

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER

IJELLH

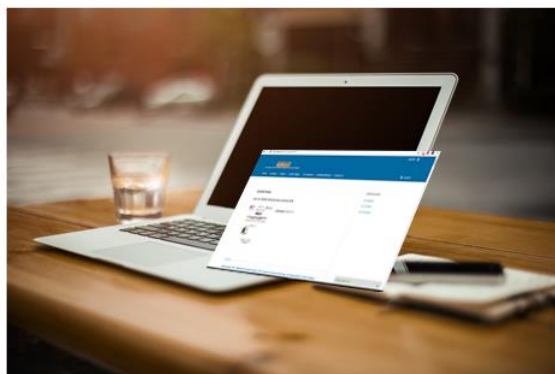
Crossref
INDEX  COPERNICUS
INTERNATIONAL

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

UGC Approved Journal

ISSN-2321-7065



**Volume 6, Issue 7
July 2018**

www.ijellh.com

Ritika Sinha

MA English, MA Linguistics, PGDMC

Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

GGDSD College, Chandigarh

India

ritika.ritika@gmail.com

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING ERRORS; ANALYSING TYPES AND SOURCES OF ERROR IN ACQUISITION OF SECOND LANGUAGE

Abstract

The analysis of errors in language acquisition deals with examining the language learner's output, including both his correct and incorrect utterances. The distinction between the first and second language of the learner accounts for errors during the language acquisition process. A learner acquiring any language as a second language encounters many kinds of learning problems dealing with its sound system, vocabulary, structure, etc. Moreover, the native language of this learner is deeply implanted in him as part of his habit. Very often, he transfers his habit into the second language he learns, which perhaps will cause errors. This paper lists the major types of errors in second language learning. Further, the paper traces the sources of second language learning errors which can be both interlingual and intralingual or developmental.

Keywords- Language, Acquisition, Second language, First Language, language Errors

Introduction

The first language (L1) is the native language or the language that a person has been exposed to from birth and the speaker is brought up speaking this language. Second language (L2) is a language that is not the mother tongue of the speaker and is acquired much later in life. It is any language that one speaks other than one's first language. A Marathi user learning Hindi or teaching English to a Punjabi speaker are instances of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The acquisition of second language depends on varied factors like learner's

personality, his background, his learning situation, etc. The primary goal of learning a second language is the development of communicative capability in the target language.

However, Errors are an indispensable part of language learning process. Error is a discrepancy in acquisition of the target language because the learner is still at a stage when acquisition is yet to be completed. Errors in second language learning are generally regular and easily identifiable. For instance, the over-application of the s-plural to all nouns in English like 'mans', 'foots' and 'tooths' etc. Second language learning thus aims to educate the learner to appreciate the fact that many word classes contain a degree of irregularity.

Brown (1993) differentiates between Mistakes and Errors. A Mistake or Lapse is a performance error. It is an inability of the learner to utilise a known system correctly but has no bearing on learner's competence to acquire a language. But an error is a deviation which reflects the competence of the learner. It is a systematic deviation made by the learner as he has not yet mastered the rules of the target language. Mistakes are a random, non-systematic and usually unpredictable phenomenon in second language learning. They arise on the spur of the moment when speaking and are not indicative of any acquisition stage.

Mistakes can be made by the learner, both in native and second language learning. Corder (1992) claims that a mistake is a random performance slip caused by fatigue, excitement, etc. and therefore can be readily self-corrected. However, an error in language acquisition cannot be self-corrected by the learner and it reflects his or her current stage of L2 development, or underlying competence (Larsen, 1992).

Importance of error identification

The significance of learners' errors in second language learning has been substantiated by detailed research in applied linguistics. An error is considered as a device which the learner uses in order to learn. An error signals how far the learner has progressed, what remains to be known and what strategy the learner is using to acquire the second language.

Selinker (1969) states that error identification is significant in three respects:

- (1) It is helpful for the language teacher because error identification indicates the learner's progress in language learning.

- (2) The language researcher also benefits from the identification of errors as they provide insights into how language is learnt.
- (3) Identifying an error is significant to the language learner himself/herself as he/she gets involved in hypothesis testing.

Selinker (1992) further states that the making of errors can be regarded as 'a device the learner uses in order to learn. Thus, error is a proof that the learner is learning. The Error is the bridge that the learner must pass to achieve the target language and this bridge language produced by the learner is called interlanguage.

Major types of error in SLA

The second language acquisition is significantly influenced by the learner's knowledge of his native language. As early as the forties and fifties, Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) emphasised that the native language plays mostly a negative role during SLA. The Errors committed due to the influence of the native language are called interlingual errors. In-depth research proved that Intralingual or developmental errors are an equally significant cause of errors made by the second language learner.

Richards (1971) classified errors observed in the acquisition of English as a second language as follows:

- a) Overgeneralisation are the instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structure of the same target language.
- b) The failure to observe the rule restrictions or to comply with existing structures of the target language.
- c) Incomplete application of rules occurs when the learners is unable to fully master a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences of target language.
- d) Faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language causes the learner to hypothesise false concepts.

The major types of errors can be classified as follows:

1. Simplification:

This error occurs when the learner replaces simple forms and constructions instead of using complex ones. For example, a learner commits an error of simplification when he uses simple present instead of the present continuous to discuss future plans as in 'We rarely go out for

dinner, but this week we go out on Sunday'. However, the correct utterance is 'We rarely go out for dinner, but this week we are going out on Sunday'.

2. Overgeneralization:

It implies overextension of a rule. It occurs when the application of a form or construction used in one context is extended to other contexts where it should not apply. An example of overgeneralisation is the extended use of 'ed' as a past tense marker in English verb 'run' as in 'I turned back and runned towards my house'. Research proves that simplification and overgeneralisation are used by learners in an attempt to reduce their linguistic burden.

3. Hypercorrection:

At times, the steadfast efforts of teachers in correcting their students' errors might work negatively and could rather induce the students to make errors in otherwise correct forms. Stenson (1978) calls this type of error '-induced errors'.

4. Inappropriate teaching:

Faulty teaching schedule can also be a reason for second language acquisition errors. These teacher-induced errors can be caused by the teacher, teaching materials, methods employed or the order of presentation.

5. Fossilization:

It refers to errors which persist for long periods and become quite difficult to get rid of. Specifically errors in pronunciation are an example of fossilised errors. Incorrect pronunciation of the second language vocabulary is very difficult to overcome.

6. Avoidance:

A difficult language structure might propel the learner to avoid it. Certain syntactic structures are difficult to produce. Consequently, the learners avoid these structures and use instead simpler structures.

7. Inadequate learning:

The ignorance of rule restrictions, under-differentiation or incomplete learning can lead the learner to produce incorrect collocations in the target language. For example non adherence to the rule of subject-verb agreement in English might result in an error like 'She go' or 'They

goes'.

8. False concepts hypothesised:

The wrong hypotheses formed by the learners about the target language can also result in language acquisition errors. For example, a learner might think that 'Is' is the marker of the present tense. So, he utters 'He is eat the cake'. Similarly, 'was' is incorrectly hypothesised as the past tense marker. Hence the learner says 'It was happened last night'.

Sources of error in SLA

The applied linguists maintain that the difference between the L1 and L2 is the prime cause or the sole reason of L2 learner's problems and errors. Primarily the 'PULL' of the mother tongue which operates during the process of second language acquisition(SLA) causes the knowledge of L1 to interfere and pose problems for the second language learner. The invasive effect of the first language operates at all levels of language acquisition-phonological, grammatical, lexical and cultural.

The contrastive analysis hypothesis propounded by Robert Lado(1957) advocates that the difficulties imposed by L1 and the differences between the two languages results in errors in second language acquisition. This situation of language transfer accounts for similarities and dissimilarities between the first and the second language. And that these linguistic differences can be overcome by an interlingual comparison, followed by predicting the learners difficulties and focusing on the problem areas.

However, subsequent empirical studies of errors made by second language learners revealed that interferences from the learner's mother tongue is not the sole reason for committing errors in the target language. Many errors are not traceable to the structure of the first language. These peculiar errors are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds. (Richards, 1971; Buteau, 1970).

The concept of contrastive analysis has been put under constant scrutiny and researchers have instead argued for error analysis. Stephen Pit Corder (1960) advocated the theory of Error analysis in SLA. Error analysis (EA) brought forth the drawbacks of contrastive analysis and showed that though contrastive analysis provides valuable input to the theory of Language transfer but it was unable to predict a great majority of errors!

The EA argues that though the first language is one of several sources of error, but other sources also need to be considered. The EA theory holds that the errors are produced majorly by the second language learner in situations where he makes a faulty inference about the rules of the new language to be acquired.

We can distinguish two major sources of errors in second language learning. The first source of error is interference in the target language from the native language. The second source can be attributed to intralingual and developmental factors. Interlingual errors are interference errors caused by the native language of the second language learner while intralingual errors occurs when a target language rule is applied to areas where it is not applicable.

Corder's Theory stresses on the identification of the difficulties contributing to errors during SLA. Thus, error was the focal point in Corder's theory and he laid the steps of error analysis:

1. Identification of errors
2. Description of errors
3. Explanation of errors
4. Evaluation of errors
5. Prevention of errors

Identification of errors

The first step involves collecting samples of learner's language to identify the problematic area. An error is where the language learner does not possess the knowledge of the correct usage.

A difference here is made between an error and mistake. As stated earlier, Errors arise from the lack of competence which results in faulty application of rules by second language learners which do not correspond to the actual rules of L2. A mistake is where the language learner possesses the knowledge, but has a lapse in memory. Lapses is an error in second language performance due to processing limitation. Slips of tongue and repetition are examples of lapses. For example it is a mistake when a learner, who knows the distinction between animate and inanimate and has the knowledge of pronouns, uses the pronoun 'she'

when referring to an inanimate object as in 'She is made of teak wood' where 'she' is used as a pronoun to replace 'The table'.

Description of errors

After mistakes are eliminated from the errors, the errors are classified in terms of occurrence. The error can occur at the language level (structural- phonology, morphology, syntax), in general linguistic usage (passive sentences, etc) or in specific linguistic elements (nouns, articles, etc).

Explanation of errors

It answers the premise; Why was the error made? This stage helps to identify the types of errors and differentiate the source of the errors committed into interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors arise majorly due to interference from first language on the second language.

Intralingual error are within the language which shows a gap in knowledge of the rule. The error is Intralingual when the knowledge of L1 is not transferred to L2.

Evaluation of Errors

The optimal evaluation of errors and its causes is the next important step of error analysis. It investigates how serious are the errors? Do they cause a lack of understanding? Both, differences and similarities between L1 and L2 can cause errors. More is the difference between L1 and L2, more are the errors committed. However, too much similarity between L1 and L2 can cause overlap and can confuse a learner, causing errors. This is the very reason that a native speaker of German, learning Dutch as a second language commits errors because of the similarity between these two languages!

Prevention of Errors

Here, Practise works magic! Learning a language is conquered by using it in communicative situations. The prevention of errors and the proficiency in the second language can only be acquired through repeated use and error correction.

Conclusion

The differences between first language and second language are the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language. The process of second language learning involves 'selective unlearning' or the 'wilful suspension' of certain internalised rules of the first language which might interfere with SLA. Inability to do so produces Errors in SLA. The errors can be both Interlingual or Intralingual. A comprehensive error analysis is an indispensable process to facilitate second language learning and help the language learner to attain a native like proficiency in the target language.

Bibliography

- sCorder, S. P. (1973). *Introducing Applied Linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Richards, J. C., Platt, J. T., & Platt, H. (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Essex, England: Longman.
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The Significance of Learners' Errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 5, 161-170.
- Richards, J.C. (1974). *Error Analysis and Second Language Strategies*. Longman.
- Larsen, Diane, et al. (1992) *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London: Longman
- James, Carl (1998) *Errors in Language Learning and Use – Exploring Error Analysis*. Essex: Pearson.
- Corder, S. P. (1974). Error Analysis. In J. P. B. Allen, & S. Pit Corder (Eds.), *Techniques in Applied Linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press.