ERROR ANALYSIS

WHAT IS AN ERROR?

An **error** is a form in learner language that is **inaccurate**, meaning it is different from the forms used by competent speakers of the target language. For example, a learner of Spanish might say "Juana es *bueno," which is not what competent speakers of Spanish would say. The accurate form should be "buena."

WHAT IS ERROR ANALYSIS?

Error analysis is a method used to document the errors that appear in learner language, determine whether those errors are systematic, and (if possible) explain what caused them. Native speakers of the target language (TL) who listen to learner language probably find learners' errors very noticeable, although, as we shall see, accuracy is just one feature of learner language.

While native speakers make unsystematic 'performance' errors (like slips of the tongue) from time to time, second language learners make more errors, and often ones that no native speaker ever makes. An error analysis should focus on errors that are systematic violations of patterns in the input to which the learners have been exposed. Such errors tell us something about the learner's interlanguage, or underlying knowledge of the rules of the language being learned (Corder, 1981, p. 10).

HOW TO DO AN ERROR ANALYSIS

Although some learner errors are salient to native speakers, others, even though they're systematic, may go unnoticed. For this reason, it is valuable for anyone interested in learner language to do a more thorough error analysis, to try to identify all the systematic errors. This can help researchers understand the cognitive processes the learner is using, and help teachers decide which might be targeted for correction. Researchers have worked out the following procedure for doing an error analysis Corder (1975).

1. Identify all the errors in a sample of learner language

For each error, what do you think the speaker intended to say, and how they should have said it? For example, an English learner may say, "*He make a goal." This is an error. However, what should the learner have said? There are at least two possible ways to reconstruct this error: (1) He MAKES a goal, and (2) He IS MAKING a goal. In this first step of an error analysis, remember that there may be more than one possible way to reconstruct a learner error. Tarone & Swierzbin (2009, p.25) offer another example from an English language learner:

Learner: ... *our school force us to learn English because um it's, it's a trend.*

Here are three different possible reconstructions:

a. *Our school forced us to learn English because it was a trend.*

b. *Our school required us to learn English because it was a popular language.*

c. *Because everyone felt it was important, English was a requirement at our school.*

The way you reconstruct a learner error depends on what you think the intended message is. An added complication is that any given learner utterance may contain errors at many levels at once: phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical.

Finally, determine how systematic the error is. Does it occur several times, or is it just a performance slip (a mistake)? Even native speakers of a language make one-off mistakes when they're tired or distracted.

2. Explain the errors

Once you've identified systematic errors in your sample of learner language, think of what might have caused those errors. There are several possibilities. Some errors could be due to native language transfer (using a rule or pattern from the native language). Some could be developmental errors most learners make in learning this language no matter what their native language. Induced errors may be due to the way a teacher or textbook presented or explained a given form. Communication strategies may be used by the learner to get meaning across even if he or she knows the form used is not correct (Selinker 1972 discusses these and other possible causes of systematic learner errors). Explaining errors in learner language isn't always straightforward; for example, sometimes an error may appear to have more than one cause. As Lightbown & Spada (2013, p. 45) say, "... while error analysis has the advantage of describing what learners actually do ... it does not always give us clear insights into why they do it."

WHAT ERROR ANALYSIS MISSES

Error analysis is a good first step, but it also can miss important features of learner language. First, in focusing only on errors, you may miss cases where the learner uses the form **correctly**. For example, you may notice that a learner makes errors in pronouncing a TL sound before consonants, but not notice that she is producing the sound correctly before vowels. The second thing an error analysis misses is **avoidance**. Schachter (1976) pointed out that learners can avoid using features of a TL that they know they have difficulty with. For example, you may see very few errors in relative clauses in a sample of English learner language, but then realize that's because the learner simply isn't producing many relative clauses—correct OR incorrect. Avoidance can lead to the absence of errors—but absence of errors in this case does NOT mean the learner has no problems with relative clauses. Finally, error analysis focuses only on **accuracy**. Accuracy is just one of three ways of describing learner language: **accuracy,**

- Students are do their researches every semester.

- Both the boys and the girls they can study together.

3. Developmental errors: this kind of errors is somehow part of the overgeneralizations, (this later is subtitled into Natural and developmental learning stage errors), D.E are results of normal pattern of development, such as (come = comed) and (break = breaked), D.E indicates that the learner has started developing their linguistic knowledge and fail to reproduce the rules they have lately been exposed to in target language learning.

4. Induced errors: as known as transfer of training, errors caused by misleading teaching examples, teachers, sometimes, unconditionally, explain a rule without highlighting the exceptions or the intended message they would want to convey. J. Richard et al. (2002) provided an example that occurs at the level of teaching prepositions and particularly '' at '' where the teacher may hold up a box and say '' *I am looking at the box* '', the students may understand that '' *at* '' means '' *under* '', they may later utter '' the cat is at the table '' instead of the cat is under the table.

5. Errors of avoidance: these errors occur when the learner fail to apply certain target language rules just because they are thought of to be too difficult.

6. Errors of overproduction: in the early stages of language learning, learners are supposed to have not yet acquired and accumulated a satisfied linguistic knowledge which can enable them to use the finite rules of the target language in order to produce infinite structures, most of the time, beginners overproduce, in such a way, they frequently repeat a particular structure.

complexity, and fluency. If teachers judge learner language only in terms of accuracy, the learners' development of complexity and fluency can suffer.

ACCORDING TO LINGUIST CORDER, THE FOLLOWING ARE THE STEPS IN ANY TYPICAL ERROR ANALYSIS RESEARCH:

1. Collecting samples of learner language.
2. Identifying the errors.
3. Describing the errors.
4. Explaining the errors.
5. Evaluating/correcting the errors.

TYPES OF ERRORS

1, Overgeneralizations: in linguistics, overgeneralizations error occur when the speaker applies a grammatical rule in cases where it doesn't apply. Richard et al, (2002) mentioned that they are caused ''by extension of target language rules to inappropriate context.'' (P.185). this kind of errors have been committed while dealing with regular and irregular verbs, as well as the application of plural forms. E.g. (Tooth == Tooths rather than teeth) and (he goes == he goed rather than went).

2. Simplifications: they result from learners producing simpler linguistic forms than those found in the target language, in other words, learners attempt to be linguistically creative and produce their own poetic sentences/utterances, they may actually be successful in doing it, but it is not necessary the case, Corder (as cited in Mahmoud 2014:276) mentioned that learners do not have the complex system which they could simplify. This kind of errors is committed through both of Omission and addition of some linguistic elements at the level of either the Spelling or grammar. A. Mahmoud (2014) provided examples based on a research conducted on written English of Arabic-speaking second year University students:

1. Spelling: omission of silent letters:

    o no (= know) * dout (= doubt) * weit (weight)

2. Grammar:

1.   Omission:

    - We wait ^ the bus all the time.

    - He was ^ clever and has ^ understanding father.

2.   Addition: