



ERROR ANALYSIS ON SPOKEN ENGLISH AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN BANGLADESH

SHARMIN JAHAN

Lecturer, Department of English, Southern University Bangladesh

739/A, Mehedibag Road, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

E-mail: sharmincudream@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

Error analysis is a branch of Applied Linguistics which was established as an alternative process of Contrastive Analysis (CA). Both methods explain sources of errors but in different ways. Contrastive analysis sees errors as results of First Language Learner (L1) interference only. But Error Analysis (EA) accepts many sources of errors like intra-lingual interference, overgeneralization, fossilization etc. Error treatment is not always easy for the teachers because the errors are infinite. So the errors have analyzed here through Corder's plausible reconstruction. Under this theory, the thirty samples were collected of the errors in speaking English and found many grammatical errors besides misinformation, omission, inherent difficulty, erroneous input etc. To overcome these mistakes, the teachers, researchers and institutions should take proper steps to make the students active and motivated in learning and speaking English. In this article we have analyzed various problems on speaking English at undergraduate level in university of Bangladesh. Published books, articles and collected data are used as the materials of the article.

Key Words: Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, Speaking Skill, Grammatical Errors, Problem Area

In second language acquisition, error analysis has become popular since its appearance in 1970s due to benefits offered to language practitioners. In the late 1960s and early 1970s emphasis was shifted from Contrastive Analysis (CA) to Error Analysis (EA). Because CA was unable to explain all errors in language learning and it was impossible to ascribe them into all of differences between First Language Learner (L1) and Second Language Learner (L2). Moreover, some of the predicted errors didn't even appear in practice. Thus there was a need for a new linguistic method, which consequently took form of error analysis. Stephen Pit Corder was one of the major proponents of error analysis.

Contrastive Analysis is defined as 'a sub-discipline of linguistics concerned with the

comparison of two or more languages or sub-systems of languages in order to determine both the differences and similarities between them'.ⁱ This language comparison can be categorized in a theoretical as well as an applied perspective.ⁱⁱ Contrastive analysis claims that it is a norm of deviation from the Target Language (TL). It also implies that when the native language rules are similar with the L2, the target language is easy to learn. It is also considered positive transfer. On the contrary when L1 rules are not similar with the L2 rules, the learners face difficulties. This is called negative transfer. As a result of negative transfer, error analysis was introduced. It refers to the learners' lack of knowledge of target language. James defined the concept of error analysis as 'the

study of linguistics ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance'.ⁱⁱⁱ

EA was established as an alternative to contrastive analysis. Both methods explain sources of error, but in different ways. CA sees errors as results of L1 interference only. On the other hand, EA accepts many sources of errors such as intralingual interference, overgeneralization, mis-teaching and the role of the variable of age, attitude, aptitude, motivation etc.^{iv} It is important to stress that Error Analysis not only explored sources of error, but also many other aspects of error and language learning. Another important matter is that errors are not only predicted but mainly observed, analyzed and classified. Again errors are elevated from the status of undesirability to that of a guide to inner working of the language learning process.^v

For both teachers and researcher error analysis is a critical task. As second language (L2) learners' errors are "infinite", teachers and researcher don't feel easy to find and analyze errors. EA was only pedagogical in the earlier period. But due to some newly develop factors now it has become a central issue for both researchers and teachers. Nowadays, sample collection has been easy than past. Identifying, describing and explaining errors have been easier because a lot of research has been done in the field of second language acquisition. Now, researchers are able to categories the learners errors and to make the errors correct to the learners properly.

In English, error has two equivalent categories, they are: "errors" and "mistakes".^{vi} The different of them are the systemation of error which is made by learners, i.e. error reflect gaps in learner's is knowledge, they occur because the learner doesn't know what is correct. Mistake reflects occasional lapses in performance, they occur because in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he/she knows.^{vii} Coder said, "Error gives suggestion to the teacher because error can be level of achievement indication in a teaching process done. Besides, error can be a condition to the researcher what learners have learned, it also can be the strategy that have by learners in learning and getting language. Then, error also can be

measurement to the learners in learning language".^{viii}

Second language learners of English make errors because of interference. It refers to any deviation of the norms of Target Language (TL). It can easily be assumed that while learning second language as English, learners' native language interferes much. Many scholars of linguistics think if the rules of L1 are identical with the rules of L2, it can be considered as positive interference and by this type of interference, learners will be able to learn the target language easily. On the other hand, if the rules of L2 are not identical, learners of second language will not be able to learn the language. This called negative interference. Besides, learners make some inter-lingual errors. Inter language is a third language and it is independent of L1 and L2. Inter language is generally defined as a system that is distinct from both the native language and the target language.^{ix}

There are three sources of error, they are: Interlingua transfer, intralingua transfer and context of learning. Interlingua transfer is to be a source of error because influencing of mother tongue that has been mastering to the second language learned. This phenomenon is categorized intervention. It is happened in began of 2nd language or foreign language learning process, which then to be adapted to 2nd language or 3rd language system continually.^x If the error is to be happened continually and there is no changing to be better, so the error is categorized in fossilized case. Fossilization happens because learners have influence their mother tongue to the 2nd language learned.^{xi} This is also called development stage. In this stage L2 learners make errors while learning second language.

Second error source is intralingua transfer. It happened after 2nd language or 3rd language learners get new language system. They learned then apply the system in all language unit, e.g. when the learners have just known that English has verb that showing time, example verb *wash* has time in present, and *washed* has time in past. So when using verb *go* to be moved to past they move *go* to be *goed* not *went*. It is also called overgeneralization.

Third error source is context of learning. It can be a source of error because error is explaining when it has got in a learning process. It is to be happened if in learning got wrong explanation or not appropriate with language using.

EA has played a vital role in SLA research in spite of having methodological problems in EA. Since the errors made by learners are “infinite”, and so error treatment is always difficult for the language teachers. The study focuses on the learners speaking errors in some collected speaking scripts by analyzing videos.

The language has a lot of functions. These functions of the language are used for expressing and receiving some information, communication, negotiation, persuasion and for socialization. We use language into two ways, verbal language and non-verbal language. It is very important to communicate because the two components help us to speak up very well. Nonverbal language supports verbal language, it makes someone who listen our speech easier to understand. For communication, speaking skill is needed by the students in the target language. It is also very important to master speaking well by implementing the experience of learning language in real life. Brown defines that

speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed.^{xii}

The data about the Errors of speaking were collected by analyzing the video. The students were given a topic to speak something about ‘How to Keep Fit’ within 10 minutes. The students were at undergraduate of first year level. 30 samples were collected and analyzed. This research was taken how the sentences or the utterances students made and what type of error made by the students. The collected data were analyzed through plausible reconstruction introduced by Corder. It represents learners’ idiosyncratic utterances which are translated by the investigators own way in the absence of learners. The notion of idiosyncratic dialects was proposed by Corder to identify the idea that the learners’ language is peculiar and transitional competence to pin point the dynamic nature of the learners developing system.^{xiii}

As learners’ errors are infinite, they may make errors a lot. The collected data shows many grammatical errors, such as: verb tenses, word order, pronoun, preposition, article, suffix, prefix, subject-verb agreement, inherent difficulty, omission, misinformation and disordering. The errors made by the students are shown in the followings:

Table 1: Error of wrong verb occurs when a learner uses the wrong verb tense in a certain sentence. Here we see that the learners were not too much attentive in applying correct form of tense in the sentences.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Verb Tense	We should go to our bed early and <i>got</i> up from bed early.	We should go to our bed early and <i>get</i> up from bed early.

Table 2: Subject and verb must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). If a subject is singular, the verb must be singular and if a subject is plural and the verb must be plural.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
subject-verb agreement	We <i>keeps</i> our nails clean and short.	We <i>keep</i> our nails clean and short.

Table 3: Word order is the syntactic arrangement of words in phrase or clauses.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
word-order	We should drink <i>always</i> enough pure water.	We should <i>always</i> drink enough pure water.

Table 4: A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and other word in sentences. In a sentence, it links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Preposition	We should have plenty <i>on</i> rest and sleep.	We should have plenty <i>of</i> rest and sleep.

Table 5: A pronoun is word that takes place of noun. Pronouns are classified into several categories, i.e. the personal pronoun, the demonstrative pronoun, the interrogative pronoun, the indefinite pronoun, the reflexive pronoun, the relative pronoun, the distributive pronoun.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Pronouns	These rules <i>who</i> can keep us fit if we follow <i>it</i> daily.	There rules <i>which</i> can keep us fit if we follow <i>them</i> daily.

Table 6: An article is a word that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. English has two articles:

1. 'The' is used to modify specific.
2. 'A/An' is used to modify non-specific.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Articles	To keep us fit, it is <i>the</i> must to play games.	To keep us fit, it is <i>a</i> must to play games.

Table 7: Suffix is a letter or a group of letters added to the end of a word to make another word. On the other hand, prefix is a letter or a group of letters added to the beginning of word to change its meaning.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Suffix	Without sufficient water, we can't work <i>efficient</i> .	Without sufficient water, we can't work <i>efficiently</i> .
Prefix	We shouldn't keep our food <i>covertness</i> .	We shouldn't keep our food <i>uncovered</i> .

Table 8: A double negative occurs when two forms of negation are used in the same sentences.

Error classification	Error Identification	Error correction
Double negative	My younger brother doesn't have <i>no</i> idea how to keep fit.	My younger brother doesn't have <i>any</i> idea how to keep fit.

Besides grammatical errors, the students made the following errors in their speaking:

- **Erroneous Input:** The students made this type of error a lot because of their mother tongue interference.
- **Inherent difficulty:** Some students had difficulty in saying some words in English. However, they didn't want to give up easily. They had willing to continue their speaking despite their difficulty. They used their Bengali language instead of stop talking.
- **Omission:** The omission ease found in the observation was diverse. Most of them were cases where the students forgot to insert 'be' or 'auxiliary' as they made negative sentences. The omission might

change passive sentence in to active sentence and so did the opposite.

- **Disordering:** The students did this kind of error because of their lack of knowledge and confidence. They were confused and nervous. Only the researcher or teacher identified it. They had no difficulty in putting English words and clauses in to the correct order.
- **Misinformation:** The students made this error difficulty in distinguishing the use of 'many' and 'much'. They misused them.

It is 100% true that learners will learn through their errors and mistakes. So learners need to correct error gradually. Errors can be commented in various ways. Some necessary steps are shown below:

Errors are classified into two categories, they are:

Global Errors doesn't need to be corrected because this type of error affects the whole concept of target language (TL). Global Errors are generally held true, and so these errors need not be corrected.^{xiv} Local Errors which need to be corrected because these type of error affect only on the elements of sentence. It doesn't eliminate the meaning of the whole context.

Since learners have lack of knowledge on target language, so pre systematic errors can be corrected directly. The learners might be helped individually too. And, systematic errors are that when the learners have the competence but they are unable to produce properly. This error can be corrected just remind the errors to the L2 Learners. Only teachers or researchers can analyze what kind of errors need to be corrected and in which situation the errors should be corrected.

Linguistic strategy is very useful for correction. The error is to be classified between two categories. They are:

Main Categories: The auxiliary system, passive sentences and sentential components are kept in main categories, if the errors are the skeleton of English clauses.

Subcategories: Modals, do, have, conditionals etc are kept into the sub-divided categories. It is not easy to keep the errors into categories or subcategories properly, as learners' errors are infinite.

Another kind of strategy is surface taxonomy. It is claimed that surface strategy is not mental process. But the possible of identifying and correcting errors cannot be ruled out. The teachers are able to find out the errors where the learners omit the rules of target language structure. The teachers should be aware when the learners overused the rules or provide misinformation. This kind of errors can be solved in the classroom or individually.

Having many methodological problems, EA has practical implication in SLA research. It has practical use in pedagogy. Collecting samples, identifying errors, describing the errors have added a new dimension in SLA research. Despite having

many defects, EA has pedagogical importance. Error Analysis is based on competence and psychology. Its use is still in per-primary level. More and more attention should be kept in the field of recent SLA research.

Considering the finding above, we can say that most of the errors are made by the 1st year Bengali learners at University level in their spoken class. And these errors are made due to L1 transfer. The overt influences of Bengali on the students speaking English indicate that correction should be perceived as a means of helping learners rather than criticizing their performance. And, it is necessary for the teacher to manage the speaking class according to the students' problems. The teacher or researcher should apply a certain teaching strategy to improve the students' speaking ability.

References

- ⁱ Fisiak, J., *Contrastive Linguistics and The language Teacher*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981, p.01.
- ⁱⁱ Johansson, S. & Hofland, K., 'Towards an English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus', Tottie, G. & Schneider, P. (Ed.), *Creating and Using English Language Corpora*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994, p. 25.
- ⁱⁱⁱ James, C., *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2001, p. 62.
- ^{iv} Shastri, P. D., *Communicative Approach to the Teaching of English as Second Language*, 2010, p. 25.
- ^v Rod Ellis, *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p.53.
- ^{vi} Brawn, H., *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Regents, 1994, p. 205.
- ^{vii} Ellis, Rod, *Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 17.
- ^{viii} Corder, S. P., *Error Analysis and Intralingua*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p.10-11.
- ^{ix} Larry Selinker, Merrill Swam & Guy Dumas, 'The Inter-language Hypothesis Extended to

Children' *Language Learning*, vol: 25, 1975, p. 139-152.

x Brown, H. Douglas, *Principle of Language and Teaching*, Prentice Hall Inc., 1987, pp. 177-179.

xi Brown, H. Douglas, *Ibid*, p. 186.

xii Brown, H. Douglas, *Language Assessment Principles and Classroom Practice*, New York: Pearson Education, Inc, 2004, p. 140.

xiii Freeman, D. & Long, M., *An Introduction to second Language Acquisition Research*, Essex: Longman, 1994, pp. 60-61.

xiv Hendrickson, J. M., 'Error Correction in Foreign Language Teaching: Recent Theory, Research, and Practice', / K. Croft, *Readings on English as second language (2nd ed.)*, Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, 1980.
