



A Review of Error Analysis with Particular Emphasis to the Causes of Interlingual Errors and their Correction

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Abstract :

Considering its importance in second language acquisition (SLA), this paper provides a general descriptive review of error analysis (EA). The paper, likewise, attempts to give a particular emphasis to an important axis of EA, the causes of interlingual errors and their correction. The causes of these errors can become explicit by investigating some intralingual factors that include overgeneralization, faulty teaching, fossilization, avoidance and hypercorrection.

Keywords: *Error Analysis ; Overgeneralization ; Faulty teaching ; Fossilization ; Avoidance ; Hypercorrection*

1. Background

SLA is definitely an intricate process. Learners task to acquire a second language is always confronted by numerous difficulties. Thus, experts in the field of SLA should continuously provide the necessary theories and their praxis that may aid learners to take steps up the ladder in this respect. Zhao (2008) stresses a similar point of view by elucidating the value of SLA theories on language acquisition.

In this connection, as known, theorization has covered EA including one of its indispensable aspects, the causes of intralingual errors and their correction. Within reviewing EA, the researcher attempted to lay stress on the causes of interlingual errors and their correction. Comparatively, interlingual errors were regarded by



recent research in SLA as more important than interlingual errors and other errors belonging to different language components that may be outside their scope .

2. Error analysis in second language acquisition

2.1 Error

To begin with, a linguistic error occurs when second language learners deviate from the proper grammatical rules of second language . Thus, it is an inaccurate form in learners' language that differs from the forms used by competent or native users of the target language . Douglas (1994) states a similar idea by defining a linguistic error as an apparent deviation from the grammar of a native speaker reflecting the interlingual competence of second language learners . The term interlanguage refers to the overall linguistic system which characterizes the out-put of second language learners prior to their proficiency in the target language . A linguistic error is usually salient to native or competent users of a target language . As stated by Gass and Selinker (2001) , it can be described as a warning signal that provides evidence of learners knowledge in a second language . Broadly , errors are either interlingual , or interlingual . In second language acquisition and as mentioned by Othman (2015) , interlingual errors result from the interference of the native tongue , whereas interlingual errors result from the ineffective traits of learning such as the faulty applications of rules . Thus , one can say , interlingual errors are generally attributed to learners' partial knowledge of second language . Conversely , interlingual errors become apparent when learners insert elements of their native language onto the patterns of the target language .

Error identification is accessible in terms of form, linguistic level, modality, and what may be called broad causes . The form of sentences, i.e. , the way they are constructed denotes the errors made by second language learners . For instance, learners' sentences may contain insertion, substitution, and omission . The linguistic level and modality, also, facilitate the task of detecting the errors made by second



language learners . The linguistic level and modality relate to the different aspects of language like the level of proficiency in the four language skills, grammar, pronunciation, style, etc. Finally, the broad causes of errors can provide an access to the identification of these errors . The researcher believes the broad causes of errors are imputable to the concepts of interlingual and interlingual . In other words , learners' partial knowledge of second language and language transfer can be investigated as rich and exhaustive sources for tracing errors .

2.2 Error and mistake

In SLA, the words 'error' and 'mistake' may seem to indicate the same thing but they differ in a sense . Feltsen (2009), on the one hand, sees errors as something that we have to learn in order to correct . That is, second language learners consistently tend to make errors prior to receiving knowledge on them . An example of a typical error that is usually made by second language learners is the use of an infinitive with *to* after a modal auxiliary verb . Those learners, most probably, say or write *you may to take my car* in lieu of *you may take my car*. Other examples of typical errors are the use of the verb *be* followed by an incorrect form of a main verb as in the sentence *She is listens to music*, and the use of the verb *do* followed, also, by an incorrect form of a main verb as in the sentence *I did not completed the assignment* . Mistakes, On the other hand, can be corrected since knowledge on these mistakes has already been learnt .

2.3 Error analysis

When the study of errors in SLA gained ground, contrastive analysis (CA) appeared prior to EA in the 1950s as a means for handling this process . CA was originated by a behaviorist theory which attributed errors in second language learning to the interference of the native tongue . CA, as maintained by Khansir (2012), is a sub-discipline of linguistics which attempted comparing a first language with a second language to make apparent the similarities and differences between these languages to finally predict errors in using a second language . The Encyclopedic Dictionary of



Applied Linguistics (1999) postulates that the differences, in particular, between these languages are behind the difficulties in learning a second language. Hence, they could be regarded as a basis for the remedy and analysis of second language errors .

EA, the topic of the present paper, concisely, examines the deviations of second language learners from target-language criteria . As defined by Richard (1980), "EA is the collection, classification, and analysis of errors in the written and spoken performance of second language learners ." EA emerged in the late 1960s as a revolutionary alternative to CA . It has been stated earlier that CA attributed second language errors to language transfer only . This was regarded as a major shortcoming of CA that founded for EA to gain more privilege in studying errors . Comparatively, EA does not only attribute errors to language transfer, but also assumes their indication of global strategies .

As assumed by Corder (1967), EA can be advantageous to SLA since it provides insights into the innate nature of learners' system in the process of SLA . He describes errors as systematic and consistent deviances which give a comprehensible idea about how learners acquire second language . Then, errors should not be a source of inhibition to learners . Instead, errors are surely a basis that makes clear their learning strategies in SLA . Khansir (2012), considers learners' errors as contributory to making learners active participants in the formation and revision of hypotheses regarding the target language rules . James(1998) views errors as significant from a teaching perspective since they help in making decisions about what to teach . In view of these opinions , one will not be exaggerating if he considers EA as one of the tools that provide a profound idea of SLA .

Despite the merits of EA , some researchers have examined its shortcomings . For instance , as maintained by James (1998) , EA leaves an impression that second language learners are erroneous . James sees those learners as not deliberately deviant in their language use . As stated by the researcher within the background of the present study that SLA is definitely an intricate process . Thus , in SLA , it is natural for learners to be erroneous . Another shortcoming of EA can raise when we keep in



mind the so-called avoidance phenomenon . To put it differently , this shortcoming suggests that EA could not cover all learners' errors due to the simple reason that learners adopt an avoidance strategy in SLA . That is , as agreed by many researchers , certain language aspects are avoided by learners due to their difficulty . So , the expected errors in these language aspects would not be explicit in the investigation of EA . Also , focusing on accuracy at the expense of complexity and fluency is a noticeable defect of EA . These three ways should be considered together in describing learners' language . Housen et al (2009) view these ways as descriptors for the oral and written performance of second language learners as well as indicators of their proficiency and progress in language learning . Finally , there is a unanimity among many researchers that EA lacks subjectivity and mainly manifests statistical data .

2.4 The steps of analyzing errors

The late British linguist , Stephen Pit Corder has published thorough articles on EA . His writings provide a basis for EA research . Most researchers consider Corder as the creator of procedures that greatly provide an answer to how error analysis could be conducted . These steps , consecutively , appear in collecting samples of learner language , identifying errors , describing errors , explaining errors and finally evaluating errors .

2.4.1 Collecting samples of learner language

As stated in the abstract , the paper attempts to give a particular emphasis to interlingual errors within the general review of EA . The researcher has previously explained that these errors occur while acquiring a second language . Hence , generally speaking , one reason that makes collecting samples of these errors divergent is their occurrence while learners handle the different components of second language . These language components create a rich environment for the errors second language learners tend to make . Another reason that makes collecting samples of interlingual errors a divergent task appears in their occurrence within different educational stages keeping in mind the fact that the nature of errors could differ from



an educational stage to another . For instance , the nature of errors in the secondary stage differ from the nature of errors in the university stage . A third reason that makes collecting samples of interlingual errors a divergent process is their occurrence on both levels of second language , the spoken level and the written one . In order to make clear statements as regards the kind of errors learners produce and under what conditions , Al-Khresheh (2016) suggests that the sample of learner language should be definite . It should similarly considers learners level and manifests either the spoken or written form of language .

2.4.2 The identification and description of errors

Identifying errors requires deciding on their type and to which language component these errors belong . Also , as has been clarified by the researcher under the sub-heading entitled error and mistake , the identification of errors necessitates showing the difference between error and mistake . In any sample of learner language which is collected for the purpose of analyzing errors , attention should be given to errors . As has been mentioned earlier , mistakes are less serious than errors and learners do not need to receive education on their correction in order to correct them .

To describe errors , it is necessary to relate them to the language level in which they occur . That is , the semantic level , the syntactic level , the morphological level , etc. Also , Tizazu (2014) , asserts that the description procedure involves explaining how the improper forms of second language learners differ from the competent forms of native speakers in similar contexts .

2.4.3 The explanation and evaluation of errors

The explanation and description of errors denote processes which have something in common . Explaining why errors are made considerably founds for improving SLA (Torike , 2006) . The explanation of errors involves providing a comprehensive and an in-depth idea of their classification and causes . The researcher considers interlingual and interlingual errors as terminologies that embrace the other classifications of errors . More or less , these classifications include errors of performance and



competence , and local and global errors . Performance errors are less serious than competence errors and usually result from fatigue and hurriedness . Comparatively , errors of competence reflect insufficient learning and can generally be attributed to overgeneralization . As explained in the abstract , the explanation of overgeneralization as an interlingual factor will make the causes of interlingual errors explicit . It will be examined in the subsequent part of the present paper . Local errors are less serious than global errors . Local errors do not hinder communication , while global errors can cause the meanings of utterances to be incomprehensible .

In brief , the evaluation of errors involves determining how serious these errors are and whether or not they disrupt communication and understanding . Part of what has been discussed above , within the explanation of errors , can account for the evaluation of errors .

2.5 The causes of interlingual errors and their correction

2.5.1 The causes of interlingual errors

It has been stated in the abstract that the causes of interlingual errors can become explicit by examining the factors behind them . As illustrated by Touchie (1986) , these factors include overgeneralization , faulty teaching , fossilization , avoidance , and hypercorrection .

2.5.1.A Overgeneralization

Second language learners make overgeneralizations by extending their proper knowledge of grammatical rules and different forms in given contexts to other contexts where these grammatical rules and forms do not apply . For instance , a second language learner may make an interlingual error by forming the past simple of 'eat' as 'eated' because he or she knows that the past simple form of 'play' is 'played' .

2.5.1.B Faulty teaching



Faulty teaching can lead second language learners to make interlingual errors . Faulty teaching includes ineffective materials and the awkward way of presenting these materials . Hence , second language teachers should be knowledgeable and experienced . They should build their curriculums on second language learners' needs and the choice of agreed upon teaching strategies and principles .

2.5.1.C Fossilization

The researcher believes that fossilization is interrelated with faulty teaching . At times , some interlingual errors are labeled as fossilized . These errors are interrelated with faulty teaching because second language teachers make some errors which their learners inherit . By time , these errors become persistent and very difficult for second language learners to get rid of . So , as mentioned , they are labeled as fossilized . For instance , teachers' errors in pronunciation are liable to be inherited by their learners and then become fossilized .

2.5.1.D Avoidance

The researcher has earlier made reference to the idea of avoidance but from a different perspective , how it could be a shortcoming in the peocess of investigating EA .

Alduckhayel (2014) claims that the concept of avoidance was originated in 1974 by Jacquelyn Schachter in his book *An Error in Error Analysis* . Schachter confirmed the significance of examining second language forms learners tend to avoid in adition to the forms they tend to produce . Simply put , avoidance is a choosen strategy by second language learners to perform easier communicative tasks in tieu of the ones they consider as difficult . Thus , second language learners intentionally avoid the language uses they find difficult . In case they attempt to handle these difficult uses , second language learners will definitely be liable to make interlingual errors .

2.5.1.E Hypercorrection



Sometimes , second language teachers exert untold efforts in correcting learners . This pressing way of correction causes learners to make errors in their try to produce correct forms .Eckman and Iverson (2013) point out that hypercorrection describes a situation in which a form is extended beyond its linguistic usage resulting in an erroneous form . To reduce hypercorrection , varied methods of correction should be introduced in the second language classroom which should finally make learners less dependent on their teachers in correcting errors .

2.5.2 The correction of interlingual errors

Interlingual error correction is not a definite process . What to take into account as regards this process may differ from a teacher to another . It almost depends on teachers' general knowledge of their second language learners and the convenient methods of correction that should consider learners' individual differences .

Evidently , the interlingual errors to be corrected occur on the spoken and written levels of second language .

Generally , to avoid interrupting learners and making notes of their improper utterances to be corrected by the end of classes is a common strategy for correcting spoken errors . Other valid correction strategies for both language levels , as maintained by Teba (2017) , include self-correction , peer correction , and teacher correction . As known , self-correction takes place when learners correct themselves , while peer correction refers to learners' correction of each other . Peer correction creates a positive class atmosphere and leaves second language learners with a good impression and confidence since they realize that their teacher is not the ultimate source of correction . Teacher correction is necessary and can be used to re-explain problematic areas in language especially those areas in which self-correction and peer correction prove to be inefficient .

Recent research has indicated three types of interlingual errors to be targeted by error correction . These types of errors include stigmatizing errors , high frequency errors and the errors that block the meaning or understanding . Stigmatizing errors may be



alittle ununderstandable . Then , their illustration is more necessary than the other two types of errors . Touchie (1986) , referred these errors to sociolinguistic aspects of language learning . To phrase it differently , learners who belong to lower classes make stigmatizing errors while learning a formal language due to their exposture to an informal code before learning that formal language .The informal code is commonly referred to as restricted code .

3. Conclusion

By exploring EA within the present paper , its importance as an integral part of SLA has become quite apparent . There is no disagreement about the intensive research on EA in second language contexts . Nevertheless, one could say , its practical application in the second language classroom is seldom . Teachers should benefit from EA research by the frequent analysis and correction of the errors that emerge as part of the English language syllabi they teach . So , learners' errors will be reduced and they will acquire more proficiency in SLA .

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