

Linguistics and language teaching.

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Grammatical mistakes made by non- native English language speakers.

Introduction Language may refer either to the specifically human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication, or to a specific instance of such a system of complex communication. The scientific study of language in any of its senses is called linguistics. Linguistic theory has traditionally considered native speakers as the only reliable source of linguistic data (Chomsky 1965). It is therefore not surprising to find only a limited number of works focusing on non-native speakers prior to the 1990s.

The first attempt to put '(non)nativism' onto the centre stage of linguistic inquiry by challenging current undisputed assumptions on the matter was Paikeday's (1985) *The native speaker is dead*, in which it is argued that the native speaker 'exists only as a figment of linguist's imagination' (Paikeday 1985: 12). Paikeday suggested using the term ' proficient user' of a language to refer to all speakers who can successfully use it. A few years later, Rampton (1990) similarly proposed the term ' expert speaker' to include all successful users of a language.

Davies (1991, 2003) further delved into ' native speaker' identity, and thus formulated the key question of whether a second language (L2) learner can become a native speaker of the target language. His conclusion was that L2 learners can become native speaker of the target language and master the intuition, grammar, spontaneity, creativity, pragmatic control, and interpreting quality of ' born' native speakers. Generally, English educated Malaysians of all ethnic and family language background speak and move alike.

However, with the implementation of the national language policy of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language of Malaysia and as the language of instruction, (except in the cases of Chinese or Tamil medium primary schools), the status of English Language in Malaysia is different from the earlier years. The English language covered a continuum from first language through second language to a foreign language. Bahasa Malaysia is replacing English in most of its previous functions, but English may be expected to remain as a continuum from second language to foreign language according to the background and occupation of the speaker.

In Malaysia, presently the use of English is less common than in Singapore and is likely to decrease steadily with the implementation of the national language policy. However, English still remains as a language of considerable importance and is still being used in various spheres of everyday activity. The role of English has changed from its earlier status as the precise language of the colonial era and the decades after the Second World War to a second language.

At the moment, it is still considered as an international code to be used for diplomatic and commercial negotiations and as a language necessary in many fields of tertiary study and research. Not surprisingly, the non-native English language speakers among Malaysians make grammatical mistakes from time to time. These usually happened among Malaysian adult students and even among some Malaysian English teachers. 1. The transcript of a recorded conversation. The following excerpt is a recorded conversation among teachers and will be analysed of the mistakes made by some teachers during discussion.

Our discussion was on the quality and effectiveness of a programme called ‘Program Penutur Jati’ or English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTP). Briefly, the aim of the project is to enhance the lower primary ESL teachers’ ability to plan and deliver quality English lessons based on the new National English Language Curriculum in 600 schools across East Malaysia. The teachers involved in discussion come from various races, ethnic groups, ages and teaching experiences. Kamel : That is my opinion. I don’t know yours. Ok. Chairperson : I agree augh Kamel : But , as I said just now. I don’t like that the fixture.. ok. For example aaaa as my mentor come to our school .. every Monday ok.. my class start at nine o’clock..... 7. 30.. that mean one and half hour include the preparation for my lesson, so I don’t think that I have an ample time for me to prepare the things... ok . Moreover, the one hour and one and half hour is the .. for all to prepare.. the whole week not only , the one day. So I don’t think that will be effective. Chairperson: Emmmm Kamel : So Chairperson : Did you tell him about it?

Kamel: Aaaaaa... So far not yet. Chairperson : Do you have the chance to talk about it. Kamel : Because, I don’t have any.. I don’t have the opportunity to.. Chairperson : Then, you should tell him. Kamel ; I was thinking. Why don’t the mentors like them to be .. have qualification in teaching, so that they can come to the trainee teachers training college rather than... Chairperson : For your information, ahh Chairperson : Overall, it seems to be working with you..... Naga : The ideas (cough)... is good and different... he is friendly. Chairperson : So.. ahh.

If supposing .. You have a mentor to this.. who doesn’t speak.. doesn’t speak like Morrocan. Alright Naemah : Yehhh Chairperson: Right.. Alright, if..

Chairperson: Who? Chairperson : Madam Soya? She is from where? Others : Bulgaria.. (together) Chairperson : Bulgaria? Does she have the accent? Chairperson: What do you think? Do you think... | 2. Common grammatical mistakes and errors by non-native English speakers. The types of errors can be categorised into two: descriptive and surface structures. Descriptive errors include noun phrase, verb phrase and complex sentence.

While surface structure errors include omission, addition, misinformation, misordering and blends. After analysing the recorded conversation, there are few mistakes or errors made by Mr. Kamel during the said discussion. a. The use of unmarked forms instead of marked forms is far more frequent, as can be seen in the examples as follows. * I don't know yours. * I don't know about you. * .. as I said just now. * .. as I have said just now. One possible cause of these errors is merely interlingual errors which is the result of mother tongue influences ' Saya tak tahu awak punya' and '... seperti yang saya kata tadi. respectively. In his article, ' A Role for the Mother Tongue' in ' Language Transfer in Language Learning', Professor Corder (1981) reinvestigated the phenomenon and questions the term ' transfer'. He suggests that mother tongue influence as a neutral and broader term to refer to what has most commonly been called transfer. Corder says that since most studies of error were made on the basis of the performance of learners in formal situations where it appears that errors related to mother tongue are more frequent, it was natural that an explanation of the phenomenon was of considerable concern to the applied linguistic.

It was out of this concern that the whole industry of contrastive studies arose. He also claims that as far as the acquisition of syntactic knowledge is

concerned, no process appropriately called interference takes place, if by that we mean that the mother tongue actually inhibits, prevents, or makes more difficult the acquisition of some feature of the target language. The term 'interference' is now most often used to mean what is no more than the presence in the learner's performance in the target language of mother-tongue-like features which are incorrect according to the rules of the target language. b.

Obviously. Mr. Kamel has the problem in pronouncing certain words especially in the pronunciation of the initial sound of common words like the, there, then and that. It is also the middle consonant sound in feather and the final sound of bathe. These sounds are formed with the tongue tip behind the upper front teeth. The initial sound of that and the final sound of both are both voiceless dental. This problem arises because Mr Kamel's tongue is not merely touches the teeth. Thus, his pronunciation of these particular words are incorrect. Besides, difficulty in phonology can caused by mother tongue interference.

Eltrug (1984) affirmed that mother tongue interference can contribute to a large number of pronunciation errors made by students. An English sound does exist in the native language, but not as separate phonemes. This simply means the first language speakers do not perceive it as a distinct sound that makes difference to meaning. For example The sound /ʔ / does exist in Malay, but whether the vowel is long or short does not make any difference in meaning. For instance, the English phonemes /ʔ / and /i:/ differ very much in meaning as in the words 'leave' and 'live', 'sheep' and 'ship'.

The great amount of vocabulary of English really makes the second language learner suffer in reading. There is a lot of words unknown and the most confusing point is even the second language learner know the meaning but they can't really understand the meaning of the whole sentence. It is because an English word gives different impressions in different situations. This makes things so confusing about the meaning of the word. Grammatical interference is defined as the first language influencing the second in terms of word order, use of pronouns and determinants, tense and mood.

Interference at a lexical level provides for the borrowing of words from one language and converting them to sound more natural in another and orthographic interference includes the spelling of one language altering another. In Malay grammar, it does not require one to have any form of determiner in front of instruments like computer, piano, internet. English grammar, however, requires the instruments mentioned above (computer, piano, internet) to be preceded by determiners and if neither a possessive determiner nor a demonstrative determiner is used, the use of either a definite article or an indefinite article is necessary.

Thus, the ungrammatical sentences in could be the result of interference of the cultural transfer from Malay language structure on English. Erroneous form| Correct form| She plays piano while I sing. Malay: Dia bermain piano sementara saya menyanyi. | She plays the piano while I sing | She stay at home. Malay : Dia tinggal di rumah | She stays at home. | Table 1 : Examples of interference from the learners' first language. c.

Subjects also exhibited errors in subject-verb agreement as is shown in the examples as follows: * Every Monday, my class start at nine o'clock.... *

Every Monday, my class starts at nine o'clock.... The omission of “-s” can be attributed to the fact that Bahasa Malaysia does not require verbs to agree with subjects. However, the ending free form is generalised for all persons to make the learning task easier and this is a common intralingual made by people with diverse native languages like Mr Kamel. 3. Causes and sources of errors and mistakes Interlingual errors are the result of mother tongue influences.

Learners transfer/borrow some forms but not others due to two factors such as proto-typicality and language distance (Kellerman, 1979). Malay learners of English commonly make errors in negative sentences. For example: Adryna no coming today. [Adryna tak datang hari ini.] Such errors are common in pre-verbal negation using no, the same negative construction as in their L1. In order to determine whether transfer is the cause for the occurrence of errors, James (1998), demonstrates that learners with a particular L1 make an error that those with a different L1 do not.

He provides a useful summary of these strategies which includes the following; a. False analogy b. Misanalysis c. Incomplete rule application exploiting redundancy d. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions e. System-simplification It is not clear which strategy is responsible for a particular error. Errors can also be viewed as ‘ natural’ or as ‘ induced’. For example: a. He played football yesterday. b. He goed home at six. c. He drinked milk. d. He eated dinner. e. He slepted at eight. Conclusion

To conclude, learners’ errors are a part of the learners’ language learning process. Hence, teachers should not penalise students for the errors they made. Instead, teachers should note those errors and devise ways to assist

learners to overcome their problems in language learning. It is difficult to decide whether grammatically or acceptability should serve as the criterion for error analysis. If grammatically is chosen, an error can be defined as ‘breach of the rule of the code’ (Corder, 1967).

Defining errors in terms of grammatically also necessitates giving consideration to the distinction between overt and covert error: In the field of methodology, there are two schools of thought with regard to learners’ error. Firstly, the school which maintains that if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method, the errors would have never be committed and therefore the occurrence of errors is merely a sign of inadequacy in our teaching techniques. The philosophy of the second school is that we live in an imperfect world and consequently errors will always occur in spite of our very best teaching and learning methods. One effect has been perhaps to shift the emphasis away from a preoccupation with teaching towards a study of learning. The differences between the two are clearly defined: that the learning of the mother tongue is natural, whereas, we all know that there is no such inevitability about the learning of a second language; that the learning of the mother tongue is part of the whole maturational process of the child, whilst learning a second language normally begins only after the maturational process is complete.

A child’s incorrect utterances can be interpreted as being evidence that he is in the process of acquiring language and the errors provide these evidences. Brown and Frazer (1964), point out that the best evidence a child possesses construction rules is the occurrence of systematic errors, since when the child speaks correctly, it is quite possible that he is only repeating something

that he has heard. In the case of the second language learner, it is known that we do know some knowledge of what the input has been which we call as the syllabus.

The simple fact of presenting a certain linguistic form to a learner in the classroom does not necessarily qualify it for the status of input, for the reason that input 'is what goes in', not 'what is available' for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls this input. This may well be determined by the characteristics of his language acquisition mechanism and not by those of the syllabus. References Mariam Mohd Nor, Abdul Halim Ibrahim, Shubbiah, R (2008). OUM-Linguistics and Language Teaching. Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

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