

A green frog puppet, Kermit the Frog, is sitting on a brown sidewalk. He is holding a white piece of chalk in his right hand and has just finished drawing a white square on the sidewalk. To his right, there are other colorful chalk drawings, including a blue 'B' and a pink 'K'. A small blue and yellow object is also visible on the sidewalk to the right. The background is a blurred sidewalk with a white line.

What do L2 learner errors tell us?

Foreign Language Acquisition
& Communication I

Class 3

Pre-class questions

1. When do you notice your L2 mistake? Always the same mistake?
2. Has anyone pointed out or corrected your mistake?
3. Do you want your errors to be corrected? Why or why not?

How has SLA research dealt with L2 learner errors?

Behaviorism

- L1 acquisition: children as a passive recipient
- Environment influences
- Learning including language acquisition essentially involves habit through imitation and practice.
- Correct imitation = correct habit formation
- Errors must be corrected right away.
- The errors made by L2 learners are plausibly caused by L1 transfer due to linguistic differences between L1 and L2.
- In order for L2 learners to acquire a new habit (L2) correctly, any potential errors should be avoided

Contrastive Analysis

- We can predict L2 learner errors and teach necessary grammar beforehand to avoid their errors.

However,

- Some errors are observed across learners regardless of their L1.
- Learners do not always make errors predicted.
- Not dichotomy of “difficult” and “easy” to learn
- Language differences \neq hard to learn
 - Ex. Word order: Japanese [S-O-V] vs. English [S-V-O]

Error analysis

- Analyzing actual learner errors in their production
- Errors vs. mistakes

However,

- EA cannot explain learners' **avoidance**.
 - Production of Relative Clauses by L2 English learners of Persian, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese
 - Japanese and Chinese learners of English produced less errors than Persian and Arabic learners of English did.

The systematic errors

I don't want to go there by myself.

Miki don't know where it is.

He don't come to the meeting every week.

I don't went to the store.

Your mother don't come with me.

Various patterns of learner errors

- Language specific errors: Particular L1 group has difficulty in learning certain grammatical item(s) due to L1 interference
 - language distance: similarities and differences between the learner's native language and the target language
 - Ex. Japanese learners of English make errors in articles.
 - Ex. English native speakers learning Japanese find it difficult to distinguish the use of the particles “はha” and “がga”.
- Developmental errors: All learners go through the similar stages in learning a certain grammar construction.
 - negation, question formation
 - universal phenomenon: natural order of morpheme acquisition

Interlanguage (Selinker, 1972)

- L1 transfer
- L2 influence: overuse, underuse
- Some errors which origin cannot be recognized in neither L1 nor L2
- Learner's own rules
- Systematic and dynamic
- Errors/interlanguage indicate **learners' L2 development**.

Selinker, L (1972). "Interlanguage". *International Review of Applied Linguistics*. **10** (1–4): 209–241.