

Harmon Hall

Analyzing Student's mistakes in class

MISTAKES

Making mistakes is an unavoidable and useful part of language learning. It allows Ss to experiment with language and measure their own degree of achievement.

Mistakes can be categorized into errors and slips.

ERRORS

happen when learners make an attempt at expressing something that is beyond their current knowledge or language processing. Since these attempts are beyond Ss understanding of the language, they're not able to correct themselves.

ERRROA



Interference and developmental errors often disappear on their own as Ss learn more language. To achieve this stage, we need to provide Ss with exposure to content that is at the right level for them and that is also interesting. We also need to provide Ss with lots of interaction opportunities for them to experiment with the language, this, is far more helpful for them than you explaining the grammar rule they "broke" lecturing over and over. Finally, they also need clarification and focus on form.

SLIPS

are not the result of a lack of knowledge, but a lack of concentration. They stem from temporary circumstances and can be identified because once Ss realize they made them, they're able to correct themselves.

THERE ARE 2 MAIN REASONS FOR SS TO MAKE ERRORS.

INTERFERENCE.

This is the influence of the Ss first language onto the second one. They may use phonology, lexis or grammar structures from Spanish in English.

DEVELOPMENTAL ERRORS.

This is an incomplete process of organizing and experimenting with the language they have learned. This is similar to a child learning to speak for the first time. Common developmental errors are for example using the Simple present instead of the Present perfect.

We call these errors **overgeneralization** when Ss apply a grammar rule too widely; for example, adding -ed to all verbs in the past tense (goed instead of went).

Sometimes you may notice a S keeps making the same mistake repeatedly. You may even point this out and ask about the grammar rule, to which you'll receive a correct answer, yet the next time he/she needs to use that utterance they'll make the same mistake. **This is called fossilization.**

Fossilized errors are the result of lack of exposure to English, the fact that the mistake causes no communication breakdown or their lack of motivation to improve their language accuracy, which can be conscious or unconscious.

Always remember, **errors are a natural part of learning!** Don't get stressed or frustrated in class, your Ss making mistakes shows that learning is happening.

