking amongst themselves, laughing when other students are speaking, not participating or in general doing something different from what the teacher expects them to do. In this category there are also errors resulting from students' lack of concentration (e.g. when a student misreads a word in a text when reading aloud or when she/he answers a question that has already been answered). Although this category has not been included in any investigation of teacher error correcting behaviour (see Chaudron 1987,1988 for a review), possibly because students were well-disciplined or because students were adults and such behaviour was not expected of them, the decision to incorporate these errors in the analysis was due to the frequency of teachers' reactions to them and their "expected" occurrence in a classroom of 12 to 14 year olds. In addition to this, it was felt that the frequency with which teachers reacted to students' "misbehaviour" would reveal much about their roles in the classroom, and whether they (highly) valued discipline, orderliness and "proper" student behaviour. It should be noted that a fair amount of these errors were identified on the basis of teachers' reactions since many of them were not immediately apparent to the researcher.

> *(A student is reading aloud from the textbook)*
>
> *S: "people punishment-*
>
> *T(T2): [it says people?]*
>
> *S: "pupil..*
>
> or *(Teacher KO2 is asking comprehension questions on a text)*
>
> *T: Did you know your granddaughter was going out? (teachers spots a student not paying attention) Sofia you're sleeping, aren't you?*

8) **Non-acceptance errors**: These errors (which in reality are non-errors) manifest themselves in those instances in which the teacher reacts to a student utterance not because the student has violated some rule of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, phonology or discourse, but because the student's response was not the one expected by the

teacher. There is nothing apparently wrong with these "errors"; all of them appear to be appropriate and accurate answers to the teacher's question. Yet, the teacher reacts to them, demanding an improved student response, simply because they did not conform to his/her preconceived appropriate response. The occurrence of such "errors" has been observed by other researchers (Allwright & Bailey 1991, Fanselow 1977, Nystrom 1983) and are the cause of making the classroom appear as a "cloud-cuckoo-land" (Walmsley 1980). The majority of these errors result from teachers' requiring students to speak in complete sentences. Similar to some behavioural errors, non-acceptance errors could be identified only on the basis of teachers' reactions to them.

T (C2): How many times xx does eh.. embarkation card appear in this unit?

S: eh..twice

T: It appears...

S: It appears twice

T: ...how many times x does an eh... extract from a tourist guide appear in this unit?

S: Only once-

T: It...

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