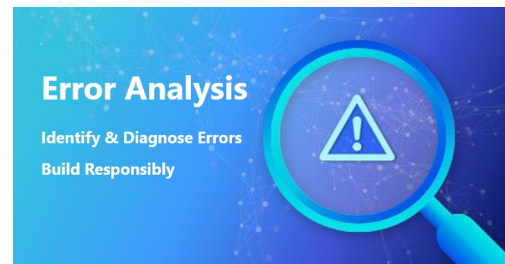


Error Analysis

2nd year master
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Table des matières



Objectifs	5
Introduction	7
I - Prerequisites	9
II - Exercice	11
III - Exercice	13
IV - Exercice	15
V - A Historical Background to the Field of Error Analysis	17
VI - Identification of Errors	19
A. Mistakes.....	19
B. • Errors.....	19
VII - Sources of Errors	21
A. Interference errors.....	22
B. Developmental errors.....	23
C. Intralingual errors.....	23
1. <i>Overgeneralization</i>	23
2. <i>Ignorance of Rule Restrictions</i>	23
3. <i>Incomplete Application of Rules</i>	24
4. <i>False Concepts Hypothesized</i>	24

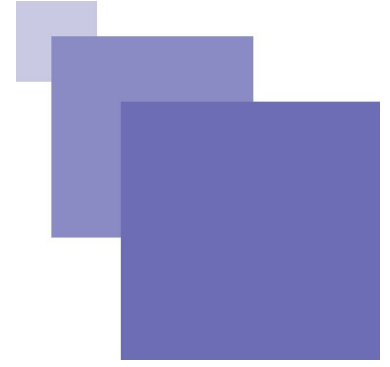
VIII - Classification of Errors	25
IX - Error Correction	27
X - Exercice	29
Solution des exercices	31
Bibliographie	33

Objectifs

The chapter of « error analysis » aims at :

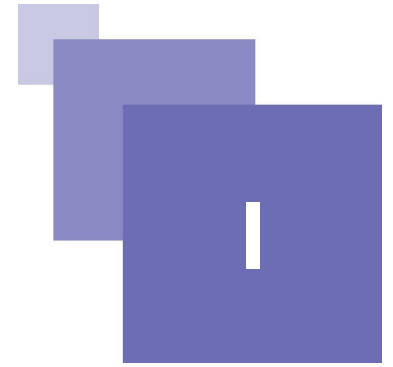
- Defining error analysis
- Describing the different sources of errors made by learners in their process of learning a target language.
- knowing the difference between mistakes and errors
Distinguishing between the types of errors.
- comparing and contrasting between the two early approaches to second language acquisition : contrastive analysis and error analysis.

Introduction



The failure of contrastive analysis to account for many learners' errors causes the researchers to take an alternative approach to analyze and describe the errors made by foreign language learners. This approach is known as error analysis. Its purpose is to discover and describe learners' errors and not to predict them as contrastive analysis does. That is, it describes what learners actually do instead of what they might do.

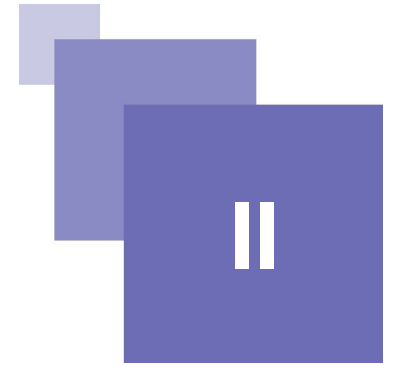
Prerequisites



Before dealing with this chapter, it is recommended for you to read about :

- Second language acquisition.
- Contrastive analysis approach to second language acquisition.

Exercise

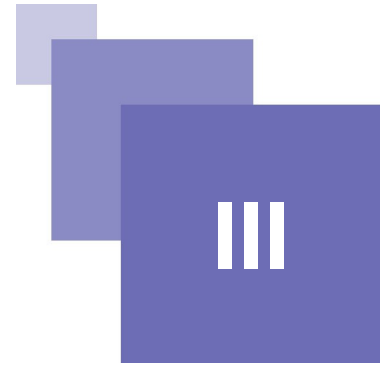


[Solution n°1 p 31]

In the contrastive analysis approach, the only source of errors is

- overgeneralization
- interference
- Incomplete application of rules
- False concept hypothesized

Exercice



[Solution n°2 p 31]

The main objective of contrastive analysis is to :

- Predict errors
- Describe the learner's interlanguage.
- Diagnose learners' errors
- Deal with the existing output (errors)

Exercice



IV

[Solution n°3 p 31]

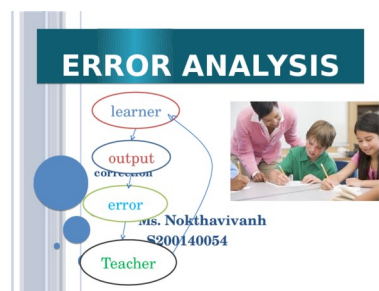
The alternative approach to contrastive analysis is :

- The communicative approach
- The structural approach
- The generative approach
- Error analysis

A Historical Background to the Field of Error Analysis



Error analysis or (EA) for short is a branch of applied linguistics which emerged in the sixties as a reaction to contrastive analysis theory. Contrary to (CA) which considers interference as the only source of errors, error analysis demonstrates that (L2) errors are not only due to the learners native language influence but also due to the reflection of some universal learning strategies such as simplification. Erdog˘ane (2005) argues that error analysis and contrastive analysis which try to investigate the same problem, i.e., explaining the second language acquisition, have different views of what is called an "error." Contrastive analysis considers errors as the result of transferring old habits from the learner's source language to the target language whereas error analysis considers them as the result of deviation from the target language norms. Lightbown & Spada (2006, p.80) argue that "error analysis was based on the hypothesis that, like child language, second language learner language is a system in its own right." Thus, error analysis deals with the learner's performance in terms of cognitive process; that is, the act of coding the received input from the target language by the learner. Coder (1967) notes that first language learners as well as second language learners have the cognitive capacity to make hypothesis about the language they are learning. In addition, he stresses that the strategies used by both learners are in many cases similar. Dulay et al. (1982) write "I adopted therefore as a working hypothesis that some at least of the strategies adopted by the learner of a second language are substantially the same as those by which a first language is acquired." An example which can illustrate the situation is the occurrence of overgeneralization strategies like in saying " I seed" instead of "I saw" in the speech of both (L1) and (L2) learners.



Identification of Errors

The number 'VI' is displayed in white on a dark blue square background, which is part of a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping squares in shades of blue.

After selecting a corpus of language, the linguist is required to identify learners' errors by making the distinction between a mistake and an error. The distinction made by Corder (1967) between these two different phenomena was the outcome of the Chomsky's theory of "competence and performance."

A. Mistakes

Corder (ibid) claims that mistakes are random errors in performance made by learners as well as natives; they are unsystematic in nature and they occur as the result of the speaker's tiredness, stress, and lack of concentration. Corder (1967) adds that mistakes can be recognized and corrected immediately by the speakers who produce them. Thus, a tired learner can say "you is", then he will correct himself directly by saying "you are"; in this case the learner did not produce "you is" as the result of rule ignorance but as the result of

Fatigue.', Corder (ibid, p.168) claims that "it would be quite unreasonable to expect the learner of second language not to exhibit such slips of the tongue (or pen), since he is subject to similar external and internal conditions when performing in his first or second language.

B. • Errors

Errors are systematic in nature; they are made by learners at a particular stage of learning as the result of inadequate learning. Contrary to mistakes, errors cannot be recognized as a wrong form by learners who ignore how to apply a target language rule. Thus, a learner can produce "bused" instead of "he bought" as the result of his ignorance about how to use the past tense with irregular verbs in English. Corder (1987) argues that while mistakes are of no significance to the process of language learning, errors are significant to the teachers since they show them how learners progress, significant to researchers as they provide them with information on how languages are learned, and significant to learners since they are a device used by them to learn any language.

To distinguish between errors and mistakes, Ellis (1997) proposed two ways :

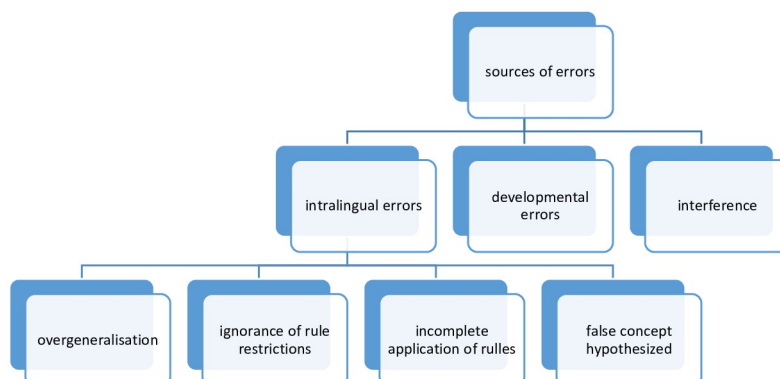
The first one is to ask the learner to correct himself; if he succeeds to do so then it is a mistake, but if he fails it will be considered as an error. The second one is to check the performance of the learner ; if he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong form we consider it as a mistake, but if he always uses the wrong form we consider it as an error.

Sources of Errors



VII

Identifying sources of errors from a cognitive point of view is different from that of behaviourist point of view. Previously, with the field of contrastive analysis, it was assumed that the only source of errors is interference. However, error analysis emerged to replace contrastive analysis and to assert that interference is not the only source of errors. There are other sources that reflect the learners' attempts and strategies to learn the target language. In other words, the learner in this case will not rely on his native language in learning the target language, he will instead use his experience to build hypothesis about the target language structure. In trying to identify the sources of errors Richards (1971) finds three types of errors which are : interference errors, developmental errors and intralingual errors.



A. Interference errors

are those caused by the use of the learner's native language elements in the target language, yet one must not confuse this with behaviouristic approach to language transfer. It is worth noting that (EA) does not consider interference as the result of old habits persistent, but rather as signs that the learners is investigating the

systems of the new language.

B. Developmental errors

are those caused by building hypotheses about the target language on the learner's limited experience, that is to say the strategies used by the learner to learn a language.

Table 3. Samples of interference and developmental errors.

Error	Classification	Justification and Possible Translations
Food of my father	Interference	Errors that reflect the structure of the L1: La comida de mi papá.
My parent house	Developmental	Error similar to L2 acquisition: La casa de mis padres
...And I had hungry	Interference	Errors that reflect the structure of the L1: ... y yo tenía hambre
... country very beautiful	Interference	Errors that reflect the structure of the L1: ... país muy hermosa
It possible ...	Interference	Errors that reflect the structure of the L1: Es posible...

C. Intralingual errors

are those which originate within the structure of the target language itself ; they are subdivided into errors due to overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rule restrictions and false concepts hypothesized. These four major types of intralingual errors are explained in the article "a non – contrastive approach to error analysis" written by Richards (1970).

1. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization occurs when the learner learns a rule and then uses it in new situation where it does not fit. Richards claims that "overgeneralization" covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language ..." (1974, p.174). For example, producing sentences such as "he can sings" and "he can plays" instead of "he can sing" and " he can play" is due to false generalization. That is, the learner here uses a wrong form after a model verb (can) as a result of his attempt to applicate a rule in a context where is does not apply,i.e, to add the – s of the third person singular after a model verb. Oldin (1989 :18) writes " ...overgeneralization ...often appears to be due to the inappropriate application of a target language rule...".

2. Ignorance of Rule Restrictions

Generalization of deviant structures is usually the result of learners' ignorance of rule restrictions, Richards (ibid) argues that " Closely related to the generalization of deviant structures is failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures, that is, the application of rules to context where they do not apply." For example, a novice learner of English who ignores the limitation on subject in structures with « who » will erroneously produce « The girl who I met her » instead of « The girl who I met. » This type of error can also be explained by analogy with a previously learned rule. That is, the learner who learned previously that the English sentence contains : Subject + Verb + Object, will add « her » by analogy since he supposes that the sentence without the object « her » is not complete.

3. Incomplete Application of Rules

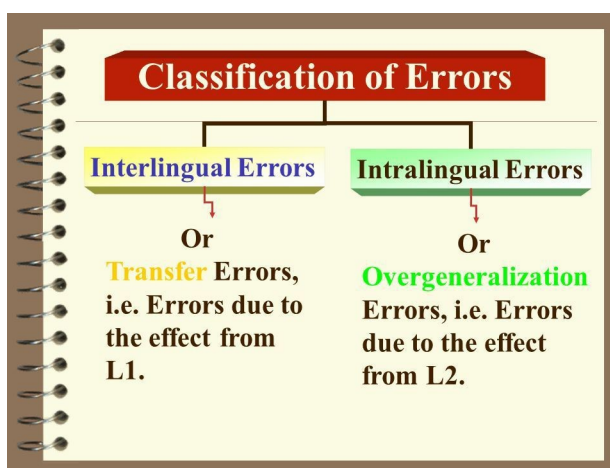
According to Richards (1974), deviant structures under this type show the degree of development of the rules needed by the learner to produce acceptable sentences. Richards gives the example of question forms where learners just add a question word at the beginning of a statement to ask a question. Thus, there was a failure from the part of the learners to produce grammatical questions despite the fact that question forms are extensively used by teachers in classroom. This can be explained by the learner's interest in communication rather than in producing grammatical sentences. For them, efficient communication can be achieved without the need of using grammatical question forms.

4. False Concepts Hypothesized

Lack of teaching items gradation often leads the learner to produce errors deriving from the confusion between those items. A famous example here, explained by Richards (1974), is the confusion between the use of the simple present and the present continuous in describing a succession of events in the present. For many learners such events are best described by using the present continuous, while the simple present is the appropriate tense here. Thus, those learners will produce wrongly « I am taking the eggs, now I am adding the flour » where « I take the eggs, now I add the flour » is the correct form.

Classification of Errors

VIII



After 1970, linguists such as Corder (1971), Richards (1974) and Lott (1983) have made many attempts to classify errors made by second language learners. Corder (1971) suggested a classification where he distinguished between two types of errors- errors of performance and errors of competence. Errors of performance are due to the mistakes in language use made by the learners, however errors of competence are due to the false application of (TL) rules. Errors of competence can be the result of intralingual or interlingual deviation from the (TL) norms

Intralingual errors of competence, on the one hand, are those errors which reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage during his learning of the (TL). This kind of errors can be found at the level of phonology, morphology and lexis.

Firstly, intralingual phonological errors are errors due to the false pronunciation of the (TL) words such as pronouncing the word 'country' with the diphthong /aʊ / instead of /ʌ/ sound.

Secondly, we have intralingual morphosyntactic errors which are the result of false generalization made by (L2) learners as in producing " I bought a new book" instead of " I bought a new book."

Thirdly, we have intralingual lexical errors that occur when the learner selects a wrong word in his speech as the result of the phonetic relatedness between the two words. For instance, selecting the word 'rule' instead of 'role' in the sentence " It plays an important rule."

Interlingual errors, on the other hand, are those errors which reflect the learner's inability to separate the source and the target languages; they are caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue, i.e. interference. Like intralingual errors, interlingual errors are found at the level of phonology, morphology and lexis.

First, we have interlingual phonological errors that occur as the result of phonic

interference. In other words, when a learner substitutes (L1) sound for (L2) sound because he thinks that they are the same. For example, pronouncing the word 'national' with /tS/ sound instead of /S/ sound by German learners as the result of their native language influence.

Secondly, we have interlingual morphosyntactic errors that occur due to interference from the mother tongue at the level of morphology and syntax. Syntactic errors occur when the constructions in (L1) and (L2) are different, for instance, a German learning French can produce " Il demanda lui" instead of " Il lui demanda" as the result of his placing the verb in the same way in German. Morphological errors occur when the learner, for instance, interprets the plural as a singular due to (L1) interference. Producing the phrase ' Les information' instead of ' Les informations' by an English learner is an example of that.

Lastly, we have interlingual lexical errors that occur as the result of literal translation from the mother tongue, selection of the wrong word in the case of divergence between the two languages, or as the result of selecting the wrong word instead of another because of their likeness in form. For example, selecting the word 'circulation' by a French learner instead of ' traffic' and thus producing erroneously the sentence " I was late because of the circulation."

Ellis (1997) prefers to adopt the classification of errors done by Corder (1973). According to him, this classification is the most suitable for helping the teachers and researchers to diagnose learners' problems. According to Corder (ibid) errors fall into four categories.

Firstly, omission of some required elements which must occur in the TL utterance, for instance, omitting the -ed marker in the sentence " A dramatical accident happen yesterday."

Secondly, addition of unnecessary or wrong elements. Dulay et al (1983: 158) write about addition "The presence of an item which must not appear in a well formed utterance" " I stayed in London during five years."

Thirdly, selection of an incorrect element. For instance, using the superlative form (est) to compare two elements and thus producing erroneously " My brother is oldest than me." Lastly, misordering of the elements ,i.e. the incorrect placement of an element in a target language utterance, for example, producing wrongly ' key car' instead of ' car key.'

Error Correction

IX

Ur (1996) claims that there are different opinions by different language teaching approaches as regards to error correction. For example, the communicative approach sees that not all mistakes need to be corrected. Focus should be on the message rather than mistakes. However, it can be said that mistakes are an important part of learning and correcting them is a way of bringing the learner's interlanguage closer to the target language.

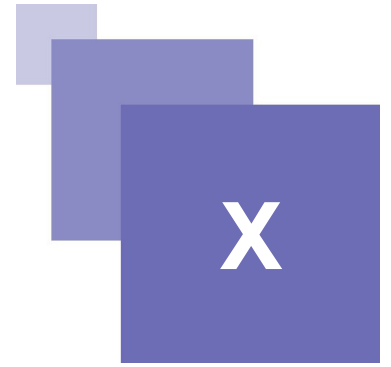
According to Erdog˘an (2005), the technique of error correction requires that the teacher should understand the source of the errors. It is only in this way that the teacher can provide appropriate remedy that will allow the learner to discover the correct rules. Thus, the source of the error is very important for the teacher to decide how to treat it.

Since there is not enough time to deal with all the errors made by the students, the correction of errors should be done according to their nature and significance. It is argued that priority should be given to errors which may affect communication and cause misunderstanding. Brown (2000) suggests that local errors usually need not be corrected since the message is clear like in saying " I gave she a present." instead of " I gave her a present." However, global errors need to be treated since the message in this case is not comprehended clearly. Thus, the priority in error correction should be given to global errors in order to develop the student's communication skills.

Erdog˘an (2005) claims that different kinds of tasks need different treatment. For oral works, it is usually recommended that students making mistakes during a speech should not be interrupted, but to be reminded of the mistakes and talk about the reason. The type of the feedback-form or content should be decided on according to the goal of the study. If the goal is to make the students practice a certain grammar point, it may be necessary to give a form feedback. Or else, if pronunciation item is being practiced, the teacher should correct the related mistakes without interrupting the speaker (Ur, 1996).

For correcting written works, it is argued that the teacher should not correct the students' mistakes directly, but instead to put writing comments or symbols which show the kind of the mistake. For instance, putting "sp" for spelling mistake under the wrong word. In this case the teacher will not give the correct form but rather alert the student that there is something wrong. Using symbols is effective since it involves the learner himself in the correction and the looking for the source of his mistakes.

Exercise



Lightbown and Spada (2006, p.80) argue that "*« error analysis was based on the hypothesis that, like child language, second language learner language is a system in its own right ».*" Explain.

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