Errors play an important role in instructional settings in school and are thus very important for learning and comprehension processes. Teachers have to account for the learning processes of their students and are responsible for providing a cognitively stimulating and motivating learning environment. Thereby, mistakes and errors can be treated in a more or less sensible and useful way. In order to learn from errors, classroom conditions must exist which allow for students’ trial and error behavior and which accept that errors and mistakes may occur. Some studies indicate that how teachers handle mistakes, as well as students’ actual opportunities to learn from errors in school instruction, may vary from culture to culture. Two important prerequisites for errors to “enter the stage” are (1) the intention of fostering a learning-oriented approach towards errors, and (2) creating a supportive social climate (Spychiger, Journal für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung, 3:31–38, 2003). This chapter presents findings from a video study in physics instruction conducted in Germany and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. One major aim of the study was to investigate the role of classroom conditions which are important for errors to occur in instruction, as well as the extent to which students perceive a climate which fosters a learning-oriented culture with respect to errors and mistakes. Both video analyses and students’ questionnaires were used for this
purpose and to identify distinctions between the two countries. The video analyses indicate some country-specific distinctions. The students’ ratings show that the Swiss students perceive their opportunities to learn from errors more intensively than their German colleagues. The findings corroborate the assumption of a better learning climate towards errors and mistakes in Swiss instruction.