



Section 4: Special Issues

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4A: Correcting Mistakes

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Self-correction

Usually, when a language learner corrects him/herself s/he does not repeat the same mistake as often. If you hear someone make a mistake, instead of pointing out that it is a mistake, just repeat what the student said but as a question. For example if the student learning English says,

"I go to the store now."

Then the conversation partner says,

"I go to the store now?"

The student may realize s/he made a mistake and will either ask what the mistake is or correct it him or herself,

"I am going to the store now."

Indirect correction

Sometimes you don't want to interrupt someone when s/he is really trying to communicate and any interruption might discourage him/her. Therefore, you can indirectly correct the student by perhaps asking a question with the corrected form of the student's mistake after s/he has finished speaking. For example, if the student learning English says,

"Yesterday I buyed a book."

Then the conversation partner says,

"I bought a book two days ago. It is a book of poetry. What kind of book did you buy?"

Notice in the conversation partner's reply s/he uses the correct form of the simple past for the verb "to buy" with the subject pronoun "I" and then asks a question that will encourage the student to respond also using the correct form of the verb "to buy."

Direct Correction

It's ok to say "no" it just depends on how you do it. Make sure your tone is polite and helpful, not authoritative and condescending. Particularly for the beginner you can say "no" and make a "no" motion with your hand and then give the correct form of what you were looking for. Avoid using grammar terminology since the goal is to focus on conversation and speaking, not teaching and a grammar lesson.

4B: Different Learning Paces

4B: Students Learning at Different Paces

Common Question: I have more than one student in the session. Even though all have prepared the same lesson, some students learn the material more quickly than others. What should I do to accommodate all the students?

Even if one person is advancing further along than another, it is important that you stick to the activities you have prepared and allow everyone equal time to participate and speak during the session. Think of ways to adapt activities that will let all members in the group participate regardless of how quick they are picking up the language. Here is an example below in which the Conversation Partner planned an activity to practice demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those):

Conversation Partner: What is that on the table?

Student 1: That is a book.

Conversation Partner: What color is this book and what color is that one?

Student 1: That book is red and this book is blue.

Conversation Partner: Which book is bigger?

Student 1 (pointing): That one.

Conversation Partner (pointing): What is that?

Student 2: a book.

Conversation Partner: This? (picking up a notebook)

Student 2: No, that is a book. (pointing to book).

Conversation Partner: Ok. What is this? (holding notebook).

Student 2: That is a notebook.

In the above examples the Conversation Partner is using the same activity but frames the question differently depending on what the student is able to communicate. In the first example, the conversation partner has asked a question that is a little more complicated (s/he included the use of a

preposition and the location of the object). The question is lengthier. The student answers with the correct demonstrative pronoun and the conversation partner asks an even lengthier and challenging question that s/he knows the student is capable of answering.

In the second example the conversation partner asks a simpler question. The student does not respond with a demonstrative pronoun, thereby showing his/her difficulty with the concept. As a result, the conversation partner asks the student a question that requires an answer with a demonstrative pronoun. The goal here is to simply have the student use the structure whereas in the first example the conversation partner is giving the student the opportunity to use description and more complicated sentences.

Although the two students are learning at a different pace, they are still practicing speaking in the same conversation session and therefore practicing the same concept: demonstrative pronouns. The activity was not really changed, but rather the conversation partner simply adapted it through his/her question and knowing what the student is capable of doing.

4C: Student Preparation

4C: Students Unprepared for Sessions

Common Question: What if the student is not prepared?

This can happen sometimes. Perhaps the student didn't understand an assignment or had a lot of difficulty with it when doing the work on his/her own. Either way, the session must go on. A student is responsible for the material s/he is meant to cover in order to prepare for the conversation session with the conversation partner. Therefore, you still will need to use what you prepared for that conversation session. You may be able to make the activities slightly more simple so the student can still participate. It may also be a good idea to have in mind one or two activities that review what was done in last week's conversation session.

If you have more than one person in your group, you may encounter a situation in which one student has prepared and the other has not. If this is the case you need to make sure that you are still covering the speaking activities you have prepared for the current week. Complete the activities you have prepared. It may be that the student who has not prepared may not be able to participate as fully; however, it will then be that student's responsibility to review the material not completed and to be prepared for conversation practice in the next session.

It is important that you make note of a student's level preparedness in your weekly reports. If a student is chronically unprepared, program staff will follow up with the student to see how the problem can be remedied. Reporting that a student is unprepared will never hurt the student's grade. Rather it gives the program staff a chance to work with the student so that the student has the best chance of having a successful semester.

4D: Video Examples & Assignment

4D: Video Examples and Section 4 Written Assignment

Section 4 Written Assignment

Think about these questions, write down your notes, be prepared to talk about them in group discussion. If you are doing this training individually, you will need to fill out the Section 4 Written Assignment on the next page before scheduling your individual conference.

1. In order to learn, students need to feel they can risk speaking out loud and making some mistakes. How can you help students feel comfortable speaking and feeling okay about taking the risk of making mistakes in the conversation session?
2. How do you feel about correcting mistakes? In your past language learning experience, what forms of correction did you find most constructive? What strategies of correction and encouragement do you think you will feel most comfortable using with your students?
3. Imagine that you have two students in the same conversation session. One is learning very fast and the other is having trouble keeping up with the material. How should you handle this situation?

Video Examples

Watch the video examples. Even though you may not understand the language involved, you can still observe the way the conversation partner and students interact.

Conversation Partner Correcting Pronunciation

Students are reading dialogues from the text with the conversation partner correcting their pronunciation as they read.

Self-Correcting Student

Here is an example of self-correcting. The student makes the utterance and then corrects himself and goes on.

Students Repeating Phrase

Note how the conversation partner has the students repeat and repeat until they get it right:

Conversation Partner Urging Student to Keep Speaking

Watch how the conversation partner encourages the student to keep speaking. He continues to press

the student to give more information.

Conversation Partner Encouraging Students to Speak

Notice how the conversation partner encourages the students to speak.

Section 4 Written Assignment

Your name *

Your email address *

1. In order to learn, students need to feel they can risk speaking out loud and making some mistakes. How can you help students feel comfortable speaking and feeling okay about taking the risk of making mistakes in the conversation session? *

2. How do you feel about correcting mistakes? In your past language learning experience, what forms of correction did you find most constructive? What strategies of correction and encouragement do you think you will feel most comfortable using with your students? *

3. Imagine that you have two students in the same conversation session. One is learning very fast and the other is having trouble keeping up with the material. How should you handle this situation? *

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