

ERROR AND ERROR CORRECTION IN TEACHING SPEAKING

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ABSTARCT:

This article presents a number of useful techniques which will smoothen the correction slot pressure.

KEYWORDS: error, language learning mistakes, correction, communication, Self-correction

INTRODUCTION:

Everyone makes mistakes even while using their own L1. In the second language learning making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. The correction of the mistakes is a very important element of the teaching/learning process, therefore, teachers need to make informed decisions about what, when and how to correct their students to improve their speaking for fluency skills and not discourage them from the speaking. Basically, error correction can be divided into two categories: Immediate correction (on-the-spot correction, when students get an immediate, individual correction in the context) and Delayed Correction (correction doesn't interrupt the flow of the fluency-based task).

- This technique is one of the most effective ones since the teacher doesn't interfere in the speaking flow and lets the students finish up their mind. The idea is that the teacher monitors the learning during a speaking activity and collects the errors (grammar, lexical, pronunciation) by noting them in a notebook. The teacher needs to be selective and jot down those mistakes which are closely connected with the lesson topic, impede communication or are repeated mistakes. Mistakes referring to the topics

which haven't been studied or minor mistakes which don't obscure the meaning shouldn't be given notice of.

After the activity is over the teacher boards the sentences which contained mistakes, divides the learners into pairs and asks to correct each sentence. They write their versions on pieces of papers, give them to the teacher who jumps through the answers of all pairs and decided the winning pair. Afterwards, the correct answers are discussed open class. In this way, the students will not feel very stressed about being corrected and actually, the error correction slot will turn into a competition. Moreover, students enjoy analyzing the errors and working out the right answers with their peers

Moreover, you can write down on the board not only sentences with mistakes but also ones with good grammar or vocabulary usage. In this case, a teacher asks students to find and correct incorrect sentences.

- An alternative to delayed correction is when the teacher boards sentences which contain mistakes and asks the students to divide them into two columns where in the first column they must include the mistakes which lead to misunderstanding and in the second column those mistakes which are slight and don't give rise to any misunderstanding in the communication. In this way, the teacher shows to the students that making mistakes is quite a natural part of the language learning process and not all mistakes must be corrected.
- You can use grammatical terminology to make students identify the mistake. Use this technique with more high-level students who know grammatical terms.

"You used the wrong tense",

"You need an adverb, not an adjective"

"Can change that into the passive?"

"Say the same sentence, but with the comparative form"

Facial Expression and Body Language

In many cases when the teacher wants to point to the mistake on the spot he/she may use facial expressions or body language.

- Tilt your head to one side or frown slightly to make the students understand that not everything is ok with their response/speech. In this way, you give them the chance to self-correct
- Point the thumb backwards showing that the sentence must be used in the past tense form or that there is a mistake in the usage of the past tense.
- Point to the posters or any other visual in the classroom which contains the right answer. I had a number of great posters with idioms, use of prepositions, functional language use and so on. In case, when I was spotting a mistake related to those language items I was pointing to one of those posters for students to self-correct and students were able to notice their mistake quite successfully.

Echoing – Repeat what they have said

This can mean repeating the whole sentence or one section of it including the wrong part with an increasing intonation.

Student: "The man GOED to the shop."

Teacher: "The man GOED to the shop?"

Student: "Went to the shop".

You can also repeat the sentence up to the wrong part or the sentence with the wrong part missed out (with maybe a humming noise to show the gap that should be filled). In this way, the teacher illustrates that there is an error and gives some hint as to which bit is wrong by using a questioning tone. However, this method mustn't be overused not to seem to patronizing.

Recast or Sadow correction:

A recast is a corrected answer given by the teacher to a student who has made an error. The teacher effectively repeats what the student has said but in a corrected form. This technique is a quick and encouraging way to highlight mistakes.

Teacher: "What did you do yesterday?"

Student: "I GOED to the shop."

Teacher: "Oh, you WENT to the shop yesterday".

Self-correction

Sometimes, students don't need much help at all but just a chance to do it again. In such cases, when you spot a mistake you can just ask them to repeat the sentence again. A lot of students enjoy self-correction and if they finally come up with the right version of the sentence/language item they have a feeling of accomplishment and get better at language awareness.

"One more time (but think about the grammar more this time"

"Give it another go".

Error correction is necessary to prevent fossilization, over-correction could be demotivating. This means that teachers need to be selective. For this reason, they can even agree with the students on what type of mistakes they need to be corrected for.

Point at the correct language if you have something on the correct form easily accessible on the whiteboard, in the textbook or on a poster, just pointing at it can be a subtle but clear way of prompting students to use the correct language. What you point at could be the name of the tense or word form they are supposed to be using, a verb forms table or the actual correct verb form, a grammatical explanation, or another grammatical hint such as "future", "prediction" or "polite".

Useful language:

"Have a look at your books/ the board"
"The correct version is somewhere in this chart/ poster/ table"
"You copied this down earlier. Have a look in your notebooks"
Just say the right version

The students can then repeat the correct version or tell you what the difference between the two sentences was and why their version was wrong. Because the students don't do much of the work in this way of being corrected, it might not be as good a way of remembering the correction as methods where you give more subtle clues. Its advantages are that it is quick and suits cultures, classes and students that think of elicitation as shirking by the teacher. It can also be more face-saving than asking them for self-correction, as trying to correct themselves risks making even more mistakes. The "right version" could mean the whole sentence or just the correction of the part that was wrong. In the latter case, you can then ask them to put it into the sentence in the right place and repeat the whole thing.

Useful language:

"I understand what you are saying, but you need to say..."
"We studied this last week. "Hardly" has a different meaning to "hard", so you need to say..."

"The past of say is pronounced /sed/. So your sentence should be..."

Use grammatical terminology to identify the mistake For example, "(You used) the wrong tense", "Not the Present Perfect", "You need an adverb, not an adjective" or "Can change that into the passive/ indirect speech?" This method is perhaps overused, and you need to be sure that the grammatical terminology isn't just going to confuse them more. Other useful language:

"Because that is the present simple, you need to

add the auxiliary (verb) 'do'"
"Say the same sentence, but with the comparative form"
Don't

Sometimes students won't benefit from any feedback on spoken errors. I could write another whole article on how to choose when to correct and when not to, and I may well do so...

Useful language:

"We're concentrating on fluency today, so we'll leave the error correction until next week"

"There is practice of this in your homework, so we'll just try and use the language for communication today, and concentrate more on getting the grammar right next week.

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