Errors analysis in language learning

Education, Learning

Error analysis emerged with the growing criticism of constrictive analysis. It was S. P Corder who first advocated in ELT and Applied linguistics community the importance of errors in language learning process. Corder (1967) mentions the paradigm shift in linguistics from a behaviouristic view of language to a more rationalistic view and claims that in language teaching, one noticeable effect is to shift the emphasis away from teaching towards study of learning.

Corder further argues that in L1 we interpret child's ' incorrect utterances' as being evidence that the child is in the process of acquiring language and that for those who attempt to describe his knowledge of the language at any point of its development, it is the ' errors' which provide the important evidence. For learners themselves, the errors are ' indispensable,' since the marking of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn

Selinker (1992) pointed out two highly significant contributions that Corder made: that the errors of a learner, whether adult or child are not random, but are in fact systematic, and are not negative or interfering in a way with learning a TL but are, on the contrary, a necessary positive factor.

It is important here to make a distinction between ' errors' and ' mistakes' Both Corder (1967, 1971) and James (1998) reveal a contribution that helps us to do so: it is the self correctability criterion. A mistake can be self-corrected, but errors can not. Mistakes are manifest in slip of the tongue, random ungrammaticalities and other performance lapse that are common to both native speakers and second language speakers. Errors are '

systematic,' i. e. likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, only the teacher or the researcher would locate them, the learner wouldn't (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

Thus errors are idiosyncrasies of the interlanguage of the learner which are direct manifestation of a system within which a learner is operating at the time. They are elsewhere referred to as goofs (Dulay and Burt, 1972) for which no blame is implied. In other words, errors are noticeable deviations from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting interlanguage competence of the learner.

Goals of error analysis

Scholars of error analysis believe that error analysis helps in: Determining the sequence of presentation of items in text books and classroom, with difficult items following the easier ones; deciding the relative degree of emphasis, explanation and practice required in putting across various items in the target language; devising remedial lessons and exercises; and finally selecting items for testing learner's proficiency. The applied linguists' emphasis to this approach is obvious.

Methodology for error analysis

The methodology of error analysis, according to Sridhar (1981) can be said to have followed the following steps: Collection of data: This can be done either from free composition by students on a given theme or from examination answers Identification of errors: Labeling with varying degrees of precision depending on the linguistic sophistication brought to bear on the

task, with respect to the exact nature of the deviation, e. g. Dangling preposition, anomalous sequence of tenses, etc. Classification of errors into types: put the errors into groups such as errors of agreement, articles, verb forms, etc. Statement of relative frequency of error types

Identification of the areas of difficult in the target language Therapy: In this you provide remedial drills, lessons, etc. Analysis of the source of errors: e. g. mother tongue interference, over-generalization, inconsistencies in the spelling system of the target language, etc. Determination of the degree of disturbance caused by error (or the seriousness of the error in terms of communication, norms, etc

Classification of errors One point in error treatment is determination of the degree of disturbance caused by the error (or the seriousness of error in terms of communication, norms, etc.) we will explore the question of the extent to which the error diverts the reader/listener from making direct connection between utterance and meaning.

Traditionally, teachers have graded production of a foreign language according to the quality of errors made. It would be more profitable perhaps, while indicating all errors, to actually judge the quality of the work by the efficiency of its message-carrying capacity.

If we accept that in certain contexts, different types of errors carry a greater weight of deviation or resonance than others, we might now look for other types of deviation than the combination of error and context can cause.

Opposite of intended meaning: Variant of meaning leading to inaccurate or embarrassing interpretation we could have.

Indecipherability, where comprehension comes to a dead stop because a phrase is just not interpretable, e. g. ' I am working on the upside of the street' Familiarity, where a learner produces errors associated with his/her mother tongue, e. g. " Are you seeing that man?", " do you hear the smell?" Inappropriacy, be it is the level of socio-linguistics or collocation " please, I am looking for you man [husband]".

Other types of errors Errors of omission: This is when an element in the structure (a letter of alphabet, a morpheme, a word, or an entire phrase has been wrongly omitted. Omission is ungrammatical, while ellipsis is zero elements are allowed in grammar. He pass (ed) (his) exam and I' ll too

Errors of Addition: This is addition of an element as the " result of all-too-faithful use of certain rules: These may take several forms: Regularization: overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply. E. g. buyed for bought Double marking: Failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions but not in others, e. g. " he doesn't knows me" Misformation (mis-selection): use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme, e. g. *I seen him yesterday. Misordering: to arrange the right forms in the wrong order, e. g. he every time comes late home.