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Errors in language teaching

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Abstract: This article focuses on the role of errors in language teaching and learning. Errors are a natural part of the learning process and can provide useful insights for teachers and students. We discuss the different types of errors, their causes, and how teachers can use them to improve their language teaching methods. The article also highlights strategies that can help students learn from their mistakes and build confidence. By understanding and effectively dealing with errors, language teachers can create a better learning environment and help students succeed in acquiring a new language.

Key word : Grammatical Errors, language acquisition, mistakes, learning opportunities, self-reflection, adaptation, educational strategies Pronunciation Issues, cognitive development, Phoneme production, innovation

INTRODUCTION

Language learning, like any complex skill acquisition, is a journey paved with mistakes. These errors, often stemming from learners' attempts to apply their understanding of the new language, are not signs of failure but rather crucial indicators of their developing linguistic systems. In essence, language learning mistakes are



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deviations from the target language, arising from a learner's incomplete or incorrect understanding of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or pragmatic rules. They are inevitable because learners' brains actively construct and test hypotheses about how the new language works, a process that inevitably leads to experimentation and occasional missteps. It is crucial to shift the perspective on these errors, recognizing them not as something to be ashamed of, but as a natural and necessary component of the learning process. Instead of viewing mistakes as failures, we should embrace them as valuable opportunities for growth and understanding. Each error provides a window into the learner's current level of comprehension and offers a chance to identify areas that require further attention and instruction. By fostering a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as positive feedback, educators can empower learners to take risks, participate actively, and ultimately achieve greater fluency and accuracy. In this article, we will delve further into the diverse nature of language learning mistakes. We will explore various types, including but not limited to, [briefly list types you will discuss, e.g., grammatical errors, lexical errors, pronunciation errors, pragmatic errors, etc.]. Understanding the different categories of errors will provide a more comprehensive picture of how learners acquire language and inform the development of more effective teaching strategies.

Types of Mistakes:

Grammatical Errors: These errors involve deviations from the target language's grammatical rules. They often arise from overgeneralization, simplification, or interference from the learner's native language. **Incorrect Verb Conjugations:**

Example: "I goed to the store yesterday." (Correct: went)

Category: Irregular verb forms, tense usage.

Incorrect Tense Usage:



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Example: "She will visit me last week." (Correct: visited)

Category: Past tense, time reference.

Pronunciation Issues: These errors stem from difficulties producing the sounds, stress, and intonation of the target language.

Sounds that Don't Exist in the Native Language:

Example: English speakers struggling with the rolled "r" in Spanish or the "th" sounds in English for non-native speakers

Category: Phoneme production, unfamiliar articulation.

Incorrect Stress Patterns:

Example: misplacing stress in words like "photograph" (pho-to-graph vs. pho-to-graph)

Category: Word stress, Phoneme production.

Vocabulary Confusion: Learners often struggle with vocabulary due to similarities in form, meaning, or usage.

Similar Meanings:

Example: Confusing "hear" and "listen" or "job" and "work."

Category: Lexical semantics, synonym discrimination.

Similar Spellings/Sounds:

Example: Confusing "there," "their," and "they're" or "affect" and "effect".

Category: Lexical phonology, spelling accuracy.

Inappropriate Context:

Example: Using "I feel good" when you should say "I feel well."

Category: Appropriate word usage, lexical context.

Interference from the Native Language



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A learner's native language (L1) often influences their attempts to learn a new language (L2), leading to errors. This phenomenon is known as transfer. Learners may apply L1 grammatical rules, pronunciation patterns, or vocabulary to L2, even when they don't match.

Example: A Spanish speaker might place adjectives after nouns in English, reflecting Spanish grammar ("the car red").

Negative transfer occurs when L1 patterns hinder L2 learning. Positive transfer happens when L1 helps L2 learning. Consistent practice and exposure to the target language are essential for developing fluency and accuracy. Insufficient practice leads to weaker retention of new information, hindering automaticity in language use. Regular engagement (speaking, listening, reading, writing) consolidates learning and reduces the likelihood of errors. Total immersion environments expose learners to continuous practice opportunities. Effective teaching plays a critical role in guiding learners through the complexities of a new language. Lack of clear explanations, inadequate feedback, or inconsistent correction can hinder learners' understanding and perpetuate mistakes. Good instruction provides scaffolding, addresses individual needs, and offers timely corrective feedback. Teachers must use effective methods and adapt to the needs of their students. The brain's capacity to process information is limited. Overloading it can hinder learning and increase the probability of mistakes. How it happens: Presenting too much new information, too quickly, can overwhelm the learner's working memory. Teachers need to chunk information, pace learning appropriately, and provide opportunities for consolidation to reduce cognitive load. Introducing complex concepts gradually. Learners who lack interest or engagement in the learning process often face challenges in progress and can make more mistakes. Low motivation leads to decreased effort, reduced attention, and poorer retention. Creating meaningful and engaging



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learning experiences is crucial for fostering motivation and promoting active participation. Activities and content should be relevant to the learner's interests. When the teaching method doesn't align with a learner's preferred way of learning, it can impede progress. Learners may have different preferred learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.). If instruction only caters to one style, some learners might struggle. Teachers should diversify their teaching methods, cater to various learning styles, and encourage students to explore strategies that work best for them. Adapting material or activities to match the learning style is critical.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this exploration of language learning mistakes underscores their critical role in the acquisition process. From grammatical inaccuracies and pronunciation challenges to vocabulary confusions and beyond, errors are not failures but rather invaluable data points revealing a learner's current linguistic understanding. By embracing these mistakes, both teachers and learners can gain valuable insights, adjust teaching strategies, and ultimately foster a more effective and encouraging learning environment. Moving forward, recognizing errors as a natural and necessary part of the journey is paramount to promoting successful language acquisition.

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