**Error Analysis**

**Introduction**

Arising from the shortcomings of CAH to adequately account for

many aspects of second-language learners' language, a number of

researchers began to look for an alternative approach for the study of errors; an approach which would be theoretically more justifiable and pedagogically practicable. This new approach, which is based on theories of first and second language acquisition and possible

similarities between them, became known as Error Analysis (EA).

In second-language learning, a more positive attitude developed

towards learners' errors compared to what was prevalent in the

Contrastive Analysis tradition. Errors were no longer considered as

evil signs of failure, in teaching and/or learning, to be eradicated at

any cost; rather, they were seen as ***a necessary part of language***

***learning process.***

Error Analysis emerged as a reaction to the view of second language

learning proposed by contrastive analysis theory, which saw

language transfer as the ,central process involved in second and foreign

language learning. Error Analysis tries to account for learner

performance in terms of the cognitive processes learners make use of

in reorganizing the input they receive from the target language. A

primary focus of error analysis is on the evidence that learners' errors

provide to an understanding of the underlying processes of second language

acquisition. It studies the unacceptable forms produced by

second or foreign language learners.

It is widely believed that language learning, like acquiring virtually

any other human learning, involves the making of errors. As Dulay,

Burt & Krashen (1982) assert, people cannot learn language without

frrst systematically committing errors. The Ieamer profits from his/her

errors by using them to obtain feedback from the environment and in

turn use that feedback to test and modify his/her hypotheses about the

target language. Thus, from the study of learner's errors (Error

Analysis) we are able to get some information about the nature of

his/her knowledge of the target language at a given point in his/her

learning career and discover what s/he still has to learn.

By describing and classifying the Ieamer' s errors in linguistic terms, we build up apicture of the features of the language which are causing him/her learning problems. In this respect, the information we get is similar to that provided by Contrastive Analysis.

Error Analysis, thus, provides a

check on the predictions of bilingual comparisons, and in as much as

it does this, it is an important additional source of information for the

selection of items to be incorporated into the syllabus.

The claim for using error analysis as the primary pedagogical tool

was based on three arguments:

(I) error analysis does not suffer from

the inherent limitations of CA - restriction to errors caused by mother

tongue interference: EA brings to light many other types of errors

frequently made by learners,

(2) error analysis, unlike

contrastive analysis~ provides data on actual, attested problems and

not hypothetical problems, and thus forms a more efficient and

economical basis for designing pedagogical strategies; and

(3) error analysis is not confronted with the complex theoretical problems encountered by CA.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion it can be concluded that

error analysis is based on three important assumptions, as follows:

1. Errors are inevitable as we cannot learn a language, be it frrst

or second, without goofing, i.e. without committing errors.

2. Errors are significant in different ways.

3. Not all errors are attributable to the learner's mother tongue,

i.e. first language interference is not the only source of

errors.

**RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE ERRORS**

Receptive Errors: Receptive errors occur when a learner misunderstands or misinterprets language input they receive through listening or reading.

Examples:

1. A student hears "can't" but understands it as "can" because they don't catch the negative contraction.
2. A learner reads "lead" (as in leadership) but interprets it as the metal "lead" due to the same spelling.
3. A student misunderstands idiomatic expressions like "it's raining cats and dogs" literally.

These errors happen in the learner's mind and aren't always obvious to teachers unless they specifically test for comprehension.

Productive Errors: Productive errors occur when learners make mistakes while producing language, either in speaking or writing.

Examples:

1. A student says "He go to school every day" instead of "He goes to school every day."
2. A learner writes "I am study English" instead of "I am studying English."
3. A student pronounces "island" with a clear "s" sound.

These errors are more noticeable because they appear in the language output that learners produce.

**Key Differences:**

1. Visibility: Productive errors are more easily observed, while receptive errors often remain hidden unless specifically tested.
2. Skills involved: Receptive errors involve listening and reading skills, while productive errors involve speaking and writing skills.
3. Assessment: Productive errors can be assessed through speaking and writing tasks, while receptive errors require comprehension checks or specific listening/reading tests.
4. Feedback: It's often easier to provide immediate feedback on productive errors, while receptive errors might go unnoticed in day-to-day communication.
5. Impact on communication: Productive errors can directly affect how well a learner communicates their ideas, while receptive errors affect how well they understand others.

Understanding both types of errors is crucial for teachers because it provides a more complete picture of a learner's language abilities. It helps in designing balanced lessons that address both receptive and productive skills, ensuring that students can both understand and produce language effectively.

**The difference between errors and mistakes in language learning**, This distinction is important in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Error Analysis.

**Errors**: Errors are systematic deviations from the correct forms of the target language. They occur because the learner doesn't know the correct form or rule. Errors reflect a gap in the learner's competence.

**Examples of errors:**

1. Consistently saying "He go to school" instead of "He goes to school"
2. Always using "yesterday" with present tense: "Yesterday I go to the store"

**Mistakes**: Mistakes are occasional lapses in performance. They occur even though the learner knows the correct form or rule. Mistakes reflect problems in language production rather than lack of competence.

**Examples of mistakes:**

1. Occasionally saying "goed" instead of "went," even though the learner usually uses the correct form
2. Mispronouncing a word that the learner normally pronounces correctly when paying more attention

**Key Differences:**

1. Consistency: Errors are consistent, while mistakes are occasional.
2. Awareness: Learners can often self-correct mistakes but not errors.
3. Cause: Errors stem from lack of knowledge, while mistakes are due to factors like fatigue, stress, or lack of attention.

**References:**

1. Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learner's errors. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 5(1-4), 161-170. Corder introduced the distinction between errors and mistakes, emphasizing the importance of errors in understanding the learning process.
2. Ellis, R. (1994). The Study of Second Language Acquisition. Oxford University Press. Ellis discusses the error-mistake distinction in depth, relating it to the concepts of competence and performance.
3. Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (4th ed.). Longman. Brown provides a clear explanation of errors and mistakes, linking them to interlanguage theory.

A practical way to distinguish between errors and mistakes in the classroom:

1. Observe the learner's language use over time.
2. If a deviation occurs consistently, it's likely an error.
3. If a deviation occurs occasionally and the learner can self-correct when it's pointed out, it's likely a mistake.

Understanding this distinction helps teachers:

* Focus on teaching what students don't know (errors) rather than what they momentarily forget or misuse (mistakes).
* Provide appropriate feedback: more explicit instruction for errors, and opportunities for self-correction for mistakes.
* Assess learners' true competence more accurately.

Remember, the line between errors and mistakes can sometimes be blurry, especially as learners are in the process of acquiring new language features. Continuous observation and assessment are key to making this distinction effectively.

**The significance of errors in language learning**

The main idea here is that when language learners make errors, these errors are actually very helpful and important. Let's break it down into three main points:

1. Errors help teachers: Teachers can learn a lot by looking at the errors students make. It's like a roadmap showing how far the student has come and what they still need to learn.

Example: If a teacher notices that many students are saying "He goed to the store" instead of "He went to the store", they know they need to focus more on irregular past tense verbs.

1. Errors help researchers: Researchers can use errors to understand how people learn languages and what methods they use to figure out language rules.

Example: If researchers notice that many learners say "I eated" before learning to say "I ate", they can understand that learners are trying to apply a rule (add -ed for past tense) even to irregular verbs.

1. Errors help learners: Believe it or not, making errors actually helps students learn! It's like they're testing out their ideas about how the language works.

Example: A learner might say "more bigger" instead of "bigger". This shows they've learned about comparatives but are still figuring out the exceptions to the rule.

Additional points:

1. Errors interest linguists: Linguists (people who study language scientifically) find errors fascinating because they reveal how human minds work with language.

Example: The fact that children learning English often say "foots" instead of "feet" shows how human brains naturally try to find and apply patterns.

1. Errors interest psycholinguists: Psycholinguists (who study how the brain processes language) use errors to understand mental processes involved in language use.

Example: The fact that people sometimes mix up words like "cat" and "cap" in speech shows how our brains organize words by sound.

1. Errors guide teaching methods: By analyzing errors, teachers can create better teaching methods that address common problems.

Example: If many students struggle with the difference between "make" and "do" in English, teachers can develop specific lessons and activities to tackle this issue.

In summary, errors aren't just mistakes to be corrected. They're valuable clues that help everyone involved in language learning - teachers, researchers, linguists, and the learners themselves. By paying attention to errors, we can understand the learning process better and find more effective ways to teach and learn languages.

**Types of Errors Representing Stages of Second Language Development**

Stage 1: Random Errors (Presystematic) In this stage, learners are just beginning and make a lot of random mistakes. They're not sure about the rules yet.

Example:

* Saying "The cat big is" instead of "The cat is big"
* Mixing up words like "he" and "she" randomly

Stage 2: Emergent Stage Learners start to figure out some rules, but they're not always correct. They can't fix their mistakes even when someone points them out.

Example:

* Always using present tense: "Yesterday I go to school" (instead of "went")
* Avoiding difficult grammar: "I New York" (instead of "I went to New York")

Stage 3: Systematic Stage Learners are more consistent and their language is closer to correct. They can fix mistakes when someone points them out.

Example:

* Learner: "The fishes are cooking in the restaurant."
* Teacher: "The fish are cooking?"
* Learner: "Oh! I mean the fish are being cooked in the restaurant."

Stage 4: Stabilization Stage Learners make very few mistakes and can correct themselves without help.

Example:

* Learner: "I goed... oh, I mean I went to the store yesterday."

Important points:

1. These stages don't apply to all aspects of language at once. A learner might be at Stage 4 with present tense, but Stage 2 with more complex grammar.
2. This system doesn't cover everything about language learning, like pronunciation or cultural understanding.
3. Progress through these stages shows how learners are developing their own understanding of the language rules.
4. Teachers can use this information to understand where their students are in their learning journey and what kind of help they need.

**Part I. Answer the following questions.**

1. How did the Behaviorist Psychologists vtew second language acquisition?

2. What was the main cause of difficulty for second language learners according to Structural Linguistics and Contrastive Analysis?

3. How can learners benefit from their own errors?

4. What are the three main bases of Error Analysis?

5. What is the main difference between receptive and productive errors?

6. What are the main features of the emergent stage of second language development?

7. What is the *day-to-day* value of errors for the teacher?

8. What are the differences between systematic and post-systematic stages of second-language development?

**Part II. Write E for errors and M for mistakes in front of the following statements and/or erroneous sentences, as appropriate .**

1. . . . . .. They show the Ieamer's linguistic competence.

2. ...........They arc due to non-linguistic factors .

.. 3. They arc rule-governed .

.. 4. They are due to memory limitations .

5. May I sew you to your sheet, Madam? (instead of ' May I show you to another seat, Madam?')

6. That's the man I was talking about him. (instead of 'That's the man I was talking about.')