ERRORS AND MISTAKES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: *Recent research in applied linguistics emphasizes the significance of learners' errors in second language learning. In this article, major types of errors in second language learning are first briefly mentioned. This is followed by tracing the sources of second language learning errors to both interlingual and intralingual or developmental factors. While interlingual errors are caused mainly by mother tongue interference, intra-'lingual or developmental errors originate in the following factors: simplification, overgeneralization, hypercorrection, faulty teaching, fossilization, avoidance, inadequate learning, and false concepts hypothesized. The article concludes with some general guidelines for teachers in correcting errors in second language learning.*
Key words: *errors, mistakes, language learning, second language, self-correction*

Errors and mistakes are a normal part of learning a second language. In fact, they can be seen as positive signs that the learner is trying to use the new language. However, it is useful for both learners and teachers to understand where these errors come from, so that they can be corrected. A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip", in that is a failure to utilize a noun system correctly. All people make a mistake, in both native and second language situations. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such "lapses" or mistakes, which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of temporary breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech. These hesitations, slips of the tongue, random ungrammaticalities, and other performance lapses in native-speaker production also occur in second language speech. An error, a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner. An error is most likely not a mistake, and error that reveals a portion of the learner's competence in the target language.

From the explanation above, what is the difference between both of them? An error cannot be self-corrected, according to James, while mistakes can be corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker. Thus, students who make a mistake can correct it by themselves because they know the correct one.

Intralingual Errors. These are errors which are not related to the learner's L1. They are caused by the way the learner is processing the new language. For example, a learner might say 'I'm agree with you' instead of 'I agree with you'. This is because the learner has learned the word 'agree' but has not yet learned that it is not normally used with the verb 'be'.

Developmental Errors. These are errors which are typical of a particular stage in the learner's development of the language. For example, many learners of English at an early

stage of learning say things like 'I like swimming' but not 'I like to swim'. This is probably because they have learned that after the verb 'like', we usually use the -ing form of the verb.

Overgeneralisation. This is when learners apply a rule or pattern too widely. For example, a learner might say 'I goed to the shops yesterday' instead of 'I went to the shops yesterday'. This is because the learner has learned that regular past tense verbs end in -ed and has applied this rule to the irregular verb 'go'.

Avoidance. This is when learners avoid using language which they think is difficult. For example, a learner might say 'I go to the cinema' instead of 'I went to the cinema', because he or she is not sure how to use the past simple tense.

Fossilisation. This is when learners continue to make the same error, even at an advanced level. For example, a learner might say 'I have 20 years' instead of 'I am 20 years old', even after many years of learning English.

What can teachers do? Correcting errors is an important part of teaching writing and speaking skills. However, it is also important not to correct every single mistake, as this can be demotivating for learners. Here are some tips for correcting errors in the classroom:

1. Focus on meaning, not form. When you are listening to your students, try to focus on what they are trying to say, rather than the mistakes they are making. This will help them feel more confident about speaking.

2. Be selective. Choose one or two areas to focus on in each lesson, for example, verb tenses or prepositions. Correct mistakes in these areas, but ignore other mistakes for the moment.

3. Use different techniques. There are many ways to correct errors, for example:

- Echo correction: repeat what the student has said with rising intonation, to show that you are not sure if it is correct.

- Recast: repeat what the student has said, but in the correct way.

- Text correction: write the student's sentence on the board and ask the class to correct it.

- Peer correction: ask another student to correct the mistake.

- Self-correction: give the student time to correct the mistake themselves.

4. Give positive feedback. Try to give more positive feedback than negative feedback. For example, praise your students for good ideas, interesting vocabulary or clear pronunciation.

5. Encourage self-correction. When a student makes a mistake, ask them to correct it themselves. If they can't, give them some help, for example, by asking a question or giving them the first letter of the correct word.

6. Correct mistakes immediately. Correcting mistakes as soon as possible is usually more effective than correcting them later. However, there may be times when it is better to wait until the end of an activity, so that students are not interrupted in the middle of speaking or writing.

7. Be sensitive. Some students may be very sensitive to correction, and may feel embarrassed or demotivated if you correct them in front of the whole class. In these cases, it may be better to correct the mistake quietly, after the lesson.

8. Set realistic goals. Help your students set achievable goals for their learning, and encourage them to focus on progress, rather than perfection. Explain that making mistakes is a natural part of learning, and that everyone makes mistakes - even native speakers!

Conclusion. Language learning does not have to be based on speaking, mistakes, and repeated correction. Indeed, if your goal is good English — that is, if you want to be able to speak and write in English with few mistakes and understand English-language television — the feedback-based method is the wrong way to do it. It builds your knowledge very slowly and depends on a good instructor. As a result, only intensive, long-term courses with competent teachers can give satisfactory results, but these are very expensive and very impractical.

The alternative — input-based learning (more specifically, the Antimoon Method) — does not rely on mistakes and corrections. It gives you more information in less time and enables you to build your English whenever you want to, for as long as you want. On the other hand, it requires that you enjoy reading books in English or watching English-language programs, and that you apply the principles of careful reading and writing.

Errors are an important part of second language learning, and they can provide useful information about how learners are developing. By understanding where these errors come from, teachers can help learners to correct them and to become more confident and accurate users of the new language.

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