

What is the role of error?

Making mistakes plays an important and useful part in language learning because it allows learners to experiment with language and measure their success in communicating.

Mary Spratt (2011)



SARGOI

What are the main reasons why your learners make mistakes?

- ! When learners try to say something that is beyond their current level of knowledge.
- ! As the result of tiredness, worry or other temporary emotions or circumstances.
- ! There is influence from L1 on the L2. Learners may use sound patterns, lexis, grammatical structures from their own language in English
- ! The learners are working out, experimenting with the language they have learnt.



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Think about these teachers' comments. Which do you agree with and why?

- ! If my students make mistakes, it means I haven't taught them well.
- ! My students like me to correct all their mistakes, so I do.
- ! Teachers can only correct each mistake and each student in the same way.



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What kind of a **MISTAKE** is it?

ERROR
(ingrained/
fossilised
habit)

Correct the Student?

Yes

Give Student an easy way to remember to not make the error again

SLIP of the tongue

Don't **CORRECT** the student





**I'm late because I
lost the bus**



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T1: *Lost? Vocabulary....?*

T2: *I'm late because I*

T3: Hold up hands and indicates with figures: *I'm late because I lost (waggles finger) the bus?*

T4: *Oh dear? Did you find it? Or Is it yours? (No?) Then you can't lose it!*

T5: *You missed the bus! Or Why did you miss the bus?*

T6: *What do you mean?*

T7: *I'm late because I missed the bus*

T8: Makes no comment until later and then writes on WB for all to correct

using terminology

Repeat the utterance up to the point of the mistake

Finger correction

Using questions or/concept questions and /or humour

Reformulation

Feign misunderstanding

Tell them the correct answer

Delayed correction

Who corrects?

∞ **Self – correction**

∞ **Teacher – Student correction**

∞ **Student - Student correction**

∞ **Group work – e.g. On board /
handouts**

∞ **Course book or reference book**



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Would you intervene?

- ☞ Students are having discussion about pollution in the city. They are making lots of mistakes with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation and they are keep saying **ambience** instead of **environment**.
- ☞ Students are doing class survey about routines at elementary level. They are making a lot of mistakes with 2nd and 3rd forms of the Present Simple (e.g. *she go, you goes*)
- ☞ While you are drilling an item of lexis, a few students persistently getting the pronunciation wrong in the same way
- ☞ You are getting feedback to a listening or reading and the student makes a grammar or lexical mistake



It is useful to think about what kind of mistake the learner is making – a slip or an error. If the mistake is a slip, the learner can correct him/herself, may be with a little prompting from the teacher or another learner. Or, there may be no point in correcting a slip.

Sometimes, particularly in fluency activities, it is better to not to pay attention to learners' mistakes, so that the learners have an opportunity to develop their **confidence** and their fluency.

Errors which **prevent communication** are more important to correct than those which do not.

Some learners within the same class may need to be corrected, while others may not, depending on their stage of learning, learning style and level of confidence.

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