

1.29 Avoidance of errors as a strategy to create speech in the class room

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ABSTRACT

Most of the adult Learners in Sri Lanka, being either job-seekers or those needing English speech for job-related work, try to gain oral fluency through tertiary level L2 classes. Despite the non threatening environment in these classes students don't respond to lessons orally. Inquiries prove this silence to be an evidence of their fear of errors, caused due to ignorance of grammar and non familiarity with question forming strategies. Therefore, helping them to avoid errors through exposure to grammar and question forming strategies, is likely to encourage speech. Although mastery of grammar deductively through problem solving tasks is thought to be an effective strategy, Savignon's (1991) words "**in the absence of structure or grammar communication cannot take place.**" clearly prove the futility of encouraging speech without equipping students with necessary grammar background. Therefore teaching them grammar without a delay is a must. The method Patricia Wilcox uses in "Time and Tenses", namely presentation of grammar through symbols, helps students to grasp L2 grammar quickly. I used a (modified version) of her symbol to tackle this problem. To remedy the second problem I selected six conventional visuals, four of which are repeatedly used in The environment. Later, these symbols, both invented and conventional, were arranged in different configurations and used with a special grid to form questions and answers. Afterwards, I produced questions and answers and made students to form the relevant configurations. Process was reversed later to enable students to construct questions and answers. This gave students the confidence to write shorts dialogues which subsequently helped to generate speech. (Only the basic grammar patterns were able to be interpreted to symbols). This techniques was tried out in the Department of Library Science, University of Kelaniya.