



Language Testing and Assessment



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IMPORTANT: Sign up for our course platform at: www4.lernplattform.schule.at/epep

To sign up you will only need your e-mail address and a password of your choice. Register for the course "Error Analysis and Assessment" and have a look at the site. In order to work with real learner texts later in the course, please also register for the GIBS courses of this semester.

Course Schedule

Please check the current issue of the semester schedule on Moodle. There you will find the correct dates and info about any sessions that might be dropped or moved.

	Topics:	Homework:
1	Introduction: (Unit 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course objectives and course organization • What is a mistake? • Teacher's attitudes towards mistakes • Some background theory 	First reflection in your online reflections journal
2	To correct or not to correct... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accuracy versus fluency controversy • The gravity of mistakes • Responding to student speaking 	Read: Lewis, 1993: 173 – 179 and mark interesting passages. (see instructions on page 15) You will find the article in "Background Reading" on Moodle. Write a short reflection into your online journal. What are your thoughts about the topics that we have discussed so far.

EPOSTL: Assessment, F: Error Analysis, Descriptors 1-4		
3	Identifying errors and correcting them (Unit 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful tools and resources 	Read „Responding to student writing“, Hyland, 2003: 177-192. Find the text in the Background Reading section on Moodle. Highlight interesting passages and do all the suggested reflections. (note form)
4	Responding to student writing (Unit 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When and how to correct 	Mark the errors on the student-text samples provided by your teacher using the strategies discussed in class and try to give helpful, age-appropriate feedback to the students.
5	Responding to student writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher roles and feedback strategies Peer feedback 	Mark the errors on the student-text samples provided by your teacher and give helpful, age-appropriate feedback to the students.
6	Assessing writing (Unit 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using assessment scales 	Mark and assess the text sample provided by your teacher and give helpful, appropriate feedback to the student.
EPOSTL: Assessment, D. Language Performance, Descriptors 1-6		
EPOSTL: Methodology: E. Grammar, Descriptors 3, 5 and F. Vocabulary Descriptors 1,2,3		
7	Assessing writing... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> practice using assessment scales 	tbd
EPOSTL: Assessment, A: Designing Assessment Tools, Descriptors 1,2,3		
8	Designing tests (Unit 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tests in lower school standardized tests formats 	
EPOSTL: Assessment, C: Self- and Peer assessment, Descriptors 1,2,3		
9	Evaluation and grading (Unit 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing goal-oriented, criteria-based grading systems 	
10	Portfolios and learner-centered assessment	Finish and clean up your course portfolio (including reflections) and hand it in next week.
EPOSTL: Assessment, B. Evaluation, Descriptors 1-8		
11	Exam: Spotting and correcting errors + giving constructive feedback Assessing a text using an assessment scale	
12	Course roundup, Tying up loose ends	

Course Assessment:

Task:	Criteria for assessment	
<p>Test: .DATE.....</p> <p>You must reach at least 60% (24/40 pts) in the language category</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can find and correct the mistakes in a piece of learner-writing. (Language!!) • You can mark the mistakes using appropriate , helpful strategies and you can give constructive, age-appropriate feedback to the learner. • You can assess the quality of a learner text according to TORA criteria. 	<p>40</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p>
<p>Course portfolio: Deadline:</p> <p>The aim of this portfolio is to show your knowledge, understanding and skills concerning error analysis and assessment. Your course portfolio must include the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your dialectical reflections journal Show your knowledge and understanding of the topics and concepts discussed in this course. Be specific and find connections to your own experience or your future teaching. Evaluate the ideas. • Teacher interview report: Compile a short questionnaire based on the topics that we have discussed in this course. Then interview a language teacher of AHS/BHS, Hauptschule or NMS about her/his experience with correcting and assessing. Find out what works well, what problems s/he sees, how much time s/he spends on marking. Compare the teacher's answers with the ideas that you have come across in the course and write a short report based on the interview and your background information. In your conclusion state what YOU have learned from this experience and what you are planning to do/not do as a teacher. • 3 samples of learner texts that you have corrected and assessed. For each one show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ your language corrections ○ your feedback to the learner ○ your assessment (T-O-R-A) ○ short personal reflections explaining your thinking and reasoning for each sample. (Examples: I've noticed that... I have realized that... After comparing ...) • PFL: Personal Language File <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the course of the semester collect errors that you have missed in your correction work and show that you have understood the problems. For expression mistakes note the correct phrase and find out how it is used (COCA examples...). For grammar mistakes briefly explain the rule (as if you were explaining it to a learner) and give a few additional examples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • same as above plus... • You can analyze learners' errors and identify the processes that may cause them. • You can deal with errors in a way which supports learning processes and communication • You can assess a learner's performance according to the criteria described in EPOSTL p.55 and/or in assessment scales or rubrics • You can evaluate the practical relevance of the course contents and set personal goals for your own career as a teacher • You can organize your work throughout the semester and keep deadlines. 	<p>50</p>

The aims of this unit are:

- to consider the relationship between instruction and assessment
- to review relevant theories of language acquisition and consider their practical implications on correction and assessment
- to consider the importance of teachers' unconscious attitudes and beliefs about language learning and the role of mistakes

EPOSTL

SELF ASSESSMENT



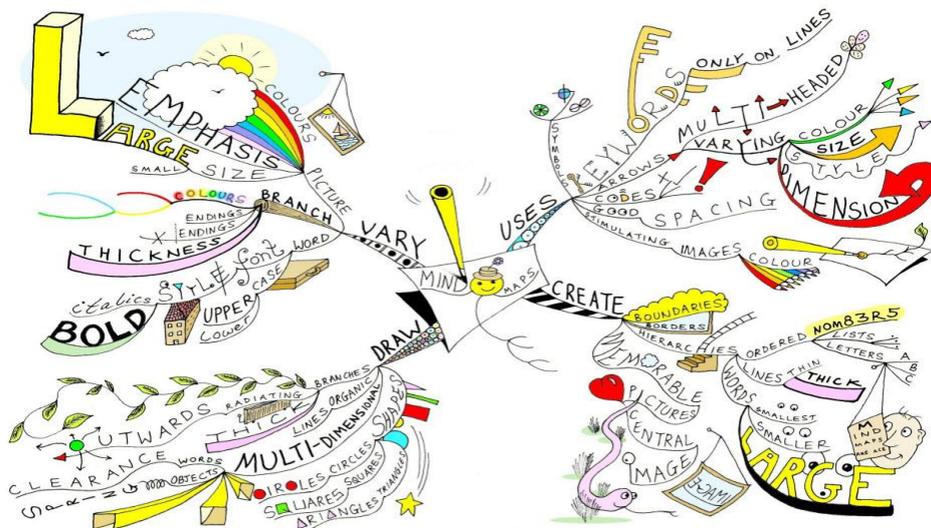
This unit will focus on the following descriptors:

ASSESSMENT: F. Error analysis: Descriptors: 1, 2,3, 4 (p.57)

What is a mistake?

Mindmapping:

Take an A4 sheet and make a mindmap for the word *mistake*. Do this activity quickly, without too much thinking. Allow all kinds of associations, even if they are not connected with language teaching. Write single words or short sentences, symbols and doodles...



© Paul Foreman <http://www.mindmapinspiration.com>

Are mistakes important?

What role do they play in language learning? In your group, discuss your mind-maps and compare your own ideas with the following quotes and with the ideas expressed in the pictures on the following page. Use the cards provided by your teacher and arrange them in meaningful groups using any criteria you think appropriate.

“Many of the things we call mistakes and see as problems are in fact signals that our students are successfully learning the language. They are taking the necessary learning steps.”(Edge, 1989: 14)

“If the teacher wants accuracy above all things and never mind what ideas the students express, then that teacher will get attempts at accuracy: no mistakes and no learning steps! (Edge, 1989: 16)

“In other words, the importance of mistakes is that they should often be ignored. Students need the experience of being listened to as people with things to say.” (Edge, 1989: 20)

“Correction is a way of reminding students of the forms of standard English. It should not be a kind of criticism or punishment. (Edge, 1989: 20)

“If students are criticized for trying, they will stop trying.” (Bartram&Walton, 2002: 15)

“Teachers tend to see mistakes only in terms of what the student actually says. These could be called 'mistakes of commission'. Another way of looking at mistakes is in terms of what the student did not attempt to say – in other words, 'mistakes of omission'.

Why should it matter what the student did not say? Simply because, if language is communication, then non-communication is a kind of mistake. If the student wants to say to say something, but is prevented, that is surely unsatisfactory. One of the reasons they do not say it is because they are worried about the possibility of making a mistake.” (Bartram&Walton, 2002: 17)

“Many language teachers see correction as an area where they can be certain in the uncertain world of language teaching.” (Lewis , in his intro to Bartam&Walton, 2002)

“We also believe that certain groups of teachers – perhaps those who lack confidence in their own English – worry more because they feel they have to make decisions about the rightness/wrongness of their students' English. (Bartram&Walton, 2002: 2)

The successful language learner will be confident, fluent, accurate and creative. Whatever teaching strategy is employed, accuracy is always achieved last. Over-emphasizing accuracy in the early stages of learning is to demand the impossible of the student, and often to inhibit confidence, fluency and creativity. (Lewis, 1993: 172)



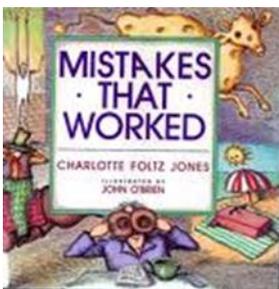
Let's make better mistakes tomorrow.

Mistakes are the stepping stones to learning!



always make new mistakes

(Leather dyer)



Teachers' attitudes:

Discuss the following two quotes in your group. What do they mean to you? Do you agree?

„A teacher's attitude to mistakes and correction is central to what is done, avoided and valued in the classroom on a day to day basis. A misguided, or more likely unformulated, view of error and correction can undermine everything else.“ (Lewis, 1993: 164)

“The fact is, the question of the teacher's attitude to mistakes and correction is probably the single most important issue in a language teacher's professional development. In many ways, it is also central for students. The kind of activities the teacher encourages in the classroom, and the kind which the teacher avoids or minimizes, will be strongly influenced by the teacher's views of the role of mistakes and correction in learning.”

(Lewis, in his intro to Bartam&Walton, 2002)

Unconscious Beliefs

“Everything you do in the classroom is based upon a belief that certain kinds of teaching or learning work better than others.(...) The problem is that, too often, that attitude is unconscious. (...) This is why theory, in the end, is important. How you react to a mistake is part of your whole vision of what a language is, what learning is, and what a teacher is.”

(Bartram/Walton 2002: 4)

Let's look at these hidden beliefs.

- **Arrange the following words in two groups, using any criterion you think appropriate. Use the boxes provided below.**

conformist, creative, exciting, imaginative, orthodox, reassuring, normative, stable, incoherent

(Lewis, 1993: 165)

Then add the word *accurate* to one of the two lists and discuss your associations with each of the two lists. Try to find fitting labels for the two boxes. They represent two ends of a spectrum

whose poles are and .

How important is accuracy compared to fluency?

Do the following activity before discussing this matter in detail.

- **Defining our goals: Why do people learn second languages?**

Complete the following sentences spontaneously.

- Her Spanish is pretty good, she.....
- Her French is rather poor, she....
- My students learn English in order to...

Reflections Journal: Personal reflections and goals after session one:

Take a few minutes to browse the notes you have taken so far and ask yourself:

- What are the most important ideas that you have learned so far.
- How could you put them into practice as a language teacher?
- How do these ideas compare to your personal experience as a learner?
- What other aspects concerning assessment do you consider important?

Write your reflections into the Moodle reflections journal. Only you and your teacher will see these.

Sharing Ideas:



Pop-Up #1: –A Pop-Up is when a person pops out of her chair and states a very important thing she has learned so far.

In order to finish/start our session we need to hear at least 20 such pop-ups in the next 60 seconds. Time begins now.

Some background theory: How do we learn second languages?

Look at the following brief summaries of recent theories of language acquisition and discuss how each of them might see the role of errors.

Behaviorists in the 1940 to 1970s thought that languages were learned through the formation of habits. According to this theory second languages would be learned on top of the habits formed in the first language. For this reason they assumed that these habits would interfere with the patterns of the new language.

Classroom activities emphasized pattern drills (grammar patterns without context) and memorization of dialogues or sentences.

Contrastive Analysis claimed to be able to predict typical errors by comparing the learners' native language with the target language. The catalogs of differences between two languages, however, proved much less useful to foreign-language teaching than had been expected.

The behaviorist approach suggests a linearly sequenced syllabus where one feature of language can be added to another one following a **Present-Practice-Produce** paradigm, also called the “**what -you-meet-you-master**” principle. It was assumed that what was taught would be learned and could be reproduced correctly in free situations. If not, this could only be due to bad teaching or bad practice on the student's side.

What role might mistakes play in this theory?

What type of classroom activities would fit to this approach?

Innatist perspective: Universal Grammar

Noam Chomsky argued that innate knowledge of the principals of a Universal Grammar (UG) permits children to acquire their native language during a critical period of development. Some linguists have argued that this mechanism would also work for L2, others say that L2 acquisition has to be explained by some other theory, because learners have usually passed the critical period for natural language acquisition.

What role might mistakes play in this theory?

What type of classroom activities would fit to this approach?

Krashen's monitor model

Stephen Krashen (1982) described five hypotheses of second language acquisition:

1. The **acquisition-learning hypothesis**: According to Krashen we *acquire* language naturally and unconsciously by being exposed to samples of the second language and we also *learn* language through conscious attention to form and rules.

2. According to his **monitor hypothesis** the two parts (acquisition + learning) act together in successful language acquisition. The naturally acquired language is responsible for spontaneous language, the *monitor* checks for accuracy and polishes what the acquired system has produced. Monitoring only works when there is enough time and if the rules have been learned.
3. Krashen has found a **natural order of acquisition**. Both in first and second language learning we can find a predictable order of structures and patterns, irrespective of the learner's first language. For example, 3rd person -s appears fairly late although it appears to be so simple and clear.
4. The **input hypothesis** says that acquisition happens when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input that is just one step ahead of his present knowledge.
5. Krashen's fifth hypothesis is the **affective filter hypothesis**. The affective filter can be seen as an emotional or affective barrier that filters unwanted input (e.g. anxiety, stress). Under such negative conditions no acquisition takes place.

What role might mistakes play in this theory?

What type of classroom activities would fit to this approach?

Current psychological theories:

Information processing: Learners who are exposed to a second language can only process a certain amount of new information at a time. It is assumed that learners gradually build up their knowledge of the new language through **conscious and unconscious processing of the incoming information**. As some structures and words are becoming automatic, cognitive resources become free for new features of the language.

In this model the practice needed for development is not passive rote-learning as in the behaviorist approach. It always involves cognitive effort but need not necessarily be productive. Comprehensible input that is in some way processed by the learner is assumed to lead to the building up of knowledge that can eventually be used automatically.

Other researchers describe language acquisition as '**skill learning**' suggesting that learning consists of *declarative knowledge* or **factual knowledge** (knowing that... knowing a rule) and **procedural knowledge** (the ability to perform under real-life conditions). Obviously performance is the goal of modern language teaching and can be improved by exposure to superior performance (very similar to Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development* or Krashen's concept of $i+1$ (learner's level of language + 1 new step)).

It is now generally agreed that the old *what-you-meet-you-master* principle has to be replaced by an **observe-hypothesize-experiment** paradigm and that both receptive and productive practice in meaningful, real-life communication will lead to successful acquisition.

What implications does this approach have on the treatment of mistakes?

What type of classroom activities would fit to this approach?

To correct or not to correct?**Oral mistakes:**

As we have seen, teachers' beliefs about how languages are learned will have strong effects on their treatment of mistakes. If we see language acquisition as a circular process based on active hypothesis-making on the part of the learners, errors cannot and must not be avoided. This does not mean that teachers should not respond to mistakes in appropriate ways that will **help learners adapt their working hypotheses**.

Basically hypothesis-forming works like this:

- The learner is exposed to the new language (comprehensible input: listening or reading).
- The learner forms unconscious hypotheses and ideas about how the language works.
- The learner puts these ideas into practice and tries them out actively in speaking or writing.
 - e.g.: I learned  I heard  I buyed
- The learner is exposed to more comprehensible input and
- changes his original hypotheses. e.g: I bought

Where in this model can you see room for correction and feedback?

What type of correction and feedback will help learners adapt their working hypotheses?

Look at the following possibilities of correcting oral mistakes and rank them in order of usefulness. Discuss possible effects they might have on the learners. Are they encouraging/discouraging or neutral?

- **Giving a grammar explanation:**
 - T: What did you do on the weekend?
 - S: I did lots of things. First I was going to my grandmother, she had her birthday..
 - T: Yeah. Don't forget, you have to use the simple past to talk about an event. The progressive form is only used to describe the circumstances.
 - S: Sorry?
 - T: ... so you say "First I went to my grandmother's..."
 - Oh, yes...
- **Echoing:**
 - S: I am living in Scheigergasse.
 - T: I am living in Scheigergasse?

- **Pretending to misunderstand**
 - S: I will study the new vocabulary until Friday.
 - T: Really, all the time – you won't even play soccer?
 - S: No, no, I'll play soccer on Thursday, but I'll study the vocabulary for the test on Friday.
- Or: S: My grandmother was born in 9020.
 - T: Wow, is she an alien traveling in a time-machine?

- **Reformulation:**
 - S: I am living in Scheigergasse.
 - T: Really, that's interesting. I live in Scheigergasse as well. At what number do you live?
 - S: I live at number 160, in the end of the street.
 - T: Oh, at the end of the street, that's the white house with the green shutters? Is that where you live? You've got a lovely garden.

- **Peer correction:**
 - Anna: My grandmother is living in Scheigergasse.
 - T: gestures the presence of an error, Peter's hand shoots up.
 - Peter: She lives in Scheigergasse.
 - Anna: She lives in Scheigergasse and she have three cats.
 - T: Who can help Anna?
 - Sue: She has three cats...

What can you do to create an atmosphere that allows and encourages experimentation and hypothesis-forming. Collect ideas that help (+) and strategies that might stifle creativity (-)

In general, we can say, that any response that focuses on the **content** of the learner's message will be more motivating and encouraging than responses about the **form** of the learner's utterance. Learner's want to be treated as real human beings, not as faulty language production devices.

We can also assume that the teacher's **reformulation** will use a language that is just one step above the learner's and thus exposes the learner to relevant comprehensible input or *i+1* as Stephen Krashen would put it. This is exactly the language which the learners are ready to add to their current repertoire.

In some cases **formal correction** will also be useful and necessary. Here any methods that encourage active participation and reflection on the part of the learner should be given preference over simply offering the correct solution. (e.g.: Pretending to misunderstand, non-verbal signs etc.) More about this in the unit on “responding to writing”.

List some situations where reformulations seems useful and suitable
and some situations where formal correction seems preferable.

Probably your list can be divided into activities that practice fluency and activities that focus on accuracy.

Fluency activities are usually more open tasks where students are encouraged to try out the new language in communicative situations. Often fluency activities are organized as pair-work or group activities. The focus is on successful communication – not on specific grammatical or lexical patterns.

Why do you think fluency activities are important?
What type of learners might like/ not like fluency activities?

During **accuracy activities** students are encouraged to produce correct utterances. Often accuracy activities focus on a grammatical structure or notion and are usually more structured and guided than fluency activities. Good accuracy activities often allow little freedom of forms but still lead to meaningful communication. An example might be:

Find someone who has eaten Chinese food.
 has been to Mexico.
 has had an accident...

In such an activity all the utterances will follow the same pattern (Have you ever – present perfect tense) and the same notion. This repetition of similar input will help the learners to make or adapt their hypotheses about a particular language pattern.

Think of different types of activities that are commonly used in class. Which of these activities encourage the building of procedural knowledge and unconscious hypothesis making, which of them focus on factual or declarative knowledge? Does it matter?

Practicing Reformulation:

1. Work with a partner. One of you takes the learner's role, the other one takes the teacher's role.

Learner: Read Laura's letter to the "teacher". Stop at each of the smiley-dots and allow the "teacher" to react and reformulate what you have said.

Teacher: Imagine Laura was telling you about her holidays (not reading her letter). Listen carefully and react to Laura in an encouraging way. Reformulate where necessary but make sure Laura feels taken seriously as a person.

2. Now mark Laura's letter and give her the same kind of feedback in written form. How could you indicate the little mistakes she has made without discouraging her?
3. Try to explain why Laura has made these errors. Where has she made wrong hypotheses?

Hi! My name ist Laura.*

In the first ten days of my holidays I was in a scout-camp in Stainz. There we had our tents. It was much fun. We played night-games, went swimming and cooked our meals by ourself. For the cooking we need wood. I hacked the wood with the axe. suddenly I slid of the wood and hacked on my hand. It bleeds and hurts very much but after a while I forget the hurt. Right on that day I went home from Stainz my family and me went with the Wohnwagen to Italy. In the sea was a big ship with pirates. We went on the ship and drove on the sea. Suddenly we met a second ship and fighted with them.

How can you deal with mistakes during fluency activities (including group work)?

The gravity of mistakes:



HOMEWORK:

1. **1. Read:** M. Lewis, *The Lexical Approach*, (1993) ch.11, pp.173 – 179 and highlight interesting passages. Whenever you agree strongly with Lewis' views make a + or ++ in the margin. If you disagree with some of his views, mark them with a – .
Be prepared to discuss the chapter in the next session.
2. **Reflections:** Browse the notes you have taken so far and look at the descriptors on p. 57 of your EPOSTL. Ask yourself to what extent you feel you have reached them. What do they mean to YOU and what practical consequences do they have. **HOW** would you put them into practice? Give concrete examples. Don't forget, our aim is not to fill the arrows – this is a slow, step by step process that you are embarking on. Write your reflections into your online reflections journal. Leave out any descriptors that do not mean much to you at this point. Keep adding ideas in the course of the semester.

EPOSTL

SELF ASSESSMENT



Assessment: F: Error Analysis, Descriptors 1-4. P. 57

References:

- Bartram Mark /Walton Richard. 2002. *Correction: A Positive Approach to Language Mistakes*. Boston: Thomson Heinle
- Edge, Julian. 1989. *Mistakes and Correction*. London/New York: Longman (in course folder)
- Krashen, S. 1985. *The input hypothesis*. London: Longman
- Lewis, Michael. 2008. *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a Way Forward*. Heinle