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**THE PROBLEM OF THE SPEECH ERRORS ANALYSIS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A SECONDARY LANGUAGE PERSONALITY**

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Abstract: This article is based on a survey on the attitudes towards the error correction by their teachers in the process of teaching and learning and it is intended to improve the language teachers' understanding of the nature of error correction. Based on the analysis, the article expounds some principles and techniques that can be applied in the process of foreign language teaching. In this article, the author will first focus on both teachers' and students' attitudes towards errors and error correction since these attitudes have a great impact on the entire learning process, and then suggest some techniques for error correction.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, errors, attitudes towards errors, error analysis, error correction.

Introduction. Errors always constituted and still do a very substantial object of linguistic studies. They occur in both, the first and second (foreign) language learning processes and thus so many well-known and respected specialists devoted their publications, books to this particular topic. What is more, a significant number of definitions, sources or classifications of errors, being modified and developed over time, proves how broad and diversified this domain is.

There has always been much concern and discussion on errors and error correction in foreign language learning and teaching. It also has been a controversial issue because teachers' and learners' attitudes towards error and error correction differ depending on the teaching and learning approach they adopt.

Formulation and analysis of the problem. There are basically two different attitudes to mistakes or errors made by people learning languages other than their own. Probably most teachers regard mistakes as undesirable, a sign of failure either on the students' part to pay attention or 'to listen properly', or else on the teacher's part to make his meaning clear or to give the students sufficient time to 'practice' what they have been taught [1, p. 15]. But on the other hand there is an proverb "We learn through our errors" and making mistakes can indeed be regarded as an essential part of learning. In many traditional language classes student have been made to feel that errors bring discredit on the teacher and learner alike and have been reprimanded for making too many errors. This implies that errors are the fault of the student and could be avoided.

Many people will agree that one of the most inhibiting factors in any formal learning situation is the fear of making mistakes and being thought ridiculous either by native speakers, one's classmates or by the teacher. This leads to the characteristic hesitancy among learners to say anything in a foreign language for fear of appearing a fool. This form of behavior has been described by Earl Stevick as 'defensive learning' [2, p. 36]. The learner is not so much concerned with attempting to express what he would like to say, either orally or in writing, as rather with saying what he thinks he can without making mistakes. The actual substance of the message is relegated to second place while the learner concentrates on the 'correct' form of what he is trying to say. 'Will I get the accent right?' 'Is that the right pronoun for that place?' As anyone who has broken through this barrier will have discovered, there is seldom one right form in any case; there is much more likely to be a number of alternatives. But how many of us as teachers can honestly say that we have encouraged our students to experiment and to think of alternative ways of putting what they want to say?

How often does one hear the statement 'I'm bad at languages'? And yet everybody in the world has learnt one language very well: his or her own. If we can all learn a language as infants but find second language learning so difficult, then maybe it is the teaching methods that are at fault.

The aim of our study is to analyze the attitude, principles and methodological approaches of teachers to correct errors in the teaching foreign language process.

Presenting main material. Some researches follow logically from the shift in emphasis from contrastive analysis to error analysis. Indeed, this shift has changed the entire look to errors and it has influenced the teachers' and the researchers' attitudes towards errors to a very great extent. According to Ellis R. [3, p. 328] the most significant contribution of error analysis lies in its success in elevating the status of errors from undesirability to that of a guide to the inner working of the language learning process. In this sense, researchers view errors as evidence of the learner's positive contribution to foreign language learning rather than as a sign of learner's inability to master the new language as many teachers view it. Burt M. stated that error making is inevitable and that it would appear necessary and crucial to language learning. In fact, it is a clear sign to show language learner actually develop and internalize the rules of the language [4, p. 59]. While the errors a learner makes provide no direct measure of his knowledge of the language, it is probably the most important source of information about the nature of his knowledge.

The language teacher's attitude to errors is influenced by his view of what he is trying to do in class. In apparently punishing error, what is the teacher hoping to achieve? Few would wish to disagree that a painstaking attitude to learning and a desire to produce only the best work and settle for nothing less than perfect is an admirable general educational aim. But is this the most appropriate target in language teaching? There is an immediate and obvious difference between teaching languages and a subject such as Geography, although this has often been forgotten in the language classroom: language isn't a set of facts to be learned but a medium for expressing thoughts, feelings and communicating with other people.

It is true that many have learnt languages by a method that has regarded language teaching as very similar to teaching any academic subject and some learners may even be able to use language learnt this way. But the majority of language learners only acquire an active knowledge of the language if they have the Opportunity to listen to a great deal of the language and to make numerous mistakes while

expressing themselves in it. The language learner will find that he is more successful in getting his message across in the foreign language if he speaks reasonably quickly and makes some mistakes rather than hesitating before every word he is not certain about. In other words, what may be more highly valued in speech in real life is 'fluency' rather than a somewhat academic accuracy. The point here, then, is that drawing the learner's attention to every mistake he makes, encouraging him to be aware of these mistakes, and making him think at length before speaking or writing, may not help him to use the language in the most natural or useful way.

But what to do if we talk about the exam? There are two points to be mentioned here. First, accuracy is not being thrown out of the window; if there are too many grammatical mistakes, the listener may not be able to understand the message, however fluently it is delivered. The second point is that teachers can encourage their students to attempt fluency with the limited amount of the language they have. Even elementary students with a very limited stock of structures and vocabulary can take part in activities which encourage use of the language that has been learnt, such as finding another student with a similar card in a card-matching game.

Activities practising newly taught language, such as the card-matching game mentioned above, take place in a relatively lifelike situation and teachers can note mistakes as they occur. The implication for methodology here is clear: there are times when pointing out mistakes and thereby interrupting the flow of an activity could be counterproductive. It is possible to note the mistakes and deal with them at a more suitable time. The advantages of this approach are that, firstly, students do not become over-aware of making mistakes but regard the language as a tool for expression and, secondly, both the students and the teacher see the language that has been taught put into practice immediately. The students are motivated by the need for the language they are learning and the teacher has evidence of the students' ability to use the language.

It is worth saying, for teachers who feel that this approach to mistakes is too risky when it comes to preparing students for an exam, that students are more likely to develop a feel for the language through using it in a meaningful context than by doing

corrections three times over. The very common idea that by writing a correct form three (or more) times a student will learn it, is not only seen to be ineffective by almost any teacher with any class, but is also based on a theory of learning that is no longer commonly held to be true. This behaviorist view of language learning as primarily a matter of habit formation (i.e. if the learner does something often enough, regardless of whether he is paying attention to what he is doing or not, the correct habit will be formed) is no longer as common as it used to be because much of the recent work in the field has shown that such a notion is a gross over-simplification [5, p. 51].

Sometimes teachers are over-conscious of students' mistakes because of an entirely praiseworthy desire to teach the best possible form of the language. The problem lies in deciding what the 'best' form is. In English, for example, contractions (e.g. I'm, can't, won't, etc) are sometimes held to be lazy speech and should be treated as mistakes if the student uses them. This is a dubious procedure for at least two reasons. First, if the teacher treats as a mistake forms which are often produced by native speakers of the target language, the learner will become confused. A teacher's best goal is to get his students to do what native speakers do. As contractions are very frequent in English speech, it is sensible to allow students to use them. Second, research into the kinds of language used in different situations by native speakers has shown that the "best' form will depend on what is appropriate for the situation.

The idea that a formal, written style is 'the best' is a widely held misconception. The important point for the language teacher is that it can be misleading to call an informal form a mistake, and if the form is used in a situation where a native speaker would also use an informal expression then it is quite wrong to penalize the student. What the teacher needs to point out is precisely that certain forms are more likely to occur in certain situations. No one variety of language is the 'best'. Students must be equipped with the spoken or written variety or varieties of language they are most likely to need. Correcting of mistakes then takes the form of pointing out inappropriate use of language. For example, in such basic areas as greetings, students should be aware of the differences between 'Good morning', 'Hello' and 'Hi'. Over-

use of the more formal 'Good morning' would be as inappropriate as the use of 'Hi' in the wrong circumstances.

Allowing students to perform dramatic activities in the classroom, culminating in role-play, will enable them to appreciate the relation of certain kinds of language to certain situations. It must be stressed, however, that this needs very careful preparation, both physical and linguistic. The physical preparation of the classroom will involve moving furniture, where possible and appropriate, to allow free movement. Desks and chairs in usual places tend to restrain the free movement needed for any kind of dramatic classroom re-creation of outside situations. Space is essential for movement. The linguistic preparation will involve presenting appropriate linguistic items for the particular situation. In a role-play, for example of a radio station going on the air for a news programme, the language needed would almost certainly be more formal than that required for an animated discussion between two car drivers involved in a minor traffic accident [6, p. 125]. An important reason for encouraging freer types of language activity in the classroom is this: what the teacher teaches is not always the same as what the learner learns. Indeed, teaching would be simpler if it were. Much recent research has indicated [6, p. 98] that language learners find it easier to use the language they are learning if it is practiced in precisely these uncontrolled situations, where the learner is more concerned with achieving something through language than with getting the right answer.

It should also be noted that not to correct student errors in the flow of speech does not mean to ignore them, paying no attention to them. Quite the vice versa! From the analysis of the learner's errors, teachers are able to infer the nature of his knowledge at that point in his learning and discover what he still has to learn. By describing and classifying his errors, teachers may build up a picture of the features of the language, which cause him learning problems. A learner's errors are significant to the teacher, in that they tell him if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn [7, p. 107].

But how to correct the students' errors so as not to offend, not to embarrass frighten or kill student's desire to speak a foreign language? There are various methods of correcting errors. These techniques are meant to help teachers eliminate the problems of error correction and to help them provide their students with effective strategies to overcome this problem. Take the students' preferences into consideration It is very clear that individual students differ from each other in their attitudes towards errors and error correction. Before starting the process of correction and ensure that students are receptive to error correction, it is necessary to find out their preferences and attitudes towards correction and feedback. Being aware of these preferences and attitudes will help teachers to choose the appropriate way of correction.

Teachers should know what errors to correct and when to correct. Instead of correcting errors randomly, teachers should correct them systematically. They should concentrate on errors that hinder communication. If an error is likely to hinder comprehension or lead students into further errors, then it should be corrected. Besides, teachers should correct those errors which are regularly repeated by students and those they consider to be the most serious. They should not correct every now and then in a way that affects learners' confidence or interest in learning.

Another important aspect that should be taken into consideration is the context in which the error has occurred. Being aware of the context leads teachers either to correct immediately when an error is made, postpone the correction until the end of the activity or ignore the error. With regard to speaking activities (a context where the focus is on fluency), the usual advice is to delay feedback until the end of the activity so as to avoid interrupting the student's flow of speech. While in a pronunciation activity (a context where focus is on accuracy), students should be stopped immediately when they make a mistake, otherwise they will continue repeating it.

Encourage students to use self-correction and mutual-correction techniques. Error correction should not always be the responsibility of teachers. Teachers should train their students to correct their own errors and give them the chance to do so. Actually, there are so many ways to help students correct by themselves. For instance, while correcting errors in writing, teachers can use some correction codes to indicate to

students that there is an error instead of giving them the correction directly. Of course, these correction codes should be explained to students in advance so that students are familiar with them. Teachers can also encourage students to use discovery techniques. For example, if a student makes an error while speaking, the teacher could say: ‘Excuse me?’, ‘Sorry, could you say that again?’ or he could repeat the student’s sentence and stress the error to indicate that it is not correct. By doing so, the student will try to correct himself and as a result, would be more confident when dealing with errors and less dependent on the teacher. Actually, there is much evidence that a self-discovery approach reduces the likelihood of students’ dependence on external assistance.

Use a wide range of feedback alternatives. Teachers can create the desire in students to accept and appreciate feedback to show that their performance is flawed. However, the repetitive use of the same type of feedback could be boring and may cause students lose interest in finding out the reasons for their errors. In fact, there are several alternatives of feedback that can be adopted by teachers in correcting errors.

Researchers put forward the following types of feedback [8, 9]:

1. Explicit correction: indicate clearly that the students answer is incorrect and provide the answer.
2. Recast: indicate directly that the student’s answer was incorrect; the teacher implicitly reformulates the student’s error, or provides the answer.
3. Clarification: by using expressions like “Excuse me?” or “Sorry, I don’t understand”, the teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or that the student’s answer contained some kind of mistake and repetition or reformulation is required.
4. Elicitation: the teacher elicits the correct form from the student by asking questions or by allowing the student to complete the teacher’s utterance or by asking student to reformulate the answer (e.g. “say it again”).
5. Repetition: The teacher repeats the student’s mistake and adjusts intonation to draw student’s attention.

In conclusion, it should be noted, that learner's errors provide to researchers evidence of how language is learnt and acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner employ in his discovery of the language. Teachers can gain much benefit from error analysis and description because errors provide them with feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching materials and their teaching techniques. In addition, errors enable teachers to decide whether they can move on to the next item they have been teaching and they provide the information for designing an improved syllabus or a plan of improved teaching. Therefore, errors made by students are major elements in the feedback system of the process of language teaching and learning. Teachers should be able not only to detect and describe errors linguistically but also understand the psychological reasons for their occurrence. For teacher being aware of the diagnosis and correction skills for errors is fundamental as it might help them understand why and how they can interfere to help their students.

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