

Poems from ***How English is Learned***, a collection-in-progress of poems about the ESOL classroom and experience.

Corrective Feedback I¹

You need to be right
you need to be correct
you need to become good
you need to be perfect

You think you want me to correct you
Every time you make a mistake,
But I know better.
I have seen what my corrections can do.

Once, I stopped the flow
of Sita's bubbling, babbling story
because correct grammar required
the past continuous and not
the present simple
and her story stuttered
and her flow shuttered
and now no one knows
how it ends.

Once, *his, not him*
thunderbolted from my sky
and hit the tender side of Jamal
like a tidal wave, hurling him
off the beam of his meaning,
leaving him gulping salt
clinging to the splintered
beams of his notes,
wrecked.

I watch you reaching
for my corrections

¹ 'Research on learner beliefs about the role of grammar and corrective feedback in L2 learning confirms that there is often a mismatch between students' and teachers' views. In two large-scale studies, Renate Scultz (2001) found that virtually all students expressed a desire to have their errors corrected while very few teachers felt this was desirable.' Patsy M. Lightbown and Nina Spada *How Languages are Learned*, Oxford University Press, 2021, p.95.