



ERROR ANALYSIS OF ESL LEARNERS AT TYUMEN INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY

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Article History: Received on 25th July 2019, Revised on 31st August 2019, Published on 03rd October 2019

Abstract

Purpose: In this study, we reviewed the errors encountered in the English text of the students. That the Russian language was their mother tongue and the English language was their foreign language.

Methodology: The aims of the present pilot study were to the analysis of foreign language tests in groups in the direction of "Oil and Gas Business", "Automobile Industry" in the Branch of IUT in Surgut, Tyumen Industrial University. We analyzed the written tests of the students involved in the research, applying the error manual of Dagneaux, which was altered in accordance with the purpose of our paper.

Result: Our findings will constitute a database necessary to conceive a more effective teaching and learning process that focuses not only on translation classes but also on the acquisition of English as a foreign language in general.

Applications: This research can be used for universities and higher education students.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of ESL teaching is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: *error analysis, grammatical error, ESL Learner.*

INTRODUCTION

All languages are systematic, and we learn a system when learning the language, that is, to create our own grammar. The language learning process, according to Falk, is necessarily accompanied by error. When students are exposed to examples of a language, they hypothesize that they are often incomplete and cannot be able to identify specific constraints or exceptional exceptions. Many linguistic and psychological researchers believe that the errors of learners are not accidental, but reflect a systematic but imperfect knowledge of the language they are learning (Corder, 1967). Linguistic errors during the language learning process, and even afterward, accompany the learner; hence, the error can be considered as part of the language learning process inevitably occurring at different levels of the language. These errors, grammatical, spelling or any other error may be. As Corder has pointed out, there is a vital difference between 'errors' and 'mistakes'. He labels 'mistakes' as 'performance errors', which are like slip of pen. The learner himself can correct it later on because they are not the result of unawareness. Whereas, genuine errors are ignorance of rules. The learner can't correct it by himself. They show the learner's "transitional Competence". Error analysis is essentially significant because, as Jack Richards refers to Corder's observation: "Learner's correct sentences do not necessarily give evidence of the rules of the new language and the rules he has developed at given stages of his language development". This can be done only by the errors he makes. And after knowing this only one can proceed in teaching. So, errors, and its analysis both are an inevitable part of teaching & learning (Corder, 1967).

Linguistic and written communication have long been the most complete form of the transfer of mental concepts, and today, with the development of communication and the transformation of the world into a global village, as well as the expansion of economic, commercial, scientific, cultural, political and social activities of the international community, it can cause confusion and avoid progress. The value of learning English as an important tool in global communication has made its position more prominent. English as a native speaker is spoken in the UK, America, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Ghana, and many other countries. English is the fourth most widely spoken in terms of the number of speakers, followed by Chinese, Spanish, and Hindi. Today, the number of those who speak English is 380 million. English is, in many countries, the language of the mediation and is the most important language in the world in political, economic, military, industrial, cultural and scientific fields in international relations. The major problem for college students at university is that they have so far learned the language, not practical (Lima et al, 2018; Kurmanali et al, 2018). They know English grammar but cannot speak the language. For this reason, professors must in the first three semesters teach basic language courses, including reading, writing, and conversation, and then enter specialized English courses. Students must have proficiency in English at the time of entering the university and become acquainted with the specialized vocabulary after entering the university. In this study, we reviewed the errors encountered in the English text of the students. That the Russian language was their mother tongue and the English language was their foreign language.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON ERROR ANALYSIS

Error analysis is one of the most significant domains of second language acquisition. It examines errors made by L2 learners and Richard and Schmidt (2002) define it as the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners. Research cites three approaches to the analysis of "learner English" namely, contrastive analysis, error analysis, and transfer analysis. The contrastive analysis compares the structures of two language systems and predicts errors.

Transfer analysis, on the other hand, compares 'learner English' with L1 and attempts to explain the structure of those errors that can be traced to language transfer. Error analysis compares 'learner English with English (L2) itself and judges how learners are 'ignorant'. Again, the definition of error analysis is given by Brown defined error analysis as 'the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then to reveal the systems operated by learners'. Similarly, for Crystal error analysis in language teaching and learning is the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language, especially a foreign language. And the present study focuses on error analysis. Making errors is one of the most unavoidable things in the world. Students in the process of learning language, profit from the errors that they make by obtaining feedback to make new attempts that successively approximate their desired object.

According to [Corder \(1967\)](#), learners' errors are important in and of themselves. For learners themselves, errors are indispensable, since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. [Gass \(1983\)](#) defines errors as 'red flags', that means they are warning signals, that provide evidence of the learner's knowledge of the L2.

The investigation of errors can be diagnostic and prognostic. It is diagnostic because it can tell us the learner's state of the language (Corder,1967, in [Richards. 1984](#)) at a given point during the learning process and prognostic because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems (Richards, 1984).

[Brown \(2000\)](#) states that there are two main sources of errors, namely, interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual (Interference) errors are those errors that are traceable to first language interference. These are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term 'interlingual' was first introduced by [Selinker \(1972\)](#). He used this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner's L1 and the target language.

The transfer is of two kinds: positive and negative. The transfer may prove to be justified because the structure of the languages is similar-this is called 'positive transfer' or 'facilitation, or it may prove unjustified because the structure of the two languages is different that case is called 'negative transfer' or 'interference.

Stenson states three main reasons for errors, namely, (1) incomplete acquisition of the target grammar, (2) exigencies of the learning /teaching situation, and (3) errors due to normal problems of language performance. Among the researchers who have worked on adult L2 learner's errors, [Richards \(1984\)](#) holds a prominent place. He has examined intralingual errors produced by speaker of Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalos, Maori, Maltese, and the major Indian and West African languages. He has found 6 types of intralingual errors which are: (1) errors in the production of verb groups; (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) errors in the use of prepositions, (4) errors in the use of articles, (5) errors in the use of questions, (6) miscellaneous errors.

RELATED WORK

In a study, [Zafar \(2016\)](#) has investigated "Error Analysis: A Tool to Improve English Skills of Undergraduate Students". The results of his study indicated that, out of the various errors visible in their writing, the verb tense errors, mainly, the past and present tenses were the most common errors. From the results, it was concluded that in both tenses, the errors of the Second Language Influence were more frequent. The second most frequent category of errors was the First Language Interference. The Transfer of Structure errors and the Overextension of Analogy errors respectively ranked as the third and the fourth most frequent categories. According to the findings of this study, these errors were the focus in the remedial English Teaching followed in the last two months of the semester. They saved valuable teaching time and made need-based Business English writing training for students more effective ([Zafar, 2016](#); [DiNapoli, 2019](#)).

METHODOLOGY

Objective

The aims of the present pilot study were to the analysis of foreign language tests in groups in the direction of "Oil and Gas Business", "Automobile Industry" in the Branch of IUT in Surgut, Tyumen Industrial University, and establish the causes of error production in order to improve students' writing skills. Such a purpose was achieved by answering the following research questions that guided our analysis:

1. What kind of linguistic for writing is dominant: the negative or positive on writing?
2. What are the most frequent types of errors that students usually make in their writing tasks?
3. What other causes determine the production of errors?

Participants

The people involved in our pilot research are 120 students that study English as part of an undergraduate academic program at Tyumen Industrial University. As writing tasks constitute a major component of the English practical courses that students do that, their writing skills are tested semesterly and at the completion of their studies on the occasion of the graduation examination, which includes the writing of various texts from Russian into English and vice versa. (Ibatova, A. Z., Ilin, A. G., Ippolitova, N. V., Stavruk, M. A., & Ivanova, N. L. (2016))

Procedure

In order to find answers to the research questions mentioned above, we analyzed the written tests of the students involved in the research, applying the error manual of Dagneaux, which was altered in accordance with the purpose of our paper. The types of errors that we identified, together with their codes, are indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Error codes

Error Code	Type of error
GSO	grammar – subject omission
GCA	grammar – continuous aspect
GVT	grammar – verb tense
GST	grammar – sequence of tenses
GIF	grammar – conditional clauses
WO	word order
GUN	grammar – uncountable nouns
GP	grammar – prepositions
GNEG	grammar – double negation
GIA	grammar – indefinite articles
GDA	grammar – definite articles
WOM	word omissions
VLC	vocabulary – lexical confusion

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Taking into consideration a quantitative criterion, we found that the vast majority of the errors made by students in writing in English classes are caused by negative linguistic transfer, that is, a high level of interference between the lexical and grammatical structures of the native tongue and the ones of the target language. The results of the quantitative analysis are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Inventory of errors in students' samples

Type of errors	Error code	Number of errors	Percentage
1 subject omission	GSO	378	20.03
2 misuse of the continuous aspect	GCA	352	18.65
3 confusion between present perfect and past tense	GVT	326	17.28
4 sequence of tenses	GST	275	14.57
5 if clauses	GIF	98	5.19
6 word order	WO	96	5.09
7 misuse of uncountable nouns	GUN	78	4.13
8 misuse of prepositions	GP	74	3.92
9 double negation	GNEG	71	3.76
10 omission of indefinite articles	GIA	39	2.07
11 misuse of definite articles	GDA	34	1.80
12 omissions	WOM	34	1.80
13 lexical confusion	VLC	32	1.70
Total number of errors		1887	100.00

It is noteworthy that the most frequent interlanguage errors include the omission of the subject (20.03%) and the incorrect use of the indicative mood tenses (14.57%) in subordinate clauses. As to the former category of errors, let us mention that the omission of the subject in independent declarative sentences is rare, whereas the cases in which the subject is left out in subordinate clauses are very frequent. For instance, we found numerous correct sentences like “It is a fine day today, isn’t it?”, “The weather is fine as usual in this part of the country”, in contrast to “When he saw his girlfriend approaching the garden, jumped with joy” or “She did not enter the elegantly decorated ballroom because was not able to make the steps of the Viennese waltz correctly”, etc. As far as the latter category of errors is concerned, many examples show that students do not master the appropriate usage of tenses in indirect speech, such as “He said that he is an engineer and works for a multinational company based in Saudi Arabia” or “He said that his name is Eric and that he comes from

nowhere”. The errors mentioned above can be explained by the influence of the Russian language where both simple and complex sentences do not need the presence of the subject, as in Russian the ending of the verb indicates the person.

Another series of errors resulting from the negative transfer of linguistic structures from L1 to L2 should also be taken into account although the percentages are not as high as the first two categories that we have already analyzed. The most frequent errors refer to the incorrect use of the tenses in if-clauses, especially type I (5.19%), wrong word order (5.09%), misuse of uncountable nouns (4.13%), misuse of prepositions (3.92%), double negotiation (3.76%), omission of the indefinite article (2.07%) and misuse of the definite article (1.80%). For instance, we found sentences like “If the weather will be fine I’ll go to the mountains to contemplate the beauty of the landscape”, “I like very much English people”, “The money is on the table in the corner of the dark room”, “He is the most intelligent from all the boys she has encountered in her life”, “You’ll get fat unless you don’t stop eating all that crap food that your wife is preparing for you”, or “The dogs are the most friendly animals on earth”.

The errors listed above are due to the Russian grammatical patterns and linguistic rules which function differently from the ones of English. One of these discrepancies is obvious in the case of real conditions which in Russian are expressed by means of both future and present tenses. Another dissimilarity concerns the word order, the Russian language being more flexible than English, and thus leading to the production of inaccurate structures in L2. To take one example, in Russian there is no difference in meaning between “Я очень люблю английский” and “Английский я люблю очень”, whereas in English the direct object follows the verb. (“I like **English** very much.”). As regards the wrong use of uncountable nouns, a source of errors stems from the fact that in Russian some nouns are countable, while in English the same nouns are singular uncountable with no plurals (money, information, luggage, etc.) or plural uncountable with no singular forms (scissors, overalls, pyjamas, etc.). With respect to double negation errors, these originate in the flexibility of Russian which commonly allows the use of multiple negations within the same sentence (“Я никого нигде не видел” = “I haven’t seen anyone anywhere”). The other categories of errors shown above involve the lack of correspondence between the use of definite and indefinite articles or prepositional phrases in L1 and L2.

All the errors that we have analyzed so far reveal that in the case of poor performance in English, the lexical and grammatical structures of L1 influence the generation of errors in L2 to a great extent. Nevertheless, we discovered various instances of omissions and lexical confusions which are linked to a higher degree of language acquisition. Such examples of errors are: “Michael considers Victor as his best friend” instead of “Michael considers Victor his best friend”, “I don’t have time to finish my homework today” instead of “I haven’t time to finish my homework today” (the second structure being used for particular occasions), “Helen has got black hair” instead of the literary construction “Helen has black hair”, “You needn’t help your friends if they don’t ask for it” instead of “You don’t need/have to help your friends if they don’t ask for it”, “Paper is made of wood” instead of “Paper is made from wood”. As the percentages of such types of errors are very low (1.80% and 1.70%), we consider that the basic causes of error production in the writing exercises under discussion were determined by the students’ failure to consolidate the linguistic structures of the target language ([Smirnova, Z. V., Vaganova, O. I., Chanchina, A. V., Koldina, M. I., & Kutepov, M. M. \(2020\).](#))

As to the intralingual and developmental errors, they can be divided into two categories. The first one comprises the errors that are generally caused by students’ tendency to hypercorrectness or overgeneralization, such as the redundant use of the ending “s” and the presence of the double subject or object: “She does not studies French at school as she hates it”, “He can speak Italian too, even if he only spent some months in Rome”, “My little sister she answered the phone”, “The house which I bought it was situated in the outskirts of the city I was born”. In comparison with the errors occurring as a result of the negative linguistic transfer, these are less numerous and not as varied as the previous type. The second category, which is the most comprehensive one, includes the errors that are generally determined by the superficial acquisition of the target language. The examples illustrating it are various, ranging from wrong verbal structures, confusion between stative and dynamic verbs, misuse of the infinitive or gerund to misplaced negation in compound verbs. As such type of errors are numerous we selected only the following: “Did you went to church yesterday”, “He must have been ill”, “I am knowing the truth now”, “He left without to say goodbye.”, “She went there for meeting her friends.”, and “She should have not answered that question”. ([Rudenko, D., & Morosova, E. \(2015\)](#))

If the errors are shown so far imply the linguistic relation between Russian and English, either in the form of positive or negative writing.

The analysis of the students’ notes samples showed that a large number of the errors they produced are the result of both negative and positive linguistic transfer. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile mentioning that the first type of transfer is predominant, demonstrating that the students that took part in the research still resort to the linguistic system of their native language as a mechanism of L2 acquisition. As a group of researchers from the University La Rioja emphasized in a study conducted in 2005, “The learners’ mother tongue serves as the linguistic scaffolding upon which they develop their L2 competence.” (Llach et al., 2005:3). Although this point of view explains the normal process of foreign language acquisition, our research revealed a dysfunction of the learning process in our university, which is reflected in the students’ weak level of the target language, raising the question of the causes leading to this state of affairs. ([Igorovna, K. V., Gennadievich, I. A., & Zufarovna, I. A. \(2017\)](#))

CONCLUSION

The final results we received from the review were mentioned. Another factor that could be taken into consideration is the teachers' compliance with "conformity and standardization" in point of teaching strategies, which contends that the curriculum (and teaching) can be 'teacher-proofed' through the provision of reusable materials and standardized structures and activities. As teaching writing still consists of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to students, the focus is not on how to teach but on what to teach, the content prevailing over the novelty and variety of the classroom strategies that task-based learning requires. Consequently, students lack the necessary conditions to learn by themselves and come to develop a negative perception of writing in the class, disliking the passive role they are compelled to adopt during the teaching and learning activities ([Artamonova, 2015](#); [Ardakani et al, 2015](#)).

Moreover, the development of the skills specific to write tasks, i.e. work with the dictionary, seems to be ignored. During our research we noticed that, relying on the teachers' solutions to writing problems, most students avoid utilizing dictionaries to solve their writing tasks or, in case they do use them, the dictionaries are not adequate for a writing assignment (e.g. students make use of English-Russian dictionaries instead of monolingual/learner's dictionaries, or general dictionaries for the writing of specialized texts) ([IBATOVA, A. Z. \(2017\)](#)). Needless to say, that if students are not completely familiar with the techniques of using dictionaries properly, they face problems such as finding the right meaning of words, making the distinction between the connotative and denotative meanings of words, dealing with the "false friends" phenomenon or choosing the right synonym. Getting students to use comprehensive monolingual dictionaries effectively and regularly in writing in the English classes will definitely reduce the production of errors helping them develop their knowledge in a complex way (by reading the definitions and explanations of the words, checking the pronunciation, spelling, and register of a word, finding out grammatical information about a word, etc.). ([Fedyuchenko, L. G. \(2013\)](#))

Another cause that may explain the production of incorrect structures is that most students do not practice enough in writing in English classes because teachers generally tend to emphasize the theoretical side of language, privileging the learning of rules to the detriment of their practical use. In this way the teaching of writing implies a paradox: students have a high degree of competence, that is "perfect knowledge of grammatical rules, lexis and the sound system", and a low level of linguistic performance", which in [Chomsky](#) terms means "what actually occurs in practice". Under such circumstances, their performance in point of writing can be regarded as "a faulty representation of competence, or the speakers' "actual usage of the language" is weak in contrast with their good "knowledge of the code". As a consequence, the focus on the inductive approach to teaching writing skills proves the low level of L2 acquisition and the use of the native language as perpetual support in doing writing exercises ([Muyambiri & Chabaefe, 2018](#)).

The number of developmental errors being low shows that they do not constitute a major cause of error production during writing classes. The same can be said about the other types of errors indicated by our analysis, but it is important to remember that they are "good evidence that progress is being made. Errors often show us that a student is experimenting with language, trying out ideas, taking risks, attempting to communicate, and making progress.

The aim of our research was not only to examine the production of errors in writing in English classes classifying them into categories, but also to identify their main causes starting from the premise that "the investigation of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic (to in-point the problem) and prognostic (to make plans to solve a problem)", offering information to the teachers about "the learner's grasp of a language at any given point during the learning process" and indicating when the teachers have "to modify learning materials to meet the learners' problems." ([Zare, 2015](#)). The present research proved to be fruitful for both learners and teachers as analyzing the causes of the errors produced by the Philology students in writing in English classes helped us sort out their problems and consequently improve the teaching and learning process itself. Therefore, we believe that conceiving a model of writing oriented text analysis based on clear criteria for "the classification of texts and guidelines for assessing the quality of writing" will help both teachers and students in such classes in order to achieve high standards in the process of writing. ([Ibatova, A. Z., Ilin, A. G., Ippolitova, N. V., Stavruk, M. A., & Ivanova, N. L. \(2016\)](#)).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author confirms that the data do not contain any conflict of interest.

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