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Errors in the Use of English Strategies

Abstract

While learning a second language the learner is bound to commit errors. These errors committed by the other language learner can be grouped under two heads, interlingual and intralingual errors. Errors do not always occur due to the interference from mother language. This paper focuses on the developmental errors also. Further I attempt to see the various strategies, the learner uses in order to acquire the second language system. In order to acquire the second language system.

Keywords: Factors Responsible For The Situation, Socio-Economic Background, Socio-Cultural Background.

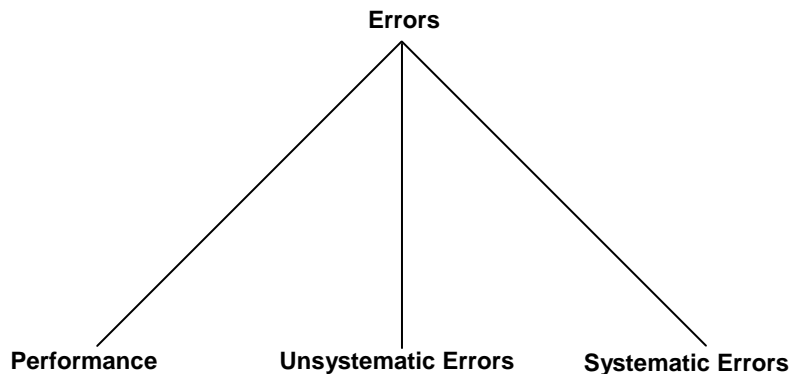
Introduction

Even though Patiala is a hub of education with a university, a college of education, a college of physical education. and half a dozen other private and government colleges. The English language continues to pose a problem. In spite of the best efforts of the teacher a vast majority of students fail to pick up the niceties of the language. Keeping this in mind I decided to made an in-depth study of the errors made by learners of English language in Patiala region.

While learning a second language students commit errors. Errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors is an effective meaningful means of improving and accurate learning.

Pit Corder (1974) has made an in-depth study of errors in the learning of second language. He feels that an analysis of errors is significant because of various reasons. The errors indicate the level of progress made by the learner, the strategies and procedures adopted by him and also provide an effective means of testing his hypothesis about the native of second language. Error analysis is an indispensable tool for the language instructor as it gives him the opportunity of assessing the teaching technique adopted. It can also suggest possible modification in the syllabi and teaching methodology. Errors provide an indispensable data base in the study of the learners language. Error is taken as inevitable in the development of second language learning and as valuable aspect of learning. Dulay and Burt (1974) is of the view that "you cannot learn without goofing" (Stern, 1987: 354). Errors should not be taken as an ailment that needs to be eradicated. On the whole, it is an important tool to diagnose and assess the progress made by the learner.

Before an analysis of errors, it is important to identify and seek out errors which are due to learner's output and which are not. Errors can be classified as follows:-



Performance Errors

Performance errors can be traced to performance. Even in our mother tongue such performance errors are visible. We commit such errors due to some slip of the tongue or lack of attention or mere fatigue. 'Lapses'

Rupinder Kaur
Associate Professor,
Deptt. of English
Govt. Mohindra College,
Patiala

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can be defined as those deviations from the norm which are made unintentionally and as a result the intended meaning gets distorted to some extent, but such instances are neither frequent nor common.

Unsystematic Errors

Unsystematic errors are those mistakes which are not based on any system i.e. they do not occur from any underlying system but from superficial influences. Such errors do not reflect the learner's developing system. In other words, mistakes are such expressions which are not correct from the point of view of grammar. They also fail to communicate the intended meaning. However, they do not occur frequently or consistently. So, mistakes are those deviations from the norm that occur at random. In the case of mistakes the learner recognizes it himself and corrects it.

Systematic Errors

Systematic errors are those errors that occur due to a set pattern in the mind of the learner. Systematic errors are those expressions that are incorrect grammatically and distort the meaning. The occurrence of error is consistent, frequent and systematic. In language theory mistakes are tolerable but errors are unacceptable.

The errors committed by the learner of the second language so that he has stored knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar rules of his native language. These 'interference errors' are identified by contrastive analysis. Richard (1972) has distinguished errors as 'intralingual error' and 'development error'. These errors do not occur due to any interference of the learner's native-tongue but are evidence of a 'system' of the target language which the learner forms in his mind in the process of learning. Distinction of errors has been also made by Pit Corder (1974) in the following manner.

The Presystematic Stage

The learner commits error at random because he is unaware of the system which operate in second language.

The Systematic Stage

A learner commits errors on a regular basis because he is following a wrong rule of the target language. He is able to give an account of the rules he has followed.

The Post Systematic Stage

Post systematic is the stage where the learner is able to speak correctly occasionally. Sometimes he makes errors and can correct himself if asked to do so.

Aims of Study

The study of language learning remains incomplete without an in-depth analysis of errors that creep into its usage. This paper aims at analysing the errors in the use of English when it is used as a second language learning.

Error Types

Errors can be classified as follows:

1. Interlingual Errors

Errors occur as a result of confusion between two languages i.e. transfer of rules from mother tongue to the second language for example

'My head is circling' or 'My father has two-two cars'. Lexical repetition is a feature of Punjabi which is transferred to English. Error like 'they have hungry' is another example of interference from mother tongue.

2. Intralingual and Developmental Errors

Developmental errors imply that the learner is processing the second language in his own way and these errors are similar to those that occur in mother tongue also. For instance, 'they hungry' instead of 'they are hungry'. Intralingual errors occur within the same language for example 'I and he went to the library' instead of 'He and I'. Intralingual or developmental errors can be further categorized as:-

(i) Overgeneralization

In the case of transfer, the learner hypothesizes from his previous mother tongue experiences, while in the case of over generalization he uses his previous knowledge of second language system. For instance, English has a rule for forming plurals. A noun can be made plural by adding 's'. For example the learner often writes 'mouses, oxes, mans, instead of 'mice, oxen, men' and in past tense, the learner has learnt to use 'ed' words like 'goed, comed, writted, pulled' are due to overgeneralization. The learner is not aware of the situation in the second language.

(ii) Simplification

It means redundancy reduction. In other words, the learner commits errors by omitting grammatical necessities. For example, 'He makes noise', 'a' article is missing or 'Daddy want chair' instead of 'wants'. The learner, in order to reduce the pressure from his mind, simplifies the sentences. For example, 'Yesterday I go to the cinema and see a movie', 'ed' past maker carries no meaning since the tense is conveyed lexically by the word 'yesterday'. Some times, it is noticed that all utterances are not difficult to understand as their meaning is understood. For example, 'He fat man'. The learner has used the content morphemes but grammatical morphemes are deleted. The reason may be that they are difficult to learn in the second language. No doubt, the context in which they occur, supplies the missing element. But, sometimes, redundancy creates comprehensive problem for example 'Mummy socks'. But, one thing is obvious that it depicts the creative aspect of the learner. He tries to construct new utterances for expressing new meanings.

(iii) Fossilized Errors

Fossilized errors can be problematic in language – learning because these errors become ingrained like bad habits and they reappear despite remediation and correction. Fossilized errors become a permanent feature of the learner's language and are different from transitional errors which eventually disappear with the passage of time. Obvious examples are pronunciation errors as in the case of Punjabi 'phul' 'tation' 'ju' in place of 'fool', 'station', 'you'. It is believed that when the speaker's communicative or functional needs are satisfied despite fossilization, then he feels that the errors are not obstacles. In India, South Indians are a good example of it.

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(iv) Unique Errors

Unique errors occur when the learner is in the 'intermediate stage of language acquisition. Such errors are neither transfer of first language nor because of limited comprehension of second language but an independent phenomenon. For example 'Them hungry'.

Strategies

In order to acquire the second language system, the learner uses various strategies. The strategies involved show how he processes the data of the language and errs in the process.

(i) Language Transfer

Transfer of rules and structure from the mother tongue to second language is one of the active strategies for many learners in sensing the language data. Earlier instances transfer was considered as 'errors' casued by non-learning, but recently it is seen as a process of creative construction'- transfer of rules from mother tongue may be one of te learner's active strategies for making sense of the d₂ data. Most researchers agree that second language learner already possesses a 'set of habits' of his first language and most of the errors are due to transfer from native language. Using his previous knowledge as a tool of organizing the second language data is taken as part of his creative process. A rather similar proposal is made by Krashen (1982) when he suggests that leaners can use the L₁ as a resource for adhoc translation to overcome their limitation. (Ellis, 2008) As Pit Corder expresses it, the language provides a learner with a 'rather rich and specific set of hypothesis' which the learner can use... (as cited in Littlewood 1984:26) The second language learner is likely to feel that everything he learns is different from his mother tongue, whereas in fact there are many ways in which his mother tongue knowledge can be directly transferred.' Sentences like 'Maharani,-eater of your parents' is totally translated from mother tongue. 'Respected Doctor Shahib', 'May God bless you with a son' are cultural bound sentences. The following sentences 'My prof. will eat me up', 'I am having a new car', 'I will come by walk', 'We had a party', 'we enjoyed very much', 'Who and who came to party' all are good examples of transfer from mother tongue.

(ii) Transfer of Training

Transfer of training is when the interlanguage rules in the IL can be traced to the training procedures and techniques. The manner in which a language is taught will ultimately go a long way to determine the manner in which he ultimately speaks it. In the educational institutions of the region the students get into the habit of using present continuous instead of present simple. Many teachers overemphasize the present continuous tense in the class. The result is the overuse of the present continuous tense, at the cost of the simple present'. For instance, occasionally, the student says, 'I am studying in Govt. College' instead of 'I study in Govt. College'. A few teachers are themselves accustomed to using these ways, for example, 'I am teaching in a college' instead of 'I teach in a college'. Poorgradation

of teaching items is also responsible for errors. For instance, when 'too' and 'very', two different issues, are taught together, it leads to confusion between the two and errors result. Classroom teaching should make sure that the practical grammar exercises are close to the format of spoken English. At present, change of 'voice' is taught often with examples like the following:

John had a little lamb.

Sam slept on the bed.

The learner will obviously end up with

A little lamb was had by John.

The bed was slept on by Sam.

Sentences like the above, are not usually used in spoken English.

(iii) Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization of target language rules means, that the learner, while internalizing a rule of second language, generalizes it beyond its limits. It is a strategy where the learner 'creates deviating structures on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language. Richard (1985:p 48) gives the following examples in this regard:

He can sings.

It is occurs.

We are hop.

Teacher	Instruction	Student
He walks quickly.	Change to continuous.	He is walks quickly.

He further says that sometimes teaching techniques of certain types, along with pattern drills and transformation exercises get mingled leading to overgeneralization. His example is

(iv) Ignorance of Rule Restriction

This refers to the 'application of rules of context where they do not apply. For example 'The man who I saw him' and'I made him to do it' violates the restriction on subjects in sentence structure with 'who' and ignores restrictions on the distribution (1985:49) 'make'. Richard states that rote learning and analogy are responsible for the following sentences:

'He said to me' becomes 'He asked to me'.

The Learner's False Concepts Hypothesized

Faulty rule-learning at various levels and stages and 'faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language are the root cause of this class of development errors. For example, 'was' is understood by the learner as past maker and 'is' is present maker which results in sentences like:-

One day it was happened.

He is speaks French.

The above discussion clarifies the 'error situation' in the learning of second language from the point of view of grammatical rules.

(v) Communication Strategy

This type of errors can be traced to the stress of communication. When the learner is under pressure to communicate, he tends to simplify the syntax, vocabulary and phonology. As a result, errors creep in because the rules of language are not taken into consideration. The speaker of second language is involved in conversation but does not have full

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confidence to carry out the conversation as he lacks appropriate vocabulary and finds it difficult to express himself. He tries out various ways of putting his meaning across and tries to cope up with the situation. In fact, he uses diverse means to compensate for the weakness that lies in his linguistic repertoire. According to Littlewood (1984) he uses the following strategies:-

(i) Paraphrasing

When he is unable to recall a suitable word. For example, 'bucket' is spoken of as 'the thing that you carry water in'.

(ii) Approximation

The learner tries to use a word which expresses a meaning as close as possible to the relevant word. For instance 'some bird' instead of 'sparrow'.

(iii) Hybridation

Sometimes to fill in the gap, the obvious strategy is to create new words by literally translating the element in a native language like the words 'lathicharge', 'policewalla', 'goondaism', 'respected doctor sahib', 'court kachari', etc.

(iv) Code Mixing

It means incorporating a word from native language into the target language. For instance:

Spice hai, to life hai.

In a bilingual society, the classroom teaching-learning process often makes use of it.

(v) Use of Non-Linguistic Resources

Sometimes a speaker conveys the meaning through gestures and expressions. The other easier way is to avoid any kind of discussion if one does not have the necessary vocabulary at his disposal.

Communicative Errors

'Error study' is done in terms of communicative effect. It is believed that these strategies give birth to 'fossilized error' because the focus is on 'communicative competence' rather than 'grammatical competence'. The speaker's whole energy

is channalized in one direction only i.e. communication. Two types of errors affect communication— Global and local errors. Global errors are generally more problematic than local errors. A global error is one in which the whole sentence is messed up. The word order is wrong. Even the message may not come across and there are always chances of a break down in communication. In case of local errors, they are less distractions than global error. For instance 'he is sitting on chair'. The article is missing but meaning comes out clear.

Recently, there has been a shift from formal learning to functional learning. In communicative approaches 'errors' are tolerable to some extent but traditionally errors were regarded negatively. The use of these strategies means that learner does not have mastery over the second language. In free conversation focus is on meaning rather than form. Fluency is aimed at and is considered more important than accuracy.

Conclusion

Earlier errors were considered as sign of failure, But, at present they are taken as an essential part of language learning and as an indication of the extent of progress made by the learner and of what was left unlearned.

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