

ANALYSIS OF MISTAKES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

LYUDMILA EVANGELIST, student

IRYNA A. SALATA, Associate Professor, PhD (Philology), Scientific Adviser
Kyryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University

The theory of error analysis as an applied research branch of linguistics directed to more successful teaching as well as learning a foreign language appeared in 60-70s of the 20th century in the countries of Western Europe. It went through several stages, each one being very important at learning a foreign language.

Unfortunately, our Ukrainian methodology doesn't have a detailed structured system of analysis of mistakes. We only can find some English teachers' articles about the types of mistakes occurring during the process of mastering a foreign language and recommendations how to correct these mistakes.

At the beginning scientists were focused on analysis of learning English as a second language in the English-speaking environment. The researchers marked the necessity of learning not only language patterns but also socio-cultural components during the process of mastering a foreign language.

At the second stage the researchers moved to the analysis of the English language as a foreign one, a speech interaction between non-native speakers. Moreover, the theory of error analysis started to be used at all levels of language system – from phonological to communicative.

We can fully agree with J. Harmer's opinion who claims that formation of productive skills goes through three stages: 1) introducing new language elements, which is called non-communicative period also known as presentation; 2) practical stage which combines communicative and non-communicative exercises; 3) the stage of communicative activity when learners use the whole variety of speech patterns that leads them to a higher level of knowledge of the English language [2].

Interrelations and balance between these stages is defined by the learners' demands of solving concrete tasks at a concrete time interval. At each of these stages the teacher's role on exposing and correcting mistakes is very important.

English teachers, who devoted their research works to the error analysis, have come to the thought that mistakes are the constituent part of learning but correcting mistakes is a part of teaching. In this case a methodical question arises – how to combine these two processes more effectively? The differentiation of learner's mistakes from one side and a teacher's opinion of mistakes from the other side is very important. Learner's mistakes as a rule are divided into two categories – mistakes of meaning and mistakes of form, besides, the mistakes of the first category are more serious because they lead to misunderstanding between communicators.

Edge J. gives the following example, in the sentence “*Please, will you to show me coats?*” there are two mistakes: the particle *to* before the verb *show* and the plural noun *coats* instead of a singular form *coat*. Using the particle *to* in this question is incorrect but it doesn’t distort the sense of the question, it sounds polite and understandable, while the other mistake may cause misunderstanding between interlocutors as one of them bears in mind quite different meaning [1].

As for the mistakes of form, it is necessary to understand what causes them. Among some of the reasons we may mention: native language interference, mistakes made according to the grammar rules which are used without any exceptions, transition of the general rules to all cases of speech usage.

Revealing the mistakes of form helps to identify the spheres which should be paid more attention at the lessons and to work out the mechanisms of liquidating mistakes. So from the methodical point of view the presence of mistakes in the speech is one of the important conditions of learning a foreign language. A teacher should master the techniques which help to correct and then avoid mistakes in a speech [3].

As for the practical ways of correcting mistakes at the lesson every teacher should decide him / herself whether to draw student’s attention to each mistake immediately during the answer or do it after speaking; to use gestures or mimics at each mispronounced word or incorrectly used grammar structure, etc.

In any case correctional teacher’s work is the way of reminding learners about the patterns of a Standard English language, not a criticism, and in no case a kind of punishment. At the beginning a great amount of mistakes is “an error of growing up”, improving a learner’s language competence, so a students’ activity on experiments with language during which they try to heighten their level of knowledge should be encouraged.

References:

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