

Error Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Error analysis is a technique used to identify, describe and explain errors made by the learners who study English language as a second or foreign language. This paper attempts to highlight the meaning of error analysis. It includes definitions of error, steps of error analysis, significance of errors. It also differentiates between errors and mistakes, presents sources of errors and classification of errors.

Error Analysis

Error analysis is considered as one of the best ways that describes and explains errors made by the learners who study English language as a second or foreign language. It reveals the types and sources of these errors. It appeared in the late of 1960s as an alternative of contrastive analysis that failed to account the learners' errors. The term error analysis has many definitions were given by some of the scholars for many years. For example, Ubol (1988) says that error analysis is "a systematic description and explanation of errors made by learners or users in their oral or written production of the target language" (p.8).

James (1998) defines error analysis as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language" (p.1). Another view of error analysis is given by Richards and Schmidt (2010), when they define error analysis as "the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners" (p.201).

Error Analysis Steps

Some scholars suggest some steps helping the researchers during analyzing students' errors. For instance, Corder in (1974) mentions five steps, they are Selection, identification, classification, explanation and evaluation. In (1997), Ellis proposes four main steps, identification, description, explanation, and evaluation. After Corder and Ellis came Gass and Selinker and suggest six steps in order to analyze students' errors, *collect data, identify errors, classify errors, quantify errors, analyze source and remediate* (2008, p.103).

Definitions of Error

There are a number of definitions of the term 'error' that has been proposed by different experts. Basically, these definitions share the same meaning. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) define error as "the flawed side of learned speech or writing. They are those parts of speaking or writing that deviate from some selected form of mature language performance" (p.138). In addition, Harmer (1998, cited in Andrian, 2015) says that "an error is the result of an incorrect rule of learning; the language has been stored in the brain incorrectly" (p.514).

On the other hand, error is defined as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker reflects the competence of the learner" (Brown, 1994, p.205).

Significance of Learners' Errors

Doubtlessly, errors play a very important part in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Many scholars have focused on the importance of the learners' errors. According to Corder (1967, cited in Sawalmeh, 2013, p.4), errors made by learners are beneficial to teachers, learners, as well as researchers. For teachers, errors are evidence of learners' progress of the language learning. Teachers can refer to it in order to help improve learners' writing skill. For learners, errors can be served as resources for their language learning. Lastly, errors provide evidence to researchers on how learners learn and acquire the language. In addition, Alhaisoni (2012), says that learner' errors are advantageous for both learners and teachers. It provides information to the teachers on students' errors. This helps the teachers in three ways, firstly to correct their errors, secondly to improve their teaching and thirdly to focus on those area that need reinforcement. (p. 55).

Errors and Mistakes

Errors and mistakes are not the same, so the distinction between the two different concepts is more significant. Corder (1967, cited in AL-Dubib, 2013). He defines errors as "systematic errors that are errors of competence". On the other hand, he also defines mistakes as "un systematic errors that are lapses or slipes of the tongue (errors of performance)"(p.13).

Another distinction between errors and mistakes is mentioned by Richards and Schmidt (2002:184) differentiate between the two important terms .They mentione that error results from incomplete knowledge, and a mistake made by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some oher aspect of performance. From this this distinction, it can be said that errors are made by the learners because they do not know what are the correct and mistakes are made by the learners because they do not apply the rule (s) that they actually know, in other words, errors can not be self corrected whereas mistakes can be self corrected.

On the other hand, Mourtaga (2004) expresses about the distinction between errors and mistakes by saying, that errors and mistakes are different from each other because an error cannot be self-corrected and is caused by a learner's inadequate knowledge of the target language whereas a mistake can be self-corrected.

Sources of Errors

Penny (2011cited in Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn, 2017) states that there are two major sources of errors.They are interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer (p.103). Richards (1974) distinguishes between the two major sources of errors (interlingual errors and intralingual errors). The first one refers to errors that caused when learners wrongly use the rules of their first language when they produce sentences of the target language (the interference of the learners' mother tongue (nativelanguage). The second one refers to the errors that caused during learners' language learning process.

Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2010:294) distinguish between interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer:

A- Interlingual Transfer

An interlanguage error is an error which results from language transfer, that is, which is caused by a transfer of similar rules from the learner's native language. For example, the incorrect French sentence Elle regarde les* ("She sees them"), produced according to the word order of English, instead of the correct French sentence Elle les regarde (literally, " She them sees").

B- Intralingual Transfer

Richards and Schmidt define an intralingual error as one which results from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than from language transfer Intralingual errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. For example, a learner may produce He is comes*, based on a blend of the English structures He is coming, He comes.

According to James (1998), there are three factors that can be classified as the causes of errors. They are interlingual errors, intralingual errors, and induced errors. They are explained as follows:

1- Interlingual errors (Mother-tongue influence): These types of errors are influenced by the native languages which interfere with target language learning. It is seen as a process in which learners use their knowledge of the first language in learning a second language. Learners translate word by word idiomatic expressions, vocabulary and even the grammatical rules of the learners' first language into the second language.

2- Intralingual errors: These types of error are caused by the target language (TL) itself. These errors occur because two types of errors.The first type is (learning strategy based errors) and the second one (communication strategies based errors).

3- Induced Errors: These errors occur as a result of classroom situation which includes (materials-induced errors, teacher-talk induced errors, exercise-based induced errors, errors induced by pedagogical priorities and look-up errors). This type of error is basically because of the incorrect strategies used in the classroom.

Classification of Errors

According to Corder (1973) and Haryono (2011), there are four main types of errors based on the surface taxonomy.They are omission, addition, misformation and misordering

1-Omission Errors

Omission errors refer to non-occurrence of necessary structures; that is, the absence of an item that should appear in a well-formed sentence.

Examples:

- 1) She a student.

2) It is orange.

In the above sentences, the learner omitted the verb to be (is) in sentence 1 and the indefinite article (an) in sentence 2. The correct forms of these sentences are:

1) She is a student.

2) It is an orange.

2-Addition Errors

Addition errors mean addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements that should not appear. That means the learner presents an item that should appear in a well-formed sentence.

Examples:

1) There are two mens in the car.

2) He did not played football yesterday.

In the first sentence, the learner added the letter (s) to irregular plural noun (men) and added the marker (ed) to the verb (play) that referred to the past in the negative sentence 2. The correct forms of these sentences are:

1) There are two men in the car.

2) He did not play football yesterday

3- Misformation Errors

Misformation errors refer to the supplement of the wrong morpheme; that is, the use of the wrong form of grammatical element.

Examples:

1) These pen is mine.

2) Me play game everyday.

In the first sentence, the learner use the wrong form of plural demonstrative (these) before a singular noun (pen) and use the object pronoun (me) as the subject in the second sentence. The correct forms of these sentences are:

1) This pen is mine.

2) I play game everyday.

4- Misordering Errors

Misordering errors refer to the wrong position of morphemes in a sentence. That means that the words in the sentence are putting in wrong order.

Examples:

1) read they a story.

2) I bought a car black.

In the above sentences, the learner put the the words in the wrong order, for example, in the first sentence, the learner put the the verb (read) before the the subject (they) and the second sentence, the learner also put the adjective (black) after the noun (car). The correct order of these sentences is:

1) They read a story.

2) I bought a black car.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the definitions of error analysis and error. It also has introduced the steps of error analysis and significance of errors. It also differentiates between errors and mistakes. Finally, the sources and classification of errors are presented.

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