

ANALYSIS OF ERRORS IN ENGLISH MADE BY TELUGU STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to analyze the errors in English written communication committed by Engineering students whose native language is Telugu. Further, the study also aims to find the frequency of such errors and if the factor “Mother Tongue (L1) Interference” is an active reason behind these errors.

Study of errors in English written communication is apart of the investigation of process of language learning. Corder (1974) also vehemently supported and emphasized upon the importance of studying errors made by second language learners. Study of errors in English written communication gives us indications on their learning process and provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner. The knowledge of the syntactic errors made by learners can help to develop an insight into their language learning process and hence help to improve upon the language teaching methodology. Kwok (1998:12) believed that language errors provide important information on the progress as well as language system of the learner. It is because of these reasons that the researcher wants to study the errors made by the learners to better understand the underlying reasons for these errors and provide some findings that may help to improve the process of learning and teaching English as second language. Engineering students from various colleges of Telangana State have been considered as sample for this study. A questionnaire-cum-data sheet was used as a sampling instrument to fetch information about profile of the students and to collect English written tasks from them. The written tasks included two general writing tasks and one academic task for the selected sample of students. A list of four topics which are relevant to youngsters were given in each task so that the students can choose any topic that they are comfortable with. IBM SPSS statistical package was chosen as Quantitative Research Technique to organize, analyze and draw inferences from the sample data to support the basic descriptive analysis of errors under different classification of errors.

INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition is the process in which a learner acquires the learning of an additional language apart from their first language. Hence, the first language learning can happen only after the learner has acquired their first language. The process of acquiring a second language happen either consciously or unconsciously and in a natural or tutored environment. During the process of acquiring a second language, the learners are prone to making errors. These errors are mostly related to syntactic structure of the target language.

“Error Analysis” as a field was developed as an alternative to Contrastive Analysis. Error Analysis in SLA was established in the 1960 by Stephen Pit Corder et. One of the most important findings of error analysis is that many errors committed by the learners are because of their faulty inference about the

rules of the new language. Language errors can be classified into the following basic types: Emissive, Additive, Substitutive, or related word order. They can also be classified based on how apparent they are - Overt Errors (e.g. "I angry") are evident even out of context, whereas Covert Errors are evident only in context. Errors may also be classified according to the level of language: Phonological errors, Vocabulary or Lexical errors and Syntactic errors. Error analysis can deal effectively only with learner production (spoken and written).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Sharma (1998) carried out a research to find out the errors in tense, agreement, preposition, article and spelling committed by secondary level school students. He also aimed at finding out the level of difficulty in using different types of articles. He administered a set of test items consisting of three subjective questions for free writing to collect data for his study and analysis. His study showed that the students committed 7.33%, 31.44%, 13.53%, 17.72%, and 29.65% errors in tense, agreement, preposition, article and spelling respectively. He found that the highest number of errors committed by students were in the usage of agreement and the lowest number of errors were in the usage of tense. He also found that the students were better in using article than they were in using preposition. Dangal (2006) carried out a similar research entitled "Errors Committed by Tenth Graders in Writing Guided Composition" to find out the errors in tense, agreement, conjunction, relative pronoun and spelling. He used a set of test items consisting of three items, viz. paraphrasing, parallel writing and story writing to collect the data for his study and analysis. His study showed that the students committed 21.35%, 38.28%, 12.68%, 1.12% and 27.15% errors in tense, agreement, conjunction, relative pronoun and spelling respectively. He found that they committed the highest number of errors in agreement and the lowest number of errors in relative pronoun.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

"Systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching" (Corder, 1974).

Error Analysis (EA) is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and the TL itself. Corder (1967) is considered the 'Father of Error Analysis'. It was through his article titled 'The Significance of Learner Errors' that EA took a new turn. In the article, he contended that those errors are 'important in and of themselves.' According to him, for learners too these errors are 'indispensable' since the making of these errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Gass and Selinker (2001) regarded these errors as 'red flags' that provide evidence of the learner's knowledge regarding the second language. Researchers have always been interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that learners use to acquire a language (Richards, 1974; Taylor, 1975; Dulay and Burt, 1974). Moreover, according to Richards and Sampson (1974) "At the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort."

ERROR ANALYSIS:

Error Analysis is the first approach to the study of second language acquisition (SLA) which includes focusing internally on the learners' creative ability to construct language. Error Analysis is based on the description and analysis of actual learner errors in L2. This is different from Contrastive Analysis which focuses on idealized linguistic structures attributed to native speakers of L1 and L2. During the 1950s and 1960s, a shift in interests began to emerge with more emphasis on pedagogical issues related to

second language studies. This difference in role of conceptualization and significance of errors changed with the publication of the article "The Significance of Learners' Errors" by Pit Corder (1967). In Corder's view errors are not just something that need to be eradicated. They are also important in and of themselves. Moreover, error analysis as an instrument was developed in the wake of the transformational-generative perspective which considers language a rule-governed system. In error analysis, it is more relevant to study the learner's performance in order to infer from it the nature of his/her competence and the processes by which the language is acquired. Also, learners make errors in both comprehension and production. They make a comprehension error when they misunderstand the sentence, for example 'pass me the paper' as 'pass me the pepper', because the learner is unable to make a distinction between the sounds /ei/ and /e/. However, comprehension errors have received very little attention. As Corder (1974:125) pointed out, "Although we can test comprehension in general terms, it is very difficult to assign the cause of failures of comprehension to an inadequate knowledge of a particular syntactic feature of a misunderstood utterance". In fact, in terms of processing, there is a fundamental difference between comprehension and production. In second language acquisition research, the focus is on production errors. However, not only do L2 learners make errors but children who are learning their first language (L1) also make errors. They frequently produce utterances like the following:

I goes see Auntie May (= I went to see auntie May.)

Eating ice cream (= I want to eat an ice cream.)

No writing in book (= Don't write in the book.)

Even errors are sometimes made by adult native speakers. For instance,
My father live in Gloucester (= My father lives in Gloucester).

In the above instance, the speaker omitted a grammatical morpheme, but it is probably true to say that these 'errors' are not generally thought of as errors in the same sense as those produced by L2 learners. Whereas L2 learners' errors are generally viewed as 'unwanted forms' (George 1972), children's 'errors' are viewed as 'transitional forms' and adult native speakers' errors as 'slips of the tongue'. Thus, Error Analysis is important to predict the errors that learners make by identifying the linguistic differences between their L1 and the target language. It also provides a methodology for investigating learner language and for this reason it constitutes an appropriate starting point to the study of learner language and L2 acquisition. Error Analysis is not a new development. It has long been a part of language pedagogy for analysis of learner errors. Corder (1967) in a seminal article, pointed out that error could be significant in three ways:

- They provided the teacher with information about how much the learner had learnt.
- They provided the researcher with evidence of how language was learnt.
- They served as devices by which the learner discovered the rules of the target language.

Whereas [1] reflects the traditional role of EA, [2] provides a new role that is of primary interest to the L2 researcher because it could shed light on how [3] imparts the process of L2 acquisition.

Thus, it is important to note that many researchers in EA in the 1970s continued to be concerned with language teaching. In fact, the attempts to discover more about L2 acquisition through the study of errors was deeply motivated by a desire to improve the existing language learning pedagogy.

IDENTIFICATION OF ERRORS:

After collecting a corpus of learner language, the errors in these corpora have to be identified. It is also important to know what constitutes an 'error' in order to establish a procedure for recognizing them. An error can be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language. But this definition lacks clarity and raises several questions. First, there is the question regarding which variety of the target language should serve as the norm. The general practice, especially where classroom learners are concerned, is to describe learners' oral production. But is it always possible to adopt the standard spoken variety as the norm? Some learners are exposed to varieties of the language which differ from the standard dialect. For example, she coped up with her problem very well.

DESCRIPTION OF ERRORS:

Description of errors can begin only when they have been recognized as errors. The job at this stage is "to describe the nature of the learner's interlanguage and then compare this with the target language. This is why error analysis is a brand of comparative linguistic study" (Corder 1973:274). Some researchers have felt the need to maintain a clear distinction in the description and explanation of errors. For example, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), argued the need for descriptive taxonomies of errors that focus only on observable and surface features of errors, which can then be used for subsequent explanation of the errors. Perhaps, the simplest type of descriptive taxonomy is one based on linguistic categories. General linguistic category includes the skeleton of English clauses - the auxiliary system, passive sentences, temporal conjunctions, and sentential complements. Each general category is then broken down into further levels of subcategories. For example, the auxiliary system is subdivided into 'do', 'have and be', modals, and mismatching auxiliaries in tag questions, while errors in the use of 'do' are classified according to whether they involve overuse in questions and negatives, underuse in questions or overuse in affirmative sentences. In 1960s, several studies provided descriptions of the different kinds of linguistic errors produced by learners. Richards (1971b), in a paper wrote that learner errors were the result of L1 interference. He examined errors made by learners from different language backgrounds (Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maaltese, and the major Indian and West African languages) and illustrated the different kinds of errors relating to the production and distribution of verb groups, propositions, articles, and the use of questions. However, he made no attempt to quantify the errors and so the extent of his linguistic categories accounted for all the errors he examined are unknown. Although there are no studies that were satisfactory in all the areas; however, there was considerable fluctuation in error frequency throughout the period. Chamot's study suggests that it may be difficult to provide a satisfactory description of learner's L2 development by quantifying the types of errors they make.

EXPLANATION OF ERRORS:

Explanation is concerned with establishing the source of the error that is accounting for why it was made. This stage is the most important for SLA research as it involves an attempt to establish the processes responsible for L2 acquisition. Taylor (1986) stated that the error source is in the following way:

- Psycholinguistic Sources: They concern the nature of the L2 knowledge system and the difficulties learners have in using it in production.
- Sociolinguistic Sources: They involve such matters as the learners' ability to adjust their language in accordance with the social context.
- Epistemic Sources: They concern the learners' lack of world knowledge.
- Discourse Sources: They involve problems in the organization of information into a coherent 'text'.

CONCLUSION:

The errors identified in this study have been coded according framework proposed by surface structure taxonomy. In addition, this study also has recognized the errors according to linguistic descriptions of errors in order to provide wider overview of such errors in oral speech production. Further, these types of errors were analyzed according to linguistic description of errors. It was found that the largest set of errors were verb form and word form of which the combined percentage is nearly 65% of total errors. Subject-verb agreement was also found to be the source of error and this was followed by sentence fragment, preposition, plural and conjunction. The findings of the study were not surprising as according to Lightfoot (1998), these types of linguistic errors are common among Asian learners.

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