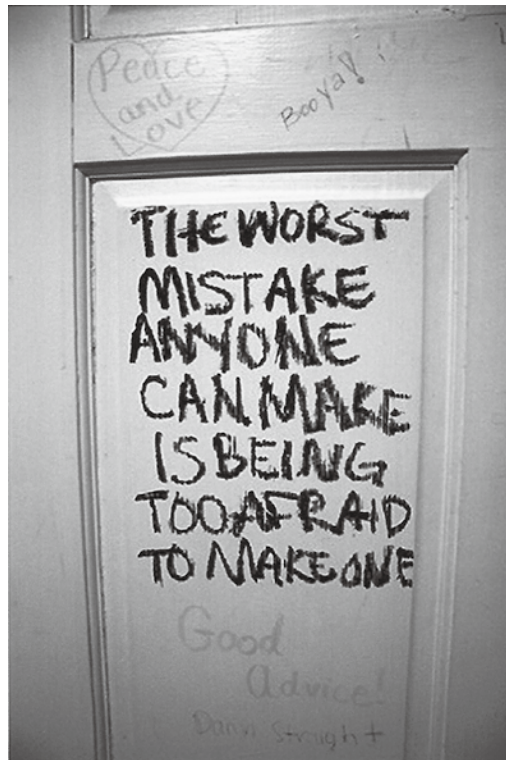


The Importance of Making Mistakes



I Pre-reading Questions • With a partner or in a small group, discuss the following questions.

1. Can you think of some examples of mistakes you have made in English?
2. What happened when you made those mistakes?

II Vocabulary • Choose the word in parentheses that best matches the contents of the passage.

1. Classes where there are few opportunities for the students to speak are (teacher-centered / learner-centered).
2. (Active learners / Passive learners) are those who don't only memorize the language, but who also use it.
3. Many learners are so focused on the outcome of their efforts to learn a language that they fail to enjoy the (process / product).



CD-01

Everyone makes mistakes. In our minds, we all know this. But, in reality, what often happens here in Japan is quite the opposite. The focus here is on perfection. From the entrance exams, to the **methodology**, to the attitudes of both students and teachers, everything screams perfection. Let me explain.

5 In Japan, the tradition in the classroom is, and has always been, **teacher-centered**. The teacher is the authority. Built into students, is the idea of listening rather than speaking, and speaking only if one is certain they are accurate in what they are about to say. This is aided by a methodology, grammar-translation, that has focused on **sentence-level translation** into Japanese, keeping the target language forever foreign by not allowing

10 students to think in the **target language**, and focusing solely on accurate or perfect translation into Japanese. **On top of this**, there are entrance exams every step of the way. In universities, these are the Center test and the university entrance exams. There are also entrance exams to high schools, junior high schools, many elementary schools and even some preschools and kindergartens. These tests focus on accuracy, not exploration.

15 Passing these tests becomes the only goal. ① Learning to use the language becomes a secondary goal, if it becomes a goal at all. Students become reluctant to attempt new patterns, reluctant to try new vocabulary, reluctant to learn. And that is the sad part. Learning is about exploring, and the goal should not be a **product** (like passing the entrance exam). That should be a step. The goal should be the **process**, and that is what

20 acquiring a second language is. It is a process.

② It is necessary to remember the importance of making mistakes in that process. Making mistakes is a major part of learning. It is **trial and error**, retrial and success, and one that makes you an **active learner**, rather than a **passive one**. As a language learner, ask yourself, how do I feel about making mistakes in English? Do I worry more about making

25 mistakes or more about **getting my point across** to the other person? ③ Am I afraid to speak for fear of making a mistake or do I try to say something and not care so much about the mistakes? These are questions each language learner must decide. Only one of those two directions will lead to being a successful user of the language.

NOTES

methodology: the way a subject is taught or approached **teacher-centered:** focusing on the teacher **sentence-level translation:** translation of sentences individually **target language:** the language one is trying to acquire **on top of this:** moreover **product:** the end result **process:** the journey in doing something **trial and error:** trying to do something and failing **active learner:** one who aggressively seeks out opportunities to use the target language **passive learner:** one who does little to improve in the target language or who expects the teacher alone to provide them with ability as a language learner **getting one's point across:** making someone understand



CD-02

III Questions • Answer the questions below.

1. How are classes generally taught in Japan?
2. How does that frequently affect language learning?
3. Why is it important to make mistakes?
4. What kind of language learner are you, the kind who only speaks when you think you are correct or the kind who isn't afraid to make mistakes?

IV Sentence Building • Look at each of the underlined parts in the passage and make a new sentence using the pattern by filling in the blanks.

- ① Learning to _____ becomes a secondary goal, if it becomes a goal at all.
仮に目標があったとしても、_____ **動詞句** を学習することは二次的な目標になっている。
- ② It is necessary to remember the importance of _____.
_____ **名詞や動名詞** の重要性を忘れないことが必要である。
- ③ Am I afraid to _____ for fear of _____?
_____ **名詞や動名詞** するかもしれないので自分は_____ **動詞句** することを恐れているのだろうか。

V Speaking • Talk about the following topic in a small group.

In the last sentence of the essay, the author says, "Only one of those two directions will lead to being a successful user of the language." What is the author referring to? What is the direction that will lead to success for language learners.

VI

What does it mean? • Look at the sign below. It contains mistakes in English. Correct any mistakes you find in the space below.



Follow

up

In your group, talk about what you are doing outside of the classroom to improve your English ability. Do you read in English for fun, listen to the radio or watch television in English? Do you chat on social media with friends in English? What are you doing to be an active learner of English?