

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE ERRORS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Making errors plays a beneficial and important part in language learning because it allows learners to experiment with language and measure their success in communicating. This article focuses on the kinds of mistakes learners make when they speak or write a foreign language, why they make these mistakes and the part that mistakes play in language learning.

Keywords: errors, issue, learning, linguistic errors, language, verb, teachers, learners, error analysis.

INTRODUCTION

An error (from the Latin error, meaning "wandering")^[1] is an action which is inaccurate or incorrect.^[2] In some usages, an error is synonymous with a mistake. The process of learning a foreign language is long and difficult. Besides that, it is unimaginable to pass it through without making any errors. People make errors not only as learners of a foreign language in the classroom, but also as children during the acquisition of the native language.

MAIN PART

Errors and error correction is a complex problem for language teachers, a problem in which the following steps in the cases of decisions have to be run through. Errors must be identified, arranged, corrected, and in the majority of the cases they must also be evaluated.

According to Corder (1967)^[3], correcting learners' errors is substantial in three different ways: First, they tell the teacher about the progress of the learner, and therefore what remains to be learnt. Second, they supply evidence of how a language is acquired and what strategies the learner employs in learning a language. Thirdly, they are indisputable to the learning process because making errors is regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn.

Linguistic errors — A linguistic error happens when we lack knowledge of the rules of the language we're trying to learn. We haven't learned enough about that language so we incorrectly implement rules.

SOME COMMON LINGUISTIC ERRORS**1: Verb Errors**

When verbs don't conjugate the same way in both languages, we see typical errors transfer from one language to the other.

2: Pronoun Errors

Some languages don't even have pronouns. Some languages use them differently. We often see pronoun errors where the pronoun is dropped all together or the wrong gender is used.

3: Errors in Word Order

Languages organize their sentences differently and we often see the order from one language show up in the language that a child is learning.

4: Grammar

Grammar errors are the bane of any language learners' existence. They're often a result of incomplete or inaccurate studying. For instance, Latin, Russian, German and Greek use the case system, which basically means that word endings change depending on each word's role in the sentence. Since modern English has no equivalent, case systems are often difficult for native English-speakers to grasp. All the words can be the same between sentences, but if one word is in the wrong case, it can completely change the meaning of the sentence. To avoid grammar errors, it's important to study not only grammar rules but also exceptions to these rules. Many languages have irregular verbs or other tricky rules that seem to violate the basic rules of grammar. While we can adjust to this fairly easily in our native language, it can be harder in a second language. The only way to learn and remember these rules is through careful study.

5: Preposition Errors

Prepositions vary across languages and across situations so hard to use them correctly. For example, in Spanish the preposition is often encoded in the verb so is omitted in English.

6: Multipurpose Verbs

How we use verbs doesn't really make sense sometimes. And this makes them difficult to learn. We say "I took a drink of juice" when the truth is that we don't actually take the juice anywhere. It is common to see direct translations of phrases in these instances such as "I have 5 years" rather than "I am 5 years old."

7: Vocabulary Errors

When we don't know what a word is, it is most common to substitute a semantically similar word. Vocabulary errors occur when you lack a clear understanding of specific words. Even if you're an expert in grammar rules, not having enough words in your arsenal, or a clear understanding of a term, will impede understanding. While circumlocution (describing the word when you don't know the exact term) is one tactic when you're unsure of a word, more vocabulary study is a helpful way to prevent vocabulary errors. To ensure you use vocabulary properly, it's particularly helpful to use resources that show you vocabulary in authentic contexts.

Far from being a nuisance to be eradicated, errors are, as Selinker[4] (1969) indicates, significant in three respects: (1) errors are important for the language teacher because they indicate the learner's progress in language learning; (2) errors are also important for the language researcher as they provide insights into how language is learnt; and (3) finally, errors are significant to the language learner himself/herself as he/she gets involved in hypothesis testing. Errors are not always bad, rather they are crucial parts and aspects in the process of learning a language. They may provide insights into the complicated processes of language development as well as a systematic way for identifying, describing and explaining students' errors.

Teachers And Their Work With Errors

When assessing the work of teachers, Haeberli [5] (1980) recommends to also monitor how many errors were corrected by the teacher, what types of the errors were corrected and in which

way the corrections were justified. According to him it is also interesting to monitor how many mistakes were ignored by the teacher. These ideas and also our own practical experience made us deal with the successfulness of teachers' corrections of errors in a more detailed way. The analysis of errors has been carried out at the Department of German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové since 1990. The errors are analysed from various angles, and several kinds of extensive research have been realized. The analysis of pupils' errors has been always carried out in connection with the tests which were already corrected by competent persons (teachers of German). However, there have been quite repetitive cases of wrong corrections (an incorrect form was ignored and not corrected, a correct form was replaced with another correct form, sometimes a correct form was even replaced with an incorrect form). Therefore the issue of ways of working with errors has become the centre of our further research. The following examples taken from the real error correction practice can be taken as a kind of evidence that this issue deserves an increased attention.

ERROR ANALYSIS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Firstly, by error analysis, teachers will get an overall knowledge about the students' errors. Foreign language learning is a process of hypothesis and trial and error occurrence is inevitable. So the teacher should learn to tolerate some errors, especially some local errors. Secondly, errors can tell the teacher how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and consequently, what remains for him or her to learn. So students' errors are valuable feedbacks. We can do some remedial teaching based on their errors. Thirdly, errors are indispensable to the learners themselves, for we can regard the making of mistakes as a device the learner employs in order to learn.

CONCLUSION

In order to improve teaching, we need to explore the learners' psychological process in language learning so that we can enhance our understanding of learners' errors. Based on the analysis of the causes of their errors, we provide our timely guide and help. In addition, while placing an emphasis on error correction in the classroom, we should take the teaching objectives, students' linguistic competence, their affective factors and the effectiveness of the error correction into consideration.

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