Foreign language Errors 's Significance and Treatment

أهمية تحليل الأخطاء في تعلّم اللّغة الأجنبية وكيفية معالجتها

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ملخّص:

في مجال المنهجية ، هناك مدرستان للتفكير فيما يتعلق بأخطاء المتعلم. تعتقد المدرسة الأولى أنه حتى لو حققنا تعليمًا مثاليًا ، فسوف يتم ارتكاب الأخطاء لأن هناك دائمًا أوجه قصور في أساليب التدريس لدينا. المدرسة الثانية ، ولكن ؛ تقول أنه بما أننا نعيش في عالم غير كامل ، فإن الأخطاء ستحدث دائمًا. على هذا النحو ، يجب أن نجد تقنيات للتعامل مع الأخطاء بعد وقوعها. تحاول هذه الورقة إلقاء الضوء على تاريخ التحليل التبايني والتداخل اللغوي. يشرح بعض المفاهيم ويبسطها للقراء من ناحية ، ومن ناحية أخرى ، فإنه يصف تاريخ تحليل الأخطاء وأهميته في تدريس وتعلم اللغة الثانية / الأجنبية. الدراسة وصفية ونظرية ولكن يعتقد الباحث أن الممارسة تنبع من النظرية وبدون ممارسة تبقى النظرية من دون فائدة تذكر. وبالتالي ، إذا لم يكن متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية على دراية كافية بأنواع ومصادر أخطائهم ؛ لن يكونوا قادرين على التقدم وإيجاد استراتيجيات لتجنب أو تقليل أعداد الأخطاء التي يرتكبونها كلما طلب منهم التحدث أو الكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل التباين ؛ الأخطاء ؛ تحليل الأخطاء ؛ التداخل.

Abstract:

In the field of methodology, there are two schools of thought as far as learner's errors are concerned. The first school believes that even if we achieve a perfect teaching, errors still will be committed because there would always be inadequacies of our teaching techniques. The second school ,however ; it says that since we are living in an imperfect world, errors will always occur. As such then we must find techniques for dealing with errors after they have occurred. This paper tries to shed

light on the history of Contrastive Analysis and Language Interference. It explains some concepts and simplifies them to the readers in one hand, and on the other hand, it details the history of Errors Analysis and its significance in the teaching of Second/Foreign Language teaching and learning. The study is descriptive and theoretical but the researcher believes that practice stems from theory and without theory practice is useless and insignificant. Thus, if learners of English are not aware enough about the types and sources of their errors ; they will be unable to progress and find strategies to avoid or minimize the numbers of errors they commit whenever they are asked to speak or write.

Key words: Contrastive Analysis, Errors, Errors Analysis ,Interference

Introduction

Before 1970,SLA research was dominated by Constrastive Analysis research.. Linguistics compared languages to see what the diffrences were and then used those data to predict the transfer errors learners would make.It was hoped that the data from linguists could eventually be used to help design special drills and exercises that would help learners learn accurate use of second languages but not make any errors while doing so.The prevailing view of errors at that time was that errors were bad habits that must be broken and not reinforced.They were viewed as harmful.Eexperts felt that errors had to be avoided,even in the course of learning,and for decades SLA reserchers worked toward this goal.

By 1970, it was clear that Contrastive Analysis could not predict the errors learners would make,therefore,researchers concluded that their must be some other processes involved in second language learning besides interference. As researchers discoverd many errors that were clearly not due to interference,it became safe to assume that there must be other sources of errors besided the first language.Researchers then,shifted their focus from predicting errors based on contrasting language to classifing the various kinds of errors they saw learners making.It was hoped that by studing the various types of errors that learners made at various stages of learning, that reserchers could get a clearer view of the second language learning process.Thus,Error Analysis,the study of learner language for the purpose of classifing errors and identifing their sources,emerged as the dominant SLA research.

Whereas Contrastive Analysis was based only on the assumption that errors were all due to first language interference and were some how harmful to the learner's development,Error Analysis was based on the assumption that errors were a natural and healthy part of the language learning process_a natural by product of the learners step_by_step

discovery of the second language's rules through a process of trail and error.This process was called « Creative Construction ».

During creative construction, learners look to diffrent sources for information about the target language.Sometimes the learner simply assumes that features of his/her first language are the same as those of his/her target language,and so,transfer might occur as he/she tests out his/her assumption by using L1 features in the L2.This could be either successful or unsuccessful. In other times, a learner might vaguely know a rule of the target language and attempt to use it creatively.she might for example,generalize the rule to a new context she is unsure of.At times such creativity might be successful,at other times it may lead to an error.Learners could also get ideas from textbooks,movies,dictionaries,and other such materials and then test those ideas out when speaking or writing,sometimes resulting in errors,and somtimes resulting in accurate or successful use of the target langyage.In sum, learners could get ideas about the target language from many different sources,including themselves,and these ideas could result in both progress and errors.In that sense,the sources of errors are also the sourse of learners' knowledge.

Errors viewed in that light are now seen as a window to the learning process for reserchers.Errors are no longer viewed as mindless behavior such as « bad habit »,but actually considered to be the by_product of the learner's intelligent efforts to discover the rules of the target language.Simply put,learners,whith their incomplete and inaccurate knowledge about the language,can reasonably be expected to produce incomplete and inccurate utterances.Errors are in a sense,a type of knowledge the learner has about the target language.They are the hypotheses she is currently exprimenting with. For researchers , learners' errors can tell them about the learner's internal system of knowledge and the rules she follows.In facts,errors are often more useful than accurate language use because accurate language use could come from anywhere-it is impossible to guess the source of accurate language use. An accurate sentence produced by the learner could simply have been memorized,but inaccurate one is probably the result of misapplying some rule. Errors often have a certain character that gives away their source for example,it is possible to guess whether an error has come from the first language if it seems similar to the first language. Likewise,errors that do not resemble the first language but ressemble those made by children can be attributed to the natural

process of development.An utterance with a missing piece tells researchers that the learner's system is still missing some pieces.

According to Corder there are two major kinds of errors :

Systmatic error : also known as error of competence.This kind of error seems to occur because of some unknown rules. E.g : He can learns.

Non-systematic error : these are errors of performance,they are due to some psychological conditions as stress , anxiety, tiredness, slips of the tongue…ect.

Error analysts say that errors are significant in different ways :

1. It is significant to the teachers, it will tell him how is the learner learning and what remain for him to learn.
2. To the reserchers, it would tell them how language is learnt and what strategies are the learner employing.
3. To the learner himself,errors seem to be a device necessary to learn.

In error analysis, there are three varieties of language : a source language (LS),a target language (LT)and an approximative language (LA). A language usually involves the different steps we go through when learning a language.What has been proved to be important is that this (LA) takes grammar from (LT) and lexis from (LS).

Errors Analysis

I should explain Error Analysis in the relationship with Interlanguage because it is difficult to understand the construct of INTERLANGUAGE without the background of ERROR ANALYSIS.

1. The definition of Error Analysis involves a set of procedure for identifying,describing,and explaining errors in learner language.(Ellis,1994.p701)

Error Analysis (EA) is the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners.Error analysis may be carried out in order to : a. identify strategies which learners use in language learning b.try to identify causes of learner errors c.obtain information on common difficulties in language learning,as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.(Richards,Jack Cet al.1992. p.127)

2. The difference between Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis :(EA) became distinguished from contrastive analysis by its examination of error attributable to all possiple sources not just those

which result from negative transfer of the native language.(Broun,Douglas B.1994.p.206)

In the 1970s,Error Analysis supplanted Contrastive Analysis, which sought to predict the error that learners make by identifing the linguistic difference between their L1 and the target language.The underlying assumption of CA was that error occured primarily as a result of interference when the learner transferred native language 'habits' into the L2. Interference was believed to take place whenever the 'habits' of the native languages differ from those of the target language.CA gave way to EA as this assumption came to be challenged.whereas CA looked at only the learner's native language. EA provided a methodology for investigating learner language.(Ellis,1994.pp.47-48)

3. The importance of learner's errors are not negative things, learner's errors can be a strategy when learning a second/foreign language. 'A learner's errors are significant in three different ways.First to the teacher,in that they tell him,if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and consequently,what remains for him to learn .Second,they provide to the resercher evidence of how language is learned or acquirednwhat strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language.thirdly,they are indispensable to the learner himself,because we can regared the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn (Corder,1967).

4. The limitation of Error Analysis a.An overstressing of production data b.Fail to account for the strategy of avoidance c.too closely focused on specific language rather than viewing universal aspects of language.(Brown et al,1994).

5. The Contribution of Error Analysis a.Creativeness of much learner language b helped to make errors respectable_to force recognition that errors were not something avoided but were an inevitable feature of the learning process.

The concept of error : After the 1960's, it became evident that the language behaviour of children was characterised as the subconscious application of rule systems deviating stronger from the rule systems which adult speakers use.

Input→internal mechanism→output
Child's primary linguistic data→cognitive organiser→child's language behaviour

Errors now are considered to be invitable, necessary and systematic stages in the langauge learning process, and are taken to constitute (subconscious) hypotheses by the child about the language to be learned.

Traditionally, errors did not receive much attention and were regarded as regrettable by products of L2 learning which could and had to be avoided as much as possible with the help of efficient teaching.

The following steps are distinguished with Error Analysis (hence forth EA). Identifying errors, describing, explaining, evaluating, preventing ,then corecting errors.

Identification of errors : errors are deviations from the norms. The latter depend on the medium (spoken /written language) , the social context (formal/informal), and the relation betwwen the speaker and the hearer (symmentrical / asymmentrical)

Description and explanation of errors : under Contrastive Analysis we considered a close connection between the notions of 'error' and the notion of 'interference'

Transfer :   pro-active transfer : transfer of existing skills onto new skills

　　　　　　Retro-active transfer : transfer of new skills onto existing skills

In both cases, transfer may be positive or negative. Positive transfer or facilitation is transfer of skill which facilitates the learning or it has a positive influence on the command of a skill because of similarities between both skills. However, negative transfer or interference is transfer of a skill which impedes the learning or has a negative on the command of a skill because of differences between both skills.

Contrastive analysis is based on the assumption that L2 learners will tend to transfer struture L1 features to their L2 uttereances. Hence, CA focuses on pro-active interference rather than of retro-active interference and on production rather than on comprehension of language.

Typology of Errors :

First, S.Pit Corder (1971) distinguished :

-**Errors of competence** : which are the results of the application of rules by L2 learners which do not (yet) correspond to the L2 norm.

-**Errors of performance** : these are mistakes of language use and manifest themselves by repetitions, false starts, corrections or slips of the tongue. They are due to stress, indecision, or fatigue. For Corder,

learners can recognose and correct errors of performance, but not errors of competence.

Developmental errors : these are similar to L1 learning errors.

Errors Analysis and Remedial Teaching

Error analysis has two aims, the first one is a theoretical one. It investigates the learning process to find out the psychological learning processes. It aims at describing the learner's knowledge at any moment in the learning process and tries to relate it to the teaching that has been given so far. The second aim is a practical one. It has to do with the remedial teaching that is supposed to be given once learner's errors have been analysed. Error Analysis, then, enables us to specify and to plan the remedial work to be done.

What is remedial teaching : Nature, scope and problem of EA. EA is useful in planning remedial works. But it has some limitations.

Remedial work presupposes that there is disequilibrium between the knowledge, skill or ability a learner is supposed to have and some demands that are made on him in a specific learning situation

In some learning situations, the learner can avoid some productions when he feels that he will make an error. This is known as the avoidance phenomenon. However, sometimes learners are obliged to meet the requirements of the learning situation and thus will be unable to avoid it.

To diagnose : Remedial work means bringing the learner's knowledge up to the standard required by the situation. There is something wrong with the eduactional system and not with the teaching or the learner himself.

Why is remedial work necessary 're-teaching' that particular bit of the langauge which has proved to be a problem but once the learners' difficulties have been understood, not just to classify the error but to try to know why it occured.

First case : errors of communication, omission, wrong sequence, wrong selection.

Second case : if errors are natural as analogical errors (which are a result of the learner's mother tongue. In the comparison of the mother tongue and the target langauge within a linguistic and psycholinguistic enterprise we try to deal with such errors by predicting and avoiding their occurrence.

Conclusion : Some errors need to be corrected; otherwise, they will become fossilized. EFL teachers should be aware of what is going on

in the field of Error Analysis and keep a keen eye on the related theories In addition, while placing an emphasis on error correction in the classroom, as language teachers, we should take the teaching objectives, students' linguistic competence, their affective factors and the effectiveness of the error correction into consideration. Consequently, we can employ more flexible strategies in error correction and make more contributions to the EFL classroom teaching and learning Error analysis is significant, but it also has its limitations; there is a danger in too much attention to learners' errors and in the classroom teacher tends to become so preoccupied with noticing errors that the correct utterance in the second language will go unnoticed. While the diminishing of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the achievement of communicative fluency in a language(Amara,2015). Language is only a means of communication.

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