

Error Analysis: An Essential Tool for English Language Teaching and Learning

Krishna Hazarika

ABSTRACT

Designing pedagogical methods and strategies that promote language learning is the main focus of any language teacher, and to some extent, every linguist. Though it isn't mentioned clearly anywhere, every teacher or applied linguist's main goal is to provide students the "correct" aspects of the language they are learning. The emphasis on "correctness" derives from the assumption that incorrect grammatical constructions or linguistic variations will result in incomprehensibility and communication barriers. Due to this belief, Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA) concentrated on the "correct" grammatical, lexical, and syntactical elements of the Target Language (TL), in this instance English. Both Contrastive Analysts and Error Analysts examined the language and attempted to identify areas of ease or difficulty. And this was accomplished with some level of success. However, in the current socio-educational context of Indian schools, where English language teaching is a major stake, insights from CA and EA, actually, are either not taken into consideration or are deemed insufficient. Where English language instruction uses bilingualism, CA is taken into consideration, albeit obliquely, indirectly, and briefly. But EA is entirely disregarded. It is seen, when an instructor/ a teacher mark mistake/errors in students' work and copies, they even just suggested for corrections without considering why the mistakes or errors happened or how to avoid them in the future. In the education system of India no one can deny the relevance of ELT with the language's ever-increasing importance as a second language in India and a second language around the world. So, to examine error analysis (EA) from a fresh perspective and determine how to use it as an effective teaching tool in schools or institutions we shall explore in this work.

Key Words: Error analysis, English Teaching, ELT, Language Learning, Assamese learners.

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine errors made by second and foreign language (L2) learners in order to comprehend the tactics and techniques used in the second and foreign language learning process and how we use them as a tool of language learning. Both applied linguistics and the study of second and foreign languages place a great deal of importance on

error analysis. It is a methodical way to examine the errors made by students. Errors are not necessarily detrimental; on the contrary, they are essential components and elements of the process of learning a language. They may bring insight into the various processes of language development as well as a methodical strategy to identify, describe, and explain learners' errors. Errors may also be useful in understanding how people learn second and foreign languages. This

study attempts to determine why, despite English being a subject of all levels in Assam's learning institutions and schools, the majority of Assamese ESL learners are unable to construct grammatically accurate sentences or hesitate to produce a sentence in English. What causes their low spoken and written English performance? The writing assignments and conversations of some higher secondary students and intermediate English language learners are examined for the aim of error analysis in the current study. The analysis of this work primarily base on the students' writing grammatical accuracy and their surety about the grammatical agreements that may appropriate for their English-language writing and speaking. Likewise, this study will also see whether the learners' mother tongue's(L1) rules have any impact on them.

1.2 Significance of the work

With regard to its area of study, this paper is extremely significant. It aims to inform addressees about the many errors made by learners and to highlight the causes and explanations for those errors. Error analysis, which is essentially linguistics analysis, sheds light on the various underlying mechanisms that are involved in the extremely complicated phenomenon of language learning. The primary field of applied linguistics, it seeks to address the issues and concerns surrounding the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages, as well as providing workable answers to the issues that surround language. Additionally, the study aims to offer teachers and language professionals a variety of tactics for improving the effectiveness of their teaching. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to use relevant materials when teaching languages. By making the students aware of their errors, it gives them the chance to self-correct. The study also looks for the causes of these students' lackluster performance in the area of

language learning. Therefore, it can be said that the present study can be of extremely significant in its nature by keeping in mind all of these aspects.

2.1 Literature review

The Error Analysis method of second/foreign language acquisition rose in popularity in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Several researches (by Corder 1976; Adjemian 1976; Selinker 1972) were conducted during this time period that proved second language learners' errors weren't random but rather indications of behaviour guided by rules, and that their language is systematic, having a clear pattern. Error analysts looked over the learners' language samples. They noticed variance from accepted linguistic pattern and classify them as lapses, blunders, or errors. They attempted to determine the causes of these language/linguistic abnormalities by categorizing the errors into several sorts. They typically attempted to organize the erroneous data collected from linguistic samples in accordance with:

- a. Modality (level of competence in the four skills i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing)
- b. Linguistic levels of analysis (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, style)
- c. Grammatical forms and structures (omission, insertion, substitution, wrong analogy)
- d. Type of error (systematic errors/errors in competence vs. occasional errors/errors in performance)
- e. Causes of errors (psychological, socio-cultural, pedagogical, mother tongue influence etc.)

Error analysis was significantly influenced in the past by the behaviourist learning theory of

language, which also postulated that errors produced by learners were caused by the presence of the rules from their native tongue, which interfered with their ability to learn. The contrast and comparison of two languages was the main focus of educators and linguists. The errors of the learners were considered based on a contrastive study of languages. Later, the contrastive analysis was unable to adequately explain the students' errors. It was discovered that errors made by learners are caused by a variety of universal and underlying structures rather than only the mother tongue's involvement. The learner's cognition as well as a number of other elements are to responsible for their errors and mistakes. Keshavarz (2003, 2006) noted that there are two aspects to the study of error analysis. They are:

(a) **Theoretical analysis of errors:** It seeks to identify the concerns and issues surrounding language learning and investigates the fundamental structures involved in the process. It looks into why learners make mistakes during the learning process.

(b) **Applied error analysis:** Applied Error Analysis involves with creating content, courses, and other approaches for correcting issues that are brought up by the theoretical examination of the errors.

As previously stated, the behaviourist theory of language learning had a strong influence on error analysis, and it was believed that the majority of errors made by learners were caused by the interference of their native tongue rules. It was believed that learning a language was a process of forming habits, and that once these habits of one language were developed, they made it difficult to learn the rules of a second, foreign language. The contrastive analysis was developed to explain the errors made by the learners in light

of both languages' rules. According to Ellis (1995), Norrish (1983), and Gass & Selinker (2008), when there was resistance to language learning due to differences in the rules of the two languages, it was considered a positive transfer. Conversely, when there was a negative transfer due to rules differences, it was considered a negative transfer. It was discovered that the process is not as straightforward as contrastive analysis had suggested and that there are actually several underlying processes at activity when learning a language. Contrastive analysis, however, was unable to pinpoint all of the causes of the errors. Error analysis is essentially linguistic analysis, and language learning is a very sophisticated and complex process.

Subsequently, Chomsky's nativist theory offered the study of error analysis and language learning a new direction by stating that idea contends that there is a universal grammar and that anyone can learn any language's rules, so language learning is more than just the formation of habits. According to this view, learning a language involves a wide range of cognitive functions. In this light, Corder highlights how some of the methods and approaches employed by speakers of second and foreign languages during the process of first language acquisition are also used by speakers of first languages (Corder, as cited in Richards, 1974: 22).

After that, there are various causes for errors made by students are found. One factor could be a shortage of teachers who are proficient in teaching languages or a lack of teaching materials. According to scholars like James 1989, 1998; Ellis, 1995; Kashavarz, 2003, the following are some more causes of erroneous analysis:

- a. Language transfer
- b. Overgeneralization

- c. Simplification
- d. Underuse
- e. Fossilization
- f. Lack of the knowledge of the rules
- g. Interference

We won't, however, analyze each error individually. Hence, we will address in the next section the framework in which we have discussed our key research goals.

2.2 Theoretical framework of the study

According to the theoretical framework for the study of error analysis, at first the errors need to be recognized, and then they need to be explained. For the error analysis, several error categories are recommended by several researchers. However, we are using the four separate categories, as Corder (1967, 1971, and 1974) has divided for the errors. They are the categories listed in the below:

- a. Addition: indicates the inclusion of any grammatical item. For instance; **They eats rice*. Here is the addition of morpheme "s" with the verb eat that is not required. *They eat rice* is the true grammatical construction because the present tense morpheme in English only can be used with the third person singular form.
- b. Omission: occurs when the sentence's necessary linguistic component is left out. As in **He eat rice*. The morpheme "s" that was necessary for the sentence's proper structure is missing in this instance.
- c. Selection: Selection relates to the issue of choosing the incorrect forms. For instance, **I am biggest than her*. Here, the superlative degree is employed rather than the comparative degree, which is an example of incorrect adjective degree selection.

- d. Ordering: The term "ordering" describes a sentence's incorrect word placement. Example: *He book me gave*. Here, the sentence's erroneous order is the root of the mistake.

In accordance with the referencing idea of these four categories of erroneous descriptions, we use it to look as the study's theoretical framework. So, these four categories would be use to analyze the data in this work.

3.1 Research methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, and qualitative approach was the approach employed for this analysis. This approach is used to examine the content of any text and determine the presence of specific words with particular meanings. In the social sciences, this approach is a common survey method. Assam's Pragjyotika Higher Secondary School, Mihiram Saikia Higher Secondary School and Borholla Higher secondary school students in Titabar, Jorhat District, are the sources of the data collection, which takes the form of answer copies from their exams and conversation recordings as they talk in English in class. These classes are taught with the intention of enhancing students' English language communication skills and capacities. The data is collected from students in a variety of classes at all schools. Only 80 response copies and 30 students' recorded conversations from the data collection survey are reviewed for the purpose of identifying and describing the errors. The errors are broken down into four groups: addition, omission, selection, and ordering. The collected data reveals errors in several linguistic constructions. For the analysis of learners' written errors, two basic questions are mainly taken into the first question asks the students to write a précis, while the second asks them to translate some Assamese sentences or a paragraph into English. Likewise, to analyze the errors in speaking given task of extempore speech and introduce

themselves in English. These types of questions are very commonly used to explore the basic processes of underlying concept of learning of second and foreign languages as well as to examine the cognitive aspects of language learning.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate as already mentioned the errors made in speaking and writing by certain Assamese second or foreign language learners. Although following are the some of the particular objectives and studies of this work.

- i. To describe the function of error analysis in the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages;
- ii. To examine student errors;
- iii. To provide the language teachers the new methods and strategies for teaching languages by looking at the errors made by the students;
- iv. To make the students aware of their errors;

3.3 Research question

We would try to develop the reasonable answer to the research questions based on the primary objectives of this study and its scope in the below:

1. What are the common characteristics of the English writing and speaking errors made by the learners?

2. What are the causes and explanations for those errors?

3. What are the causes of these students' substandard and improperly linguistically written and spoken English?

4.1 Data analysis

The data is examined in light of Corder's four categories. It has been noted that students frequently make errors in several grammatical areas and that they struggle to connect their ideas logically in their writing and speaking. The examination of the translated piece sheds information on the contrastive analysis of errors, which draws comparisons and contrasts between the rules of the two languages. The majority of mistakes include using the improper verb tenses for the appropriate verbs. The most common mistake detected in the students' answer copies is a lack of subject-verb agreement and there are also detected in students' speaking the omission issues and a lack of fluency. Additionally, both in the students' spoken and written performances, there are numerous spelling errors, pronunciation errors and improper uses of the various parts of speech are seen. These errors highlight the challenges that students encounter when learning a second or foreign language, and they also assist teachers in providing students with feedback that will optimize their learning. However, the total number of errors detected in students' written and spoken performance is shown as in the below tables:

Type of writing	addition	omission	Selection	ordering
Précis writing	36	48	52	8
Translation passage	28	33	76	5
Total mistakes	64	81	128	13

Table 1. The representation of the total errors found in learners written performance.

Task for Speaking	addition	omission	Selection	ordering
Self-Introduction	21	18	10	5
Extempore Speech	29	22	9	7
Total mistakes	50	40	19	12

Table 2. The representation of the total errors found in learners spoken performance.

Here, the following graph which is drawn to present the ratio of the errors that are we analyzed:

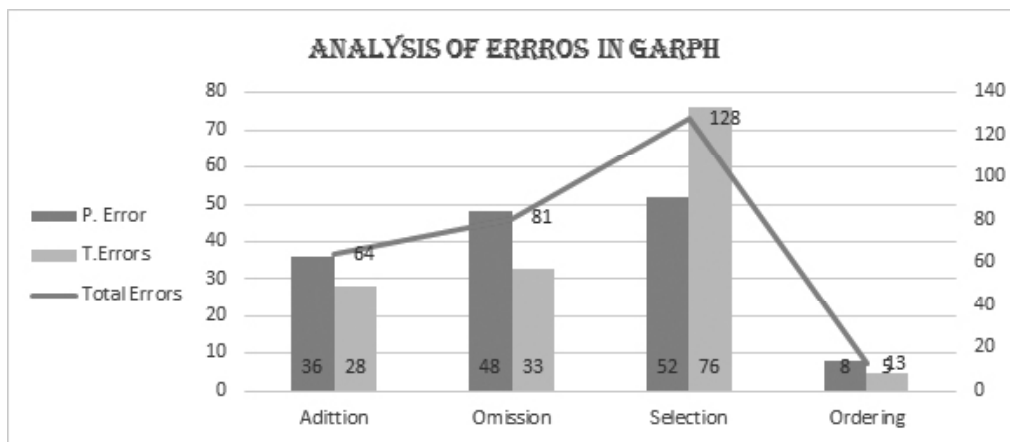
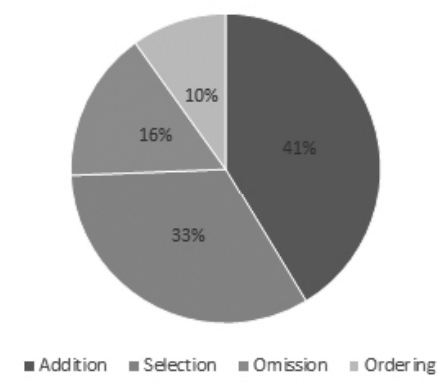


Figure 1. The graphical representation of errors in Writings

Errors in Speaking



The aforementioned graphs demonstrate that, in comparison to the other categories of error analysis, errors in the area of selection, omission and addition occur more often in both written and spoken performance. The learner's language is impacted by several things. One of these phenomena, which is also examined in the study, is the use of condensed language and Roman characters in writing, which are prohibited in formal writing. Below are some examples of these words: The study of the errors reveals several more errors of this nature, including plz for please, prior for before, thanks for thank, and thank you for thank you. In addition to making errors throughout their speaking performances, they also use extraneous grammatical forms like -ing, -ed, etc. Furthermore, unneeded -be verb forms were selected, and tense forms like -ed and -s were left removed. Due to a widespread belief in the Assamese society, English is the simplest to learn- just all you need to do is add -ing to every form that it assumes. They do, however, omit a few grammatical morphological affixes, most likely as a result of the language's less widespread use in communications. Due to the widespread use of SMS in society today and the Assamese society's widespread belief that English is the easiest language to learn, and the addition of -ing to every form, draws attention to the errors of students unintentionally using SMS language in their academic work and use -ing form in their formal conversations. The investigation of these errors reveals how well humans adopt language structure from performance-based knowledge and sociological belief.

Furthermore, the sentences that we used for the examination of the present study, along with descriptions of the various errors and their causes are as follows:

1) **a. *The football team plays the important***

role in the today's match.

b. *Experts does not skip practice.*

c. *Amar had not bought to the ball because he has no money.*

Some students wrote the incorrect first sentence (1a), which serves as an addition example. The morpheme "s" is additionally utilised in this sentence. Both an inadequate understanding of the rules and an overgeneralization of the rules may be to blame. Another example of addition is in the second sentence (1b), where some students have misapplied the rule for positive sentences and typed "does" instead of "do" because they are unsure of how to make the negative of the present indefinite. The erroneous use of the present participle form of the verb in the present indeterminate tense is also highlighted as a sign of learners' lack of grammatical awareness. The third sentence (1c) also identifies mistakes in the correct use of verbs, shows how some students are unaware of the subject-verb agreement rule and how they have oversimplified the past indefinite rule when writing a past perfect sentence. Again, in the set 2

2) **a. *We play for the first time and we do not know how to play.***

b. *They will going to party in this night.*

c. *Ram has writing this story from two years.*

Some students omitted the morpheme "ed" in the first line (2a), which is an example of omission. It shows that some learners are unaware of how to use the past tense. The second phrase (2b) serves as an additional illustration of the omission error too in which some learners failed to employ the linking word "be" in accordance with the future continuous rule. It draws attention to yet another error of saying "in this night" rather than "tonight." The third example (3c) displays how

some students are unable to use the correct verb forms for the appropriate tenses. It also draws attention to another error of using the wrong preposition “from” rather than “for”. The mother tongue’s negative transmission and interference are to blame for this mistake. Based on it, there are further instances of sentences being arranged/ordered incorrectly, and these instances may be the consequence of interference from other languages during the learning process. They are

3) *a. We do this quickly when we end the our study.*

b. About this work unluckily no one is know.

c. Will not be he get the reward of his efforts?

These sentences’ erroneous arrangement suggests that some students lack a strong understanding of sentence structure and are unable to construct sentences that make sense semantically. The second statement (3b) is another excellent illustration of incorrect sentence structure and word choice in speech. Even if the sentence’s meaning is clear, some students’ usage of the adverb, subject, and object in the wrong sequence demonstrates their lack of proficiency with the language. Additionally, correct punctuation and word is not used. The third phrase (3c) demonstrates how some pupils lack knowledge on how to properly translate auxiliary verbs into interrogative and negative sentences. The interrogative sentence has been formed incorrectly. Similar to this, there are numerous other instances of errors made by students in both written and spoken communication. Even highly competent students have been seen making these errors. These are only a few samples of the sentences used in this study to investigate various errors and their causes and understanding the process of acquiring a second or foreign language requires a thorough investigation of these errors.

4.2 Findings from the data analysis

This study found that making mistakes while learning a language is a necessary part of the process, and that systematic analysis of these errors is crucial because it offers a deep understanding of the process of language learning and many solutions to various issues related to language learning. The major point of applied linguistics specially for second and foreign-language learning is error analysis, combined with contrastive analysis. The finding of this study’s investigation of the various grammatical errors that can be made in various contexts can assist language teachers and course and syllabus developers in developing materials and adopting methodologies that are crucial to improving the efficiency of language teaching and learning.

5.1 Conclusion

In light of this study, we may conclude that learners in their second learning phase mostly make errors in addition, selection, and omission of grammatical features. At the same time, we cannot ignore the ordering error brought on by mother tongue analogies. It is evident from looking at the error analysis of second language learning speaking and writing data from the three institutions of Assam that students make errors during the second learning process for the reasons pointed above. However, the effect of the mother tongue on language is most significant because of what we often observe when examining data from speaking, students use received pronunciation (RP), which we haven’t discussed. Although the fact that this study has produced a wealth of information, therefore, we would like to conclude this study by considering the current debate in Assam over the educational system’s choice of medium in light of the state’s desire to provide students with more opportunities to study abroad or in English. However, while doing so, the aware residents of

the state start to worry that if English language is chosen as medium of Education system, the language itself may act as a hindrance to the development of the Assamese language. Therefore, to settle these kinds of argument we can use error analysis as a tool for different teaching and learning strategies that both teachers and students apply when sequentially teaching and learning a language as because, it investigates how error analysis affects our comprehension of the language learning process, describes the challenges that language learners face, and aids teachers in creating various strategies to support their students' learning, also highlights the difference in using methods and approaches used by the learners during the second and foreign languages learning and the process of during first language acquisition.

WORKS CITED

- Adjemian, C. (1976). On the Nature of Interlanguage Systems. *Language Learning*, 26,297-320.
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *Int. Rev. Appl. Linguist.* 5, 161-169. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161>
- Corder, S. P. (1971). *Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis* (p. 14). Groos, Heidelberg. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.1971.9.2.147>
- Corder, S. P. (1974). *Error Analysis*. In J. P. B. Allen, & S. Pit Corder (Eds.), *Techniques in Applied Linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Darus, S. (2009). Error analysis of the written English essays of secondary school students in Malaysia: A case study. *Eur. J. Soc. Sci.*, 8(3), 483-495.
- Ellis, R. (1995). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition: An introductory course*. New York and London: Routledge.
- James, C. (1989). *Contrastive analysis*. London: Longman.
- James, C. (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use*. London: Longman.
- Keshavarz, M. H. (2003). *Contrastive analysis and error analysis*. Tehran: Rahnama Publications.
- Keshavarz, M. H. (2006). *Error Analysis: A Practical Course for English Students and Teachers*. SAMT, Tehran.
- Norrish, J. (1983). *Language Learners and Their Errors*. Macmillan Publishers.
- Richards, J. (1974). *Error Analysis and Second Language Strategies*. Longman.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage errors. *Int. Rev. Appl. Linguist.* 10, 209-231.

Ms. Krishna Hazarika, PhD Scholar.
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi,
India.