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PRACTICING ETHICS IN ERROR HANDLING IN L2 CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Errors are an inseparable part of language learning. There are various causes for learners in committing errors. Correct feedback techniques adopted can prevent the learners' error. "Teachers should realize that correction of errors is a very delicate task, and if it is not done in an appropriate way it will do more harm than good as it may cause embarrassment and frustration for the learner"(Hejazi 620). This paper is an attempt to analyze errors and the act of dealing with errors among L2 learners. It starts with the introduction of errors in language learning, types of errors, their causes and uses are also discussed. The paper is discussing about how to deal with errors, how to correct them and how to motivate the learners to avoid errors are also discussed. Here are remedies for correcting errors are also discussed.

Key words: Error correction, Error treatment, Proficiency, Curriculum.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex activity. Appropriate teaching methods, reinforcement, motivation and teaching aids can improve language learning. Many factors are involved in the learning process. One of the most important factors is motivation, which can bring out the learners' ability to succeed in accomplishing tasks. The learners may usually make mistakes in the process of acquiring a second language. It is the responsibility of the teachers to handle their mistakes in a wise manner. Apt feedback given at the apt moment can promote error free expression from the learner. The students should understand the errors can help to develop the language learning process. "Errors are the part of the developmental process of language learning" (Montrul 2). Learners should understand that committing errors is not a sin, but it is a part of learning. Errors are considered a part of the learning process. This happens in ones' mother tongue too.

II. TYPES OF L2 LEARNERS ERRORS

Categorizing the errors is not a simple task. There are various types of learners' errors. In 1994, Brown had divided errors into phonological errors, lexicon errors, grammatical errors and discourse errors. In 1999, Keshavarz divided them into orthographic errors, phonological errors, lexicosemantic errors and syntactico-morphological errors. Nomar talks about two kinds of errors, slips and mistakes. Burt in 1975 made a

difference between global and local errors. "Global errors hinder communication and they prevent the learner from comprehending some aspects of the message. Local errors only affect a single element of a sentence, but do not prevent a message from being heard" (Fang 12).

III. CAUSES OF ERRORS

Learning a language is a slow and gradual process. During the process, mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning. "It is important for both teachers and students to accept the fact that errors are an inevitable part of the learning process" (Hamouda 128). There are various factors involved in learners' errors. They are:

1. Carelessness – This is due to lack of motivation.
2. Interference of mother tongue.
3. Over generalization.
4. Incomplete application of rules.
5. Thinking in mother tongue.
6. Method of instruction.
7. Errors that come from previous knowledge.
8. Affective, cultural, cognitive and environmental perspectives of a language.
9. Lack of learner autonomy – reliance on correction by teacher.
10. Lack of correction.

IV. USAGE OF ERRORS

In every aspect of learning, there arise confusions and difficulties. But it should be looked upon as a new experience by the learners. In every negative situation there must be a positive opportunity. The errors also give positive reinforcement for language teachers. It helps them to know the learners' level of language proficiency. It helps the teachers to be more realistic in approaching their jobs. "Learners' errors can help gather information on common difficulties in language learning" (Hejazi 621). When the students make mistakes it will help the teachers to understand the difficult areas as well. As a result, they can pay more attention while teaching those areas. It also helps the teachers to gather information on common difficulties in the process of learning. It helps the curriculum developers to set new curricula which is free from common difficulties. "The systematicity of the errors proves that there is a mental process involved in language learning" (Hejazi 620). Such an over generalization is a mental process; it proves that the learners repeat whatever they have heard. Errors provide a chance for evaluating the students as well as the teaching strategies.

V. CORRECTING ERRORS

Krashen's prediction is that "errors would take care of themselves as the learners" (Krashen 620). The teachers should give enough chances and time to students to correct their mistakes by themselves. If the students can correct themselves, nothing more needs to be said. If the student is unable to provide self correction, the teachers can make the class mates to help each other. It makes them understand that language learning is a corporate activity. This can prevent the learners from de-motivating themselves. "Don't over correct because over – explanation or correction by the teacher can have de-motivating effect" (Venkateswaran 157). Finding and correcting of all errors will affect the interest of the learner. It is better to give them a chance to correct themselves. Error correction has only a minor role in acquisition which only occurs as a result of the learner processing the comprehensible input. If the main goal of teaching is acquisition, then error correction generally needs to be avoided. "Errors should not be corrected when the goal is acquisition but should be corrected when the goal is learning" (Krashen 1982). It will not be inappropriate to make a distinction between learning and acquisition. Language learning is knowing about a language; acquisition is subconscious, learning is conscious. "Learning refers to knowledge of rules being aware of them and being able to talk about them. This kind of language is quite different from language acquisition which could be termed implicit" (Krashen 1982). Formal teaching does not help in acquisition

whereas it will help in learning. Acquired and learnt knowledge are different and stored separately. Also, learnt knowledge cannot be converted into acquired knowledge.

VI. ERROR TREATMENT

Error treatment is a complicated problem. So language teachers should have some theoretical foundations for correcting errors and they must be aware of what they are going to do in a classroom. The principles of affective and cognitive feedback, reinforcement theory and communicative language teaching all combine to form these theoretical foundations.

With the help of these theories the teacher can effectively handle the classroom. The teacher can decide whether to treat or ignore the errors and also when and how to correct them. Learners' errors are classified into different categories. Each scholar gives different opinions about correcting errors. According to Hendrickson (1980), global errors need not be corrected and they are generally held true, while the systematic errors should be corrected. "For systematic errors, since learners have already had the linguistic competence, they can explain this kind of errors and correct them themselves" (Fang 12). The teachers can remind the students when they make such errors. The most controversial issue is whether to treat the errors immediately or to delay them. "For communicative purpose, delayed correction is usually preferred" (Fang 12). Errors lead the learners to frustration and hence immediate interference will disturb the students. Grammatical errors and pronunciation can be corrected immediately because they may forget it later. The important fact is that punishment does not lead to positive learning. Punishments cannot help to avoid errors.

VII. CONCLUSION

Making errors is an inevitable part of the human learning process. Both teachers and students have an important role in handling errors. Students are expected to take feedbacks and corrections in a positive manner. The teachers should motivate the students to avoid errors. Everyone should understand that errors are also an important part of learning. "Errors are the flawed side of the learner's speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Teachers and mothers who have waged long and patient battles against their students' or children's errors have come to realize that making errors is an inevitable part of learning. People cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors" (Dulay 138.) Murphy stated that "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a language learner who makes a mistake must be in need of correction" (Murphy 146). Hence errors are a vital part of teaching/learning process, where correction is also needed.

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