

Errors and mistakes, the natural gift to learners in language learning

Linh Phuong Nguyen^{1*}

¹Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: linhnp@hub.edu.vn

ARTICLE INFO

DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.
soci.en.15.2.3231.2025

Received: February 05th, 2024

Revised: February 16th, 2024

Accepted: March 01st, 2024

Keywords:

error; interlanguage; mistake;
proactive prohibition; transfer

ABSTRACT

Making mistakes or creating errors is unavoidable in language learning. It is also considered an integral part of the student's interlanguage and a catalyst for route, rate, and success of second language acquisition, helping students reshape full development of linguistic properties. This paper aims to review the literature to technically distinguish errors from mistakes. Also, it looks into the grounded theoretical foundations of error analysis, contrastive analysis, and behaviorist learning theory in order to help a more comprehensive understanding of sources and types and classifications of errors and mistakes production. The research results indicate that mistakes are produced when the learner knows but fails to use it in learning the target language, whereas errors are the result of systematic competence (ability to use language properties: sound, phonetics, and phonology), the learner's system is incorrect, faulty actions not as planned in language production. In addition, mistakes and errors in language use can come from lack of attention (e.g., slips, lapses), ungrammaticalities (e.g., cognitive failures, broken down language system), or from the presence of interference (called proactive inhibition), or negative transfer of the first language habits or failures of overcoming proactive inhibition. Some pedagogical implications empowering teachers' roles, teaching methods, and strategies are implemented. Besides, positive feedback and frequent practice are two of the most intelligent choices for error treatment and mistake avoidance; this couple could help to facilitate rapid and easy language learning.

1. Introduction

Errors transfer and mistakes are too important to be left to both native speakers and non-native speakers; they are natural gifts of language that are given by God to human beings, especially language students, who are worthy of being rewarded in learning (formal and informal settings) including both "*natural setting*" (e.g., learner's language is used as the native or official language) and "*educational setting*" (e.g., learner's native language is the medium of instruction in foreign language classroom also called metalanguage). Otherwise, errors and mistakes are unique and universal to humans. The former is considered a phenomenon of "cognitive failures", and the latter as "slips or lapses" in learning and using language. James (2013) briefly described that language errors are seen as an unsuccessful bit of language, and mistakes are underlying within not actions as planned. In a pedagogical context, teachers are wondering if the native

speakers, who are perfect in using their language, will not make any single mistake or will stand beyond the circle of errors and if the non-native speakers are going to stay themselves so safe from mistakes or errors production. This may be a big question that could not be easy to answer and is still open to be left until now.

In the learning process, language learners make mistakes and errors by attaching them to their productive and receptive skills with different degrees. In fact, errors and mistakes can occur anywhere and take place at any time, and are produced by anyone; especially they are also found prolonged existence in all language skills (productive and receptive), learning aspects (explicit - being aware of what and when is language learned or implicit - being not aware of what and when is language learned) even declarative knowledge (knowledge about language system - linguistic properties) and procedural knowledge (knowledge about how language is used - systematic competence). Ellis (1994a, p. 255) explains clearly that “learners make errors in both comprehension (language input) and production (language output) in the first and the second language (L1 or L2)”. This is by no means that making errors and mistakes is always bad or wrong. Instead, making errors and mistakes is a process of success of language development, an alluvium of cognitive beliefs which should be widely accepted and wisely treated as an unavoidable and unexpected phenomenon in the language learning and teaching process. Making errors is the most natural thing in the world, and it is evidently and tightly tied to human beings (Maicusi et al., 2000).

In reality, the traditional teaching methods and general theories of learning labeled the educational motto published in 1983, Krashen and Terrell (1982, p. 178) finalized an extensive discussion; that is, “right is right, wrong is wrong, wrong is not right and right is not wrong in learning theory”. Backward to a little bit between time within the 1960s and the 1990s. Skinner’s (1957) behaviorist learning theory with a highlighted spot, “errors and habits,” is a good example. The behaviorists viewed that errors and mistakes were symptoms of ineffective teaching and evidence of failures in learning. In educational theory, Ellis (1994b) stated that old habits get in the way of learning new habits. Furthermore, Grammar Translation Method with accuracy emphasis (Howatt, 1984); the spark of this theory is bearing that learning language must always be perfect. Last but by no means least, the Direct Method is widely known in that mistakes and errors were never allowed to occur in any single situation (Titone, 1968). As Richards and Rodgers (2014, p. 10) wrote, “correction was top-prior and highly emphasized”.

These statements above are a few of thousands of adequate evidence to mirror that errors and mistakes are something seriously negative and terrible. So, everything must be extremely perfect and qualified in learning; students must ensure that everything they perform is always correct, accurate in the classroom.

Harmer (2001) points out that one of the big things that puzzles most teachers is why students make errors or mistakes, and the same mistakes or errors go on repeating (p. 99). More closely, teachers are often afraid of their students’ making mistakes or creating errors in class (Amara, 2015, p. 61). In truth, making mistakes or creating errors in language learning never conveys the negative meaning of signals of “badness or wrongness”. Simply, it symbolizes a student’s cognitive development instead. Merely, it finalizes the transition from a lower step up to a higher one in growth. Corder’s (1967a) article on “*the significance of learner’s errors.*”, L2 learners’ errors do not mean “bad habits”, errors are temporarily mismatched and mistimed. Of course, it does not right reflect how well or how bad our students are at the moment, but it is an integral part of language learning progressive and cognitive development. Cook (2011) describes

that making errors is a positive sign of the learning process itself. Mistakes and errors may be natural and seen as a symptom of the learner's progress through interlanguage (L1 and L2) toward closer and closer approximation to the target language (Ur, 2012, p. 85).

These days, students should be encouraged to admit errors or mistakes and gradually accept them as "false-pals." Also, students should be ready to bring "the false-pals" into their learning rather than to strict prohibition or to stop their existence towards learning, these false-pals only occur as soon as our students really integrate into learning and activate learning, and think of learning. More importantly, in Applied Linguistics, errors and mistakes may be seen as part of natural acquisition process and be viewed as catalysts of route, rate, and success of SLA; they speed language learning more rapidly. When learners make mistakes or errors, they are demonstrating a part of the natural process of language learning (Harmer, 2001, p. 100). In the classroom, it is too hard to find that no one is able to harvest the real learning outcomes without making mistakes or errors. In several cases, teachers sometimes feel uncomfortable or easily angry or upset as their students make mistakes and errors in learning, but let's remember that even teachers make mistakes and errors sometimes; the old proverb says that no one is perfect. Teachers will think that their students failed to acquire knowledge of learning and went beyond the lesson; sometimes, they carry out the strategy "*pull out habits of the rat*" as being "*rewarded or punished*" as learning promotion or enhancement. More seriously, some formative or and summative assessments may be strictly given and then tightly labeled to such students with poor learning competence and performance or deficiency in language system and learning capacity.

2. Review of literature

This section presents a discussion of the common distinction between errors and mistakes and, later, defines preliminary definitions of errors and mistakes. Then, it explains the basic concepts of error analysis, contrastive analysis, and behaviorist learning theory. Next, the causes and types of errors and mistakes also are briefly described. Finally, some pedagogical implications are going on in this paper.

To arouse a comprehensive understanding of the language that students are using in an appropriate perspective, it is important to make a distinction between errors and mistakes, technically two so different phenomena somehow. Evans (2012) expressed his view in applied linguistics theory, he distinguished between errors and mistakes, the former is consistent and based on a mislearned or cognitively failed generalization, and the latter occasionally appears due to inconsistent slips or beyond linguistic systems or random ungrammaticalities. However, it is really difficult to tell out the differences with any degree of certainty when classroom teachers run a lesson or a lecture with a little amount of time and talk. Some fruitful views, which are cited from several big distributions from different distinguished researchers, educators, and linguistic theorists, will hopefully provide a full understanding of rigorous distinctions briefly.

Mistakes may be both abstract and concrete, which are perceived intuitively and visibly by being displayed with words or sounds under the language properties (e.g., syntax, morphology, phonology, etc.). Mistakes are able to be produced a slight feeling of discomfort and nonsense of satisfaction towards the hearers or readers in some circumstances (pedagogical setting where the target language is the medium of instruction or metalanguage). According to Ur (2012), he defines that mistakes are something wrong; they are deviant forms that may not accord with some grammar book prescriptions (p. 85). The term "mistakes" pertains to misconceptions or wrong actions or out of standardized statement proceeding from faulty judgment, misunderstanding, inadequate knowledge, or inattention (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a).

Furthermore, Ellis (1994a) defined that mistake is the result of lack of attention, carelessness, forgetfulness and poor performance. It is possible to deduce that learning language is like any other learning, students make countless mistakes from the settings around them to fill up their gaps of deficiency of competence. Of course, mistakes which students are producing in using language may be logical in limited linguistic system (e.g., declarative knowledge-knowledge of language system), they are out of direct learning, this means that memory of information which is closely relevant to what is being learned is temporarily broken down, failure of rules of language system is escalated (e.g., spelling rules, lexical items, etc.). Several teachers of L2 strongly agree that mistakes produced in learning process are to construct a new system that are requiring. As Brown (2000) noted, “the concept of mistakes refers to any poor performance errors that students get slips, synonymously that is a failure in utilizing a known system correctly” (p. 226).

There are several different definitions of concept of errors which are developed by a lot of different distinguished researchers, educators (see Table 1). Firstly, starting with Ellis (1989), the term “errors” is a signal of faulty which is incomplete understanding and cannot be self-corrected. To further distinguish, he suggested two ways: that is, “consistency in performance” as a valid test. If the test of consistency is sometimes right or sometimes wrong, it will surely be a mistake. In contrast, if students are asked to correct their own deviant utterance or production, they are unable to do so or are unsuccessful in correcting it. To explain this failure, the simplest way for this answer is that students do not know how to correct because of their deficiency in the language system. Closely, Harmer (2001, p. 100) wrote, “error is a part of the learner’s interlanguage that is reshaped development for full mastery.” According to Corder (1967a), error is known as idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage of the learner, manifesting the learner’s system of operation while learning. Nevertheless, error is an act involving an unintentional deviation from truth or accuracy, a deficiency, or an imperfection in structure or function (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b).

Table 1

Synthesis of Distinctions between Errors and Mistakes

Mistakes	Errors
Mistakes are produced because of a lack of attention, carelessness, and poor performance (Ellis, 1989).	Errors are faulty, incomplete understanding in the learning process (Ellis, 1989).
Mistakes can be self-corrected as the learner’s attention is improved (Brown, 2000).	Errors cannot be self-corrected because of a deficiency of knowledge (Brown, 2000).
Mistakes is failure of cognition that is caused by forgetfulness, carelessness (Corder, 1967a).	Errors are caused by not certainly knowing the target language rules (Brown, 1987).
Mistakes are produced by learners’ slips or lapses (James, 2013).	Errors are produced by learners’ ill-forms or deviant versions (James, 2013).
Mistakes are failures of action performance, known as being not action as planned (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b).	Errors are the result of cognitive failures (Merriam-Webster, n.d.b).

Source. The researcher’s data analysis

2.1. Causes of errors and mistakes

According to Harmer (2001, p. 99), interlanguage is a main cause of errors; he further said that students who learn English as an L2 already have a deep knowledge of at least one other language, and L1 and L2 get into touch with other, confusions often arise more or less which provoke errors in learner's use of English. Like Harmer's viewpoint again, Brown (2000) stated that students are processing language on the basis of knowledge of their own interlanguage, which as a system of language underlies between two languages L1 and L2 on the same junction (p. 245). More ever, Ellis (1994a, p. 33) wrote, "error is a multi-factor phenomenon and that interference, as one of the factors, interacted in complex ways with other factors." In fact, the notion of interference is a backbone in behaviorist accounts of second language acquisition, learning difficulty is the result of interference, and interference is the result of proactive inhibition. It implies that the new learning is established from the old learning, but the previous learning inhibits or prevents the learning of new habits. For example, "*Daddy goed out and mommy comed in*" instead of "*daddy went (go + {past}) and mommy came (come + {past})*." The problem, in here, concerns to grammatical morpheme with the main verb in the sentence "go" and "come", the past tense marker in this case, does not carry the meaning in the context (e.g., *yesterday or a certain past time*). It is clear that errors will arise more or less depending on how differently or similarly students transfer L1 into L2 (L1, L2 share the meaning but express it differently). Confusions arise from the use of the native speakers and English-speaking-French students (transferring the realization device from L1 and L2). In this case, there is a similar form "present perfect" in both French and English but some time the concept is expressed differently (e.g., "*I have a cold*", an expression of being cold in English). As a result, this meaning is expressed in French "*J'ai froid*"; it sounds logical and very perfect. Marton (1981) pointed out that students always freely use their native language in the second language classroom for communication; this mainly strengthens proactive inhibition; they do not prevent or farsight the presence of proactive inhibition. Learning a second language involves maximizing and developing new habits where L2 and L1 are different (called realization device is different in two languages). The students are, therefore, advised that they have to overcome the proactive inhibition if they want to get the smooth acquisition (i+1). However, the students will not need to overcome proactive inhibition if they fully master a different realization device, the progress of SLA may not be smoother because of L1 interference - synonymously, L1 influence on L2 learning will break down or debilitate L2 learning (Teixeira, 2021).

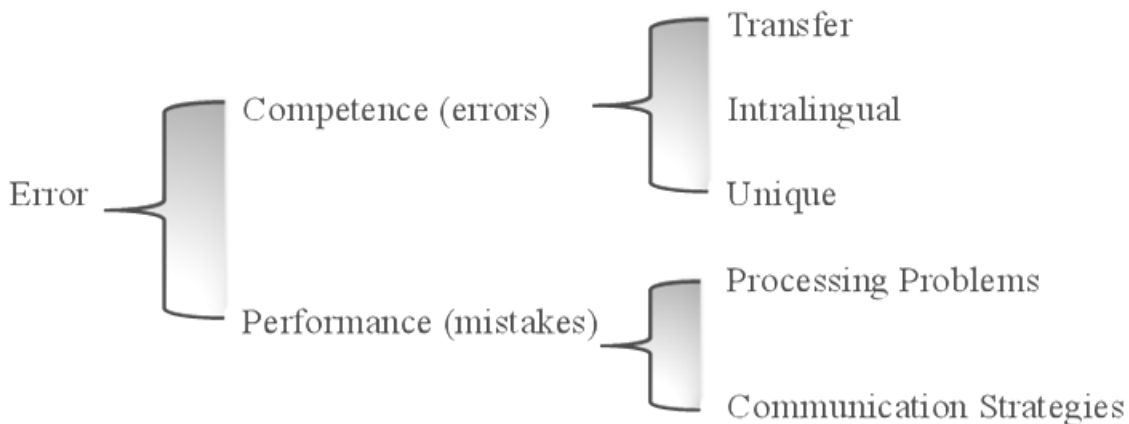
Whether smooth or debilitated SLA so much depends on "*language transfer*", it may be either negative or positive. Errors will surely arise when a negative transfer takes place from the first language to the second. Proactive prohibition is a strong catalyst for the necessary condition of negative transfer. In contrast to negative transfer, positive transfer will be when L1 and L2 are the same and no errors will occur. In the book entitled "*understanding second language acquisition*", Ellis wrote, "differences between the native language and the target language create learning difficulties which result in errors, while similarities between them facilitate learning rapidly" (Ellis, 1994a, p. 22). Deductively, how easily or rapidly the students acquire language are depending upon the degree of similarities between the native language and the target language of the learners. Jame (2013) states that interference is the greatest when there is a certain degree of similarity and vice versa.

Undoubtedly, errors are considered undesirable learning outcomes, evidence of non-learning, they are failures to overcome proactive inhibition, the result of negative transfer of L1 habits, and result of non-learning rather than wrong learning. Therefore, it is possible to say that

the greater the difference, the greater the difficulty, the more numerous errors will be (e.g., Khmer and Vietnamese; Khmer and English and others) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

A Route-Map of Errors and Mistakes



Source. The researcher's data analysis

Theoretical concepts

2.1.1. Error Analysis (EA)

As Ellis (1989) stated, “error analysis provides a synchronic description of the learner’s errors” (p. 53). Error analysis is a quite necessary procedure used by researchers, teachers, it pertains to collecting students’ language samples by analyzing, identifying, describing, and classifying errors in cross-linguistic influence and then evaluating their seriousness in language production. Heydari and Bagheri (2012, p. 84) shortly described that there is no way, but a better understanding of errors is to help teachers know students’ difficulties in learning that language. These sequences of procedures give researchers, teachers, and educators adequate information about where their students are in language progress at the moment. Also, they will be provided with information what (real) problems their students are involving as well as having an attempt at assisting them so that they are able to gain an awareness of what they know about, understanding of their students’ learning capacity. Since then, they can help decide what to do next for their teaching and their students’ learning (e.g., feedback, error treatment, avoidance, problem solving, communicative strategies, etc.). The purpose of EA emphasizes a correlation between “competence and performance”, measuring what students know and can do and do not know and cannot do. “Error analysis enables the classroom teachers to supply them not just with the information that their hypothesis is wrong, but also, importantly, with the right sort of information or data for them to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language” (Corder, 1974, p. 170).

2.1.2. Contrastive Analysis (CA)

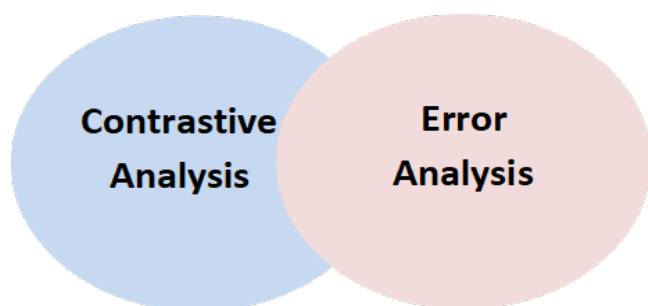
Contrastive analysis is the technique used to compare two languages, the native language, and the target language, to focus on describing the similarities and differences between the two languages. According to CA, L2 errors are the result of the differences between the learner’s NL and TL, the degree of linguistic differences will lead to degree of learning difficulties, the degree of learning difficulties will lead to the errors. Here, the notion of “*difference with difficulty*” and “*difficulty with errors*”, the problem in this situation is that “*difference reflects a linguistic concept*”, whereas “*difficulty belongs to a psychological concept.*” Thus, it is possible to say that

(linguistic) difference leads to (linguistic) difficulty and (linguistic) difficulty leads to error production. Tarone (2018) said that good contrastive analysis of the NL and the TL could accurately predict all the difficulties that learners would encounter in trying to learn the target language (p. 749), he further added in CA that errors became an increasingly major source of difficulty in language learning. Lado (1957) said, “the teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know much more and better about what (real) problems are and can provide this data for teaching them.” Ellis (1994b) classified contrastive analysis into two aspects: a psychological aspect and a linguistic aspect. The former is reliant on behaviorist learning theory (e.g., learning as the formation of habits), and the latter underlies structural linguistics (e.g., prediction - identifying which areas are likely to cause errors, mistakes; and comparison - degree of similarity and difference between two languages). Wardhaugh (1970) conceptualized CA into 02 forms: strong form and weak form. The former claims that differences (L2 errors) can be used to predict all errors that will occur (L2 errors can only be predicted between learners’ L1 and L2 differences). As Lee (1968) briefly said difficulties and errors found in L2 learning is due to interference coming from the learner’s first language or native language. The latter claims that differences can be used to identify some out of the total of errors that actually arise. Brown (1987) also suggested that the weak form focuses not only on the *a priori* prediction of difficulties but on a *posterior* explanation of the sources of errors in language learning also. Therefore, CA needs to work hand in hand with an EA in two ways: the first one, errors must be clearly identified by analyzing a corpus of learners. The second one, CA can be used to establish which errors in the corpus can be put down to differences between the L1 and L2.

In short, EA and CA, in-depth, can be used as a complementary distribution in the process of analyzing the student’s errors in order to discover competence (knowledge) and performance (ability) of the language and to fully understand (1) How the languages are learned; (2) What is the nature of language development of an individual learner (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis



Source. The researcher’s data analysis

2.1.3. Behaviorist Learning Theories (BLT)

It, being a theory of learning, also called habit-formation theory, inborned by Skinner (1957), views learning as the formation of habits. It explains that a habit is formed when a particular stimulus becomes regularly linked with a particular response. Broadly, language can be learned through activities, and making a response is necessarily conditional to learn language. If a particular response is reinforced, then it will become habitual. It means that when the students are confronted with specific stimuli, they will immediately lead to specific responses and then are reinforced by rewards. Pedagogically, if this theory is applied to language learning,

learning L1 and L2 will surely be the most successful. Moreover, when the learning task is broken down into a number of stimulus and response links, students will become exceptional and outstanding with frequent practice. More or less, they will gradually master language, leading to naturally and automatically acquiring language.

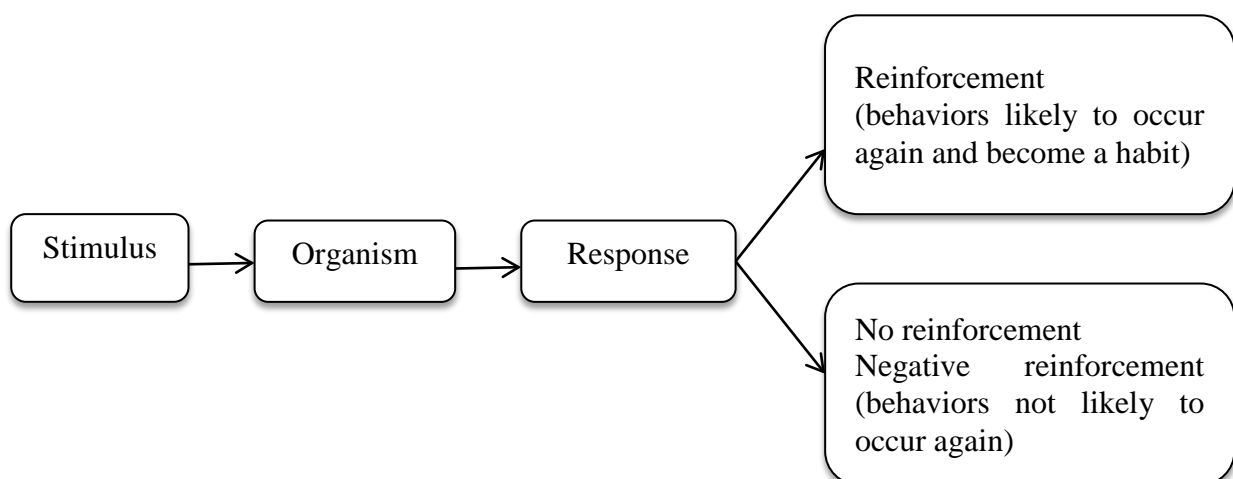
Language is a set of habits through imitation (e.g., a student, at first, copies the stimulus behavior, it will then become automatic or unconscious-habitual). In SLA theories, teaching language is teaching how to form habits and how to think of how language has been required. Chomsky (1965) believed that children are born with ability to learn a language, this ability is unconscious. They are learning a language and using it by exposing it to this language, imitating utterances (either rewarded or corrected). Similarly, Ellis (1994a, p. 21) stated that children were said to master their mother tongue by imitating adults' utterances, and L2 is gradually developing inside until they are well acquired. Truly, they can also build up knowledge of patterns or habits to replace the language that they are trying to learn. Therefore, the stimulus is said to elicit a response, and reinforcement will be marked the response with appropriateness (rewarded) or inappropriateness (punished) and also will encourage the repetition of the response in the future (see Brown, 1987; Skinner, 1957). In the same vein, Richards and Rodger (2014) shortly stated as follows:

“Reinforcement is an important element in the learning process, this is because it booststhe likelihood that the behavior will occur again and become a habit. To apply this theory to language learning is to identify the organism as the foreign language learner, the behavior as verbal behavior, the stimulus as what is taught or presented in the foreign language, the response as the learner's reaction to the stimulus, and the reinforcement as the extrinsic approval and praise of the teachers and students or the intrinsic self-satisfaction of target language use. Language mastery is represented as acquiring a set of appropriate language stimulus-response and reinforcement chains (p. 50)”.

According to behaviorist learning theory above discussed, it partly explained why the TL students made errors, mistakes in their learning. Besides, a concise explanation is also given out is that the old habits get in the way of learning new habits. Stimulus-Response links of TL is different from ones of L1, errors will be inevitable results (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Three Crucial Elements in Learning: Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement



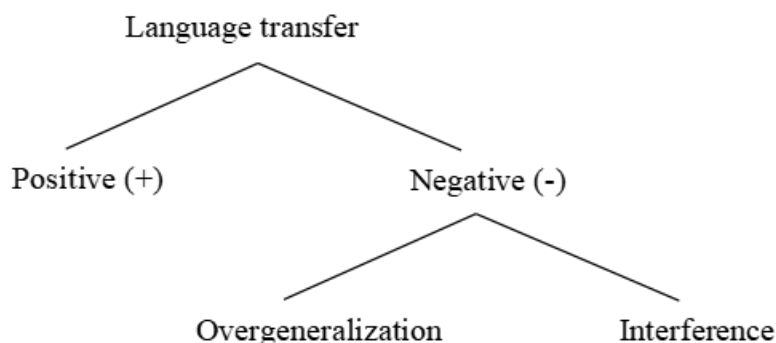
Source. The researcher's data analysis

2.2. Linguistic types of errors

Errors are result of non-learning rather than wrong learning, Richards (1972) described in details in his research, different learners with different background will make different types of errors. As Amara (2015) wrote, “errors are systematically failed in the learning process” (p. 59). Sources of errors are various and numerous and types of errors are multi-forms, too. Language learners are making errors both consciously and subconsciously, productively and comprehensively, implicitly or explicitly. They, therefore, find it too difficult to correct their errors in some or other way. Closely linked to the final conclusive statements said by Corder (1974), Scovel (2001) is that “one of the major causes of errors is language transfer” (p. 05). It is a strong evidence of faulty understanding and misleading in target language usage (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Transfer, Negative, Overgeneralization, Interference



Source. The researcher's data analysis

And now, causes of errors and types of errors are briefly summarized preceding with specific illustrations, first starting with causes of errors, as under:

2.2.1. Interference errors

It is also called the L1 transfer or interlingual interference. In this type, errors are caused by mother tongue interference (L1 interference). Harmer (2001) described, “When student's native language and target language come into contact with each other, errors will be provoked and arisen” (p. 99).

1. Ma'am Ngoc and ma'am Duyen thought of shopping.
2. We like fishes and fruits in our dinner.
3. She looks at the ship.

Firstly, let's have a careful look at sentences 1 and 2, errors are the results of “*negative interlingual transfer*” from Vietnamese into English. Here, as in sentence 1, the level sounds are examined in a phonemic distinction between two languages L1 and L2, like /ŋ/ and /d/ for Vietnamese speakers but /n/ and /ð/ for foreign speakers; a speech sound /ŋ/ occurs word-initially in L1 (Vietnamese) but occurs word medially or finally in English. Although the two languages commonly share Roman Alphabet, Vietnamese learners have difficulties when they do not equivalently pronounce /θ/ in English due to the phenomenon of N/A (not applicable, not available). It is possible to say that this item in L1 is absent in TL or vice versa. In another case, the plurality maker “-s or -es” in sentence 2 often carried no pragmatic meaning and syntactic function in the context (e.g., fish, fruit is our favourite food-the whole range of the meaning it

has is rather than the prototype in linguistics solution). So, they are not essential for adding in this case. Finally, some of the Vietnamese speakers arise their confusion in sentence 3. Foreign speakers, sometimes, all hear “see” for “she” and “sheep” instead of “ship.” Hence, L1 has a slightly different complementary distribution from equivalent speech sound (in this case, the item in L1 is absent in the TL, complementary distribution is going on with learners’ language learner-language).

2.2.2. *Intralingual interference*

Errors reflect general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012, p. 02). Errors occur (within TL-itself) as learners begin to acquire parts of a new linguistic system. When the L2 learners make this type of error, they can yet really to acquire knowledge, but demonstrate a part of the natural process of learning a second language is going on. According to Richards (1972, pp. 185-187), intralingual errors are also subdivided into the following categories:

a. *Negative intralingual interference* (including overgeneralization, developmental errors, simplification and avoidance, and others) as under:

1. *Does Nam can sing?*
2. *David is speaks English.*
3. *Daddy goed out, mommy comed in.*
4. *She is more nicer than he.*
5. *Could you tell me what time is it?*
6. *I no can go there for 2 hour.*
7. *You aren't going to work today, are you?*
Yes, I am going (I intend to go), OR, No, I am not going. (I don't intend to go).
8. *Nam asked Bob if he wanted to go shopping tomorrow.*
9. *Nhung and David suggested that he call a doctor last week.*
10. *Someone thinks they must go (or) everyone can do their best.*

Causes of errors, mistakes whose rules are extended beyond intralingual errors in learning a L2 or TL (beyond the ruled-based target language). The learners have transformed difficulties with how they perceive their own competence in communication. This means that language students cannot simply memorize the rules of the target language. They, therefore, reproduce with their own utterance, they attempt to construct their own rules on the basis of input data. As a result, the learners are trying to create deviant structures that are different from ones in the target language, or they try to rote learning of the synchronic rules before. Ellis (1994b) called these structures with the name of “incomplete application of the rules.” Further did he say more that incomplete application of the rules led to the failure to learn the more complex structures. For instance, sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 overgeneralize new rules that language students learnt them subconsciously. As a result, mistakes are made with things that students have already known before. In sentence 6, the observed example gives us a fruitful insight is that “pre-modal verb negation and plurality” are minoring the structure of Vietnamese language, students attempt at simplifying by easing the broaden of learning with the style of Vietnamese

vernacular (e.g., omitting grammatical or propositional elements in language production). Let's examine sentences 7, 8, 9, and 10, they fall into "avoidance." When students are under pressure because of the difficulty of linguistic structures, they usually feel so confused and they are likely to avoid these structures if they find too difficult to fully express or these structures are absent in L1. As Ellis (1994b) briefly described that difficulties are found in avoidance may be a lack of correspondence between the learners mother tongue structure and the target language. In fact, when NL and TL are not on the same junction of structures or lexical items. Inevitably, avoidance will be provoked.

Running contrary to interference, not all interference is negative, let have a look at sentence 10, neutral third person singular form as in "someone, anyone", the use of "they" are various forms (alternative form) officially expressed as being Standard British English (SBE) by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) or (BANA) and distinguished educators like Jack Richards and Roger Gowers and some of the well-respected others as well.

2.2.3. *Faulty teaching methods*

Appropriate teaching methods are imperative for the successful teaching launching of the English language. However, if teaching methods are faulty, they lead to errors. Our students will find it difficult to learn the target language due to inappropriate teaching methods (e.g., teaching pronunciation, etc.).

2.3. *Linguistic classification of errors, mistakes*

A vision of the classification of errors, mistakes can be of the polysemy of the term in a secondary problem in some cases.

2.3.1. *Traditional classification of errors can be briefly described under*

Errors are classified into four major classes: omission, addition, substitution, and jumbling.

Omission: students sometimes omit some important aspects like articles, helping verbs or any part of speech. As in the sentence "(1) boys play (2) bad (3) in (4) last match yesterday" the article "the" as in (1) and (4); morpheme "{play} + {past}" or "past form" as in (2) and adverbial manner "-ly" as in (4) has been omitted.

Addition: sometimes, language students add some unnecessary or additional aspects to their oral or written form. For example, "a man who works hard, he gets a good salary".

Substitution: substitute form or replaceable word is used by a student that he, she thinks correct but actually it is wrong and unqualified due to lack of knowledge or incomplete understanding, like "she cannot ate an apple"; "ate" for "eat" is totally wrong in this case.

Jumbling: a student makes a sentence in a jumbled way, for instance: "What you are doing now?". This sentence is wrong, it becomes incorrect for "crazy" helping verb and form.

2.3.2. *Corder's classification of errors*

Corder (1967b) classified the errors as under:

Pre-systematic errors: the learners do not recognize some existences of the language rules, they stand beyond the the circle of explanation about why the error occur. (If the teacher asks them to correct these errors, they cannot do so because they do not know how to correct them; they do not understand the reasons. The teacher, therefore, does not need to correct every error when unnecessary).

Systematic errors: our students formed some new rules that were incomplete. As a student learned a past tense and its form, which is a verb with ending morpheme {ed} to indicate “time deixis”, he/she does not know this verb has variant or alternant form like “*goed; comed, cannot to go, should to sleep etc.*”. In this case, teacher should make some further explanation and provide them correct form so that they can complete their knowledge.

Post-systematic errors: students have learned comparatively complete knowledge. For example, they have already known the past verb of the verb “*sleep*” is “*slept*” or “*go*” is “*went*”. At this time these students do not usually make errors, they can correct them, themselves if errors appear, teacher do not need to point out these errors, and their task is to provide students with more opportunities to sufficiently practice.

2.3.3. *Classification of mistakes*

Technically, mistakes fall into two categories as:

Slips or lapses: known as the temporary process of failures of “output.” When our students fail to utilize to know the language system correctly (normally language skills), because they sometimes slip their tongue or word(s) intended to use or step over hesitation, carelessness in producing speech. In the other words, these “slips or lapses” are normally capable of recognizing and correcting, repairing the fault(s) on time. For instance, In the case of the question(s), whether the high school students normally automatically answer “*yes*” or “*no*” although they are not yet able to spot the core of the question(s) given to them. Of course, they have no trouble correcting it (it is a mere mistake).

Deficiency in performance: Sometimes, students have insufficient practice (sometimes also labeled *performance errors*) like random ungrammaticality or random guessing, temporary breakdown, forgetfulness (language loss in mind), and others. As a result, these performances or practices become poor (due to interference or deviance or odds of the product of student’s own), leading them to imperfection or incompleteness of the target language. For example, “*She has been *their for many day**”. Just one more, “*I and my sister fly to Tokyo by night again.*” In this case, “if pointed out as a reminder” and “if given the chance” until the deviance is sufficient to prompt for self-correction.

2.3.4. *Fitikide’s common mistakes*

In the prototype of the errors dictionary published in 1936, mistakes were put into five (5) sections as follows:

Misformed: Misused linguistic properties like wrong prepositions, misplaced tenses or miscellaneous in English expressions (e.g., *instead of/to; wait/waiting; learned from out/by heart etc.*).

Incorrection omission: For example, *They ran lest he* Ø miss/√ should the train.*

Unnecessary words/Redundancies: preposition, articles etc. For instance, *please write a letter *to/ Ø √ ma’am Marosa.*

Misplaced words: Adverb and others, like *I saw him *yesternight at home/√at home yesternight.*

Confused words: to/at; to/till; lay/lie, borrow/lend; made of/from; think of/about, who/whom; go/come etc.

Finally, from personal differences of educators, researchers like Ellis, Richards, Harmer, Corder, Fitikide and others will be the best evidences and the basis premises, benchmarks in the framework and underpin for the following teaching implications.

3. Teaching implications

In practice, most teachers are afraid of their students making mistakes and errors but understand that making errors and mistakes have never been negative, terrifying, and hazardous, yet if they are examined from the positive pedagogical perspective.

Talking about errors and mistakes treatment and how to avoid them, to comfort them has still been a hot topic, at least until now. Feedback and practice are still the twos among the most important factors in correcting errors and mistakes in this situation.

Feedback, which is one of the most useful ways for effective errors and mistakes treatment, is extremely wise and brilliant (so called meaningful feedback) in correcting errors and mistakes. The best way of giving feedback includes repairing, repetition, elimination, explicit correction, and clarification request, which is a good example of errors and mistakes treatment. It is practical and useful for correcting every single mistake and error in language learners' written and oral performance, but there is one minor problem needed to pay close attention is that feedback is both positive and negative. Teachers, therefore, can set a balance between negativity and the possibility to lift up students' minds and to motivate them, to inspire them, promote and enhance their learning and learning achievement soon. Feedback can be either negative or positive and may serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed but also to increase motivation and build a supportive classroom climate (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 188). In the classroom, too much correcting mistakes, and errors may be demoralizing and discouraging students' learning, and student's attitudes, and beliefs (e.g., emotional, cognitive, and conative). According to Ur (2012, p. 242), feedback has two main distinguishable components: assessment and correction. The former simply informs how well or how badly the learners perform, and the latter, conversely, reflects the way in which the better than best information or alternatives to provide to our students. Richards and Rodgers (2014, p. 188) said that the genuine purpose of feedback is to help and to promote learning with an intellectual message of "*getting it wrong or bad into get it right or better*".

Sometimes, some people say that "*students' errors should be corrected as soon as they are making to prevent the formation of bad habits.*" Teachers of English fully understand that errors, mistakes are a natural and useful part of language learning, they play an important role in cognitive development in learning. These errors and mistakes will automatically or gradually disappear, whereas our students advance enough. Therefore, teachers should not be too upset, too anxious, or too worried about students' errors and mistakes. It is not really necessary to correct them, but this is by no means to say that we compromise with our students about errors or mistakes, the things we need to do now is that we should tolerate our students' errors and mistakes and try looking for the best way to nourish their learning desires. Language mistakes or errors should be ignored if this is a danger that correcting them would hinder learning more than help it (Ur, 2012, p. 171).

In the status of open education, individual teachers will be encouraged to correct only mistakes or errors that affect learning development (e.g., wrong meaning, misunderstanding, confusion, and others), but to correct or not to correct will depend on each of the individuals.

Harmer (2001, p. 07) stated that "more practice makes students perfect." In fact, frequent, sufficient practice inside classroom will be one of the best strategies to facilitate our students better in their learning and make them to become good, activated and professional, too. Under

the angle of education, practising is mainly the trademark of exceptional students because practice can help debilitate making errors or mistakes remarkably. Truthfully, our students will catch good chances to backward mirror their learning as well as master language and then avoid errors, mistakes. That's a good way for error treatment and mistakes avoidance that classroom teachers should weigh pros and cons to download some great benefits to students.

To sum up, details mentioned above will provide the classroom teachers valuable and reliable information about where their student are at the moment and to help decide what to do next to make students perfect and outstanding. It is strongly believed that the gain is likely to be greater than the loss in teaching and learning a language.

4. Conclusion

In short, errors and mistakes should be better viewed as a natural process of trial and mismatch on the part of the learners' language development. Errors are the result of the learner's systematic competence (the student's language system is not correct, while mistakes are the fruit of performance errors (the student knows the language system, but they failed to use it effectively or correctly). According to the theoretical aspects, contrastive analysis hypothesized that linguistic differences between L1 and L2 will lead to the occurrence of errors as the result of learning difficulties. Error analysis revealed what learners know and what learners do not know about their own linguistic competence and performance. Error analysis, being a basic foundation to help identify and classify errors, helps teachers predict the problems, know the difficulties, and understand the gaps that students are facing. At the same time, error analysis also helps students learn the language better and improve their language capacity in competence and performance by providing data on incomplete language systems to them. In behaviorist learning theory, errors are the result of the negative transfer of the L1 habits when our learners fail to overcome proactive inhibition. Therefore, language students are advised to overcome proactive inhibition if they would like to develop L2 learning.

To predict errors and to avoid or to minimize potential errors and mistakes, said Tracy-Ventura and Paquot (2020) that like sin, errors can be avoided. Likewise, Ellis (1989, p. 23) revealed classroom practice could be directed at the problem areas in order to help the learners overcome the negative transfer effects of the first language transfer.

A final word, feedback, and practice are two of the wisest and the most intelligent strategies for error treatment and mistake avoidance. Chronologically, feedback can be an instructional toolkit to develop student's cognitive beliefs and to serve all kinds of attitudes. Its main purpose is to help students move ahead in their interlanguage. Harmer (2001) shortly anchored that "feedback encompasses not only correcting students but also offering them an assessment of how well they have done" (p. 99). Importantly, language teachers should weigh the pros and cons to avoid being counterproductive and mistimed as giving feedback, not being harmful to our learners' stage in interlanguage development as well as their learning outcomes. Frequent and sufficient practice, it will be strongly believed, will make our students become professional and perfect in error, and mistake elimination. More especially, students become better than best at learning a language. Mistakes and errors are part of good English for English.

References

- Amara, N. (2015). Errors correction in foreign language teaching. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 5(3), 58-68.
- Brown, H. D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Prentice Hall.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (Vol. 4). Longman.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.
- Cook, V. (2011). *Second language learning and language teaching*. Hodder Education.
- Corder, S. P. (1967a). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Oxford University Press.
- Corder, S. P. (1967b). The significance of learners' errors. *IRAL-International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 5(4), 161-170.
- Corder, S. P. (1974). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. Longman.
- Ellis, R. (1989). *Understanding second language acquisition* (Vol. 31). Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994a). Introduction: Implicit and explicit language learning - An overview. In N. C. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 01-31). Academic Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994b). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Evans, V. (2012). Cognitive linguistics. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 3(2), 129-141.
- Fitikides, T. J. (1989). *Common mistakes in English*. Orient Blackswan.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. Longman.
- Heydari, P., & Bagheri, M. S. (2012). Error analysis: Sources of L2 learners' errors. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(8), 1583-1589.
- Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A history of english language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- James C. (1980). Contrastive analysis. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.) (1995), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics*. LongmanKachru.
- James, C. (2013). *Errors in language learning and use exploring error analysis*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. (1982). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. The Alemany Press.
- Lado, R. (1957). Sentence structure. *College Composition & Communication*, 8(1), 12-16.
- Lee, W. R. (1968). Thoughts on contrastive linguistics in the con text of language teaching. In *Report of the nineteenth annual round table meeting on linguistics and language studies*. George University.
- Maicusi, T., Maicusi, P., & Lopez, M. J. C. (2000). The error in the second language acquisition. *Encuentro Revista de investigación e innovación en la clase de idiomas*, 11(2), 168-173.
- Marton, W. (1981). Contrastive analysis in the classroom. *Contrastive Linguistics and the Language Teacher*, 147-155.

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.a). *Errors*. Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/errors>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.b). *Mistakes*. Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. <https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/mistakes>
- Richards, J. (1972). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 25(3), 204-219.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., & Lockhart, C. (1996). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Scovel, T. (2001). *Learning new languages*. Heinle and Heinle.
- Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal behavior*. Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Tarone, E. (2018). Interlanguage. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Wiley Online Library.
- Teixeira, J. (2021). Can explicit instruction help L2 learners overcome persistent L1 interference? *Language Acquisition and Language Disorders*, 229-256.
- Titone, R. (1968). *Teaching foreign languages: An historical sketch*. Georgetown University Press.
- Tracy-Ventura, N., & Paquot, M. (2020). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and corpora*. Routledge.
- Ur, P. (2012). *A course in English language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wardhaugh, R. (1970). The contrastive analysis hypothesis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 5(3), 123-130.

