



CODING AS A MEANS FOR ERROR CORRECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: AN OVERVIEW OF ACCURACY

VIKA TENSABA AKAFA

General Studies Department, Federal Polytechnic Bali, Taraba State

Abstract:

Errors are quite significant in the context of ELT as a result of indicating the learners weak points which need to be addressed professionally. It is raised up to the responsibilities of Language Teachers to do so in order to safe errors from being fossilised in learners' brain for effective learning. Error correction is definitely needed at some point in the learning process to a lesser or a wider extent .For instance, error of accuracy which includes: grammar, meaning and appropriacy; however, the main focus of this paper is to answer the following research questions: what exactly do language teachers indicate as errors? What sign or code do they use to notify the learners what needs to be corrected? Therefore, a very wide range of individual factors defining our students make this task a very complicated one which will depend on issues such as lack of clarity of what is to be corrected or the learner's age, aptitude, stage in the language process, proficiency level, motivation, anxiety, metalinguistic sophistication, individual preferences, learning styles, learning strategies and previous achievement, factors which turn to be crucial information for the language teacher in order to improve the learning process (Martinez, 2007,p.5). In essences, this work intends to provide a useful means of correcting errors in form of feedbacks for a better teaching and learning English in the contest of ELT.

Keywords : *Error, Mistake, Slip of the tongue, Interlingual error, Intralingual error, codes*

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a relatively new field of enquiry. Before the late 1960s, researchers did write about L2 learning, but very much as an adjunct of language teaching pedagogy, underpinned by behaviourism, the then-dominant learning theory in psychology. In this view, the task facing learners of foreign languages was to rote-learn and practise the grammatical patterns and vocabulary of the language to be learnt, in order to form new 'habits', that is to create new stimulus-response pairings which would become stronger with reinforcement. In order for the 'old habits' of the L1 not to interfere with this process by being 'copied', or transferred, into the L2, researchers embarked on thorough descriptions of pairs of languages to be learnt, in order to identify areas that are different and would thus be difficult.

The focus of enquiry at the time was therefore very much the description of L1-L2 pairings, and little attention was being paid to what foreign language learners actually did with the input they received, or to their actual productions in the L2. This changed in the second half of the 1960s, primarily as a result of the Chomskyan 'revolution' in the field of L1 acquisition. L1 children were shown to be highly creative in their acquisition of language, rather than mere imitators of the language around them. In the context of L2 acquisition, researchers started focusing on what learners actually produced for the first time, especially their **errors**, drawing the conclusion that much of their productions cannot be traced back to their L1, nor the L2 they are exposed to. Additionally, research found that what is different in two languages is not necessarily difficult for learners, and what is similar not necessarily easy (Myles, 2010, p.1).

Corder is the first to draw attention to the significance of studying learners' **errors**, as it becomes evident that a great number do not originate in the L1 of learners, and that learners seem to have an in-built syllabus of their own, as suggested by CHOMSKY in the context of L1 acquisition. This major shift from comparing L1 and L2 to studying learner language itself mirrors significant developments which include some errors in L1 and L2 acquisitions (Myles, 2010, p.4).

Method of the Study

In ELT, qualitative research could be seen as a research approach where the investigator relies on the views of the participants, documentations which may have inadequate information. To position this paper well in the context of ELT,

It is best suited to address a phenomenon such as coding for error correction whose variable could be unknown and need to explore because literature might have little information about the phenomenon. Therefore, there is need to learn more from participants, literature or observation through exploration. For example, "the literature may not adequately address the practice of using standard coding as means for corrective feedback which could improve learning in English as a Second Language (L2) in Nigerian Tertiary institutions and below in this work. A qualitative research is saddle with the responsibility to explore some phenomenon such as error and its method for corrective feedback in the context of ELT and so it is used in this study. Unquestionably, Method for correcting errors may cause challenges to both learners and tutors as a result of inadequate or lack of standard codes for the correction in L2 class. Students and teacher may fail to achieve their desired objectives. Such problem may not have been observed in the prior literature. In a perception of qualitative research work, such problem is known as the central phenomenon, i.e. the key concept, idea, or process studied in qualitative research. Thus, the concerned research issue in this paper is the code to be used for error correction as feedback for L2 learners which requires an exploration for effective teaching and learning English in the context of ELT (Pardede, 2018, p.14).

The Concept of Error in ELT

Ellis, (2008, p. 5) refers to error as an act of deviating from the cultures of the language in focus. Added to that he emphasised that an unusual or error is a technical term which occurs due to a lack of knowledge that resulted to deviation in a target language (TL) which refers to a particular style that is the aim of learning, for example, English (Saville-Troike and Barto, 2017, p.2). James, (2013, p. 5) sees an error as the students "interlanguage" (i.e. the variety of their language in focus) and TL itself in connection to the two, to see mismatches. Added to that, he stressed that errors could be described regarding the language in focus without the involvement of the L1 of the learners. Ludeling et al. (2017, pp.110-111) define error as a technical annotation of ungrammatical use of particle verb or possibly another aspect of language in learner text.

From different perspectives, some researchers, for example, Seidlhofer, (2004, p.228) argues that there is no justification to define an item as an error so long as most of the L2 speakers speak and comprehend it (English) in their world.

She further emphasised that it is for the native speaker to advance their receptive goal post and possibly adjust expectation as a result offices general use of language such English is concerned. It proves the claim made by some linguists and psychologists (e.g. Corder, 1967; Krashen, 1982) who argue that error could be seen as an oral or written production in SLA which is just a necessary stage of the developmental process, similar to what children undergo in the process of acquiring L1. Krashen (1982, 1984; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) further argue that correcting an error is not needed because it helps and improves the active filters of the learners. Affective filter refers to an element which filtrates input in learners' brains (Du, 2009, p.162). In a nutshell, present work sees an error as a deficient form of language from the standard norm which may be part of the developmental stages of a target language encounter by the learners.

Ellis, (2008, p. 47) argues that the learners' error can be categorised into comprehension and production. Ellis, further stresses that a comprehension error refers to a misunderstanding of a sentence by the learners, for instance, "pass him the paper" as "pass him the pepper" is due to an inability to differentiate the sounds /ei/ and /e/. Ellis believes, is not easy to figure out the cause of learners' inability to produce some linguistic features of a misunderstood expression. He further believes that a productive error could be found in learners' interview or a written task such as assignments, tests or even projects. Therefore, this work is concerned with standard codes to be used by language teachers for effective correction of errors in L2 class. It hopes to improve the learning abilities of students and that leads us to the focus of this research work (Ellis, 2008).

Sources of Errors in ELT

Brown (2006,p.224) states that there are two main sources of errors, namely, Interlingua errors and intralingua errors. Interlingua (interference) errors are those errors that are traceable to first language interference. These errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term "interlingua" was first-introduced by Selinker (1972,p.209). He used this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both learner's L1 and the target language (Anyidoho, 2002,p.5). Moreover, transfer of errors may occur because the learners lack the necessary information in the second language or the attentional capacity to activate the appropriate second language routine.

Transfer is of two kinds: positive and negative. The transfer may prove to be justified because the structures of the two languages are similar- this case is called „positive transfer“ or „facilitation“, or it may prove unjustified because the structures of the two languages are different- that case is called „negative transfer“ or “interference” (Wilkin, 1972,p.199). As far as the intralingua errors are concerned, they result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer (Keshavarz, 2003,p.62; Fang and Jiang, 2007,p.11). Richards (1974,p.12) cites four main types of intralingua errors, namely: Overgeneralization, Ignorance of rules restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. Therefore, errors that occur in written communication are the main constructs of this study.

The difference among Error, Mistake and Slip of the Tongue

The distinction between error, mistake and a slip of the tongue is that an error is when the L2 learner lacks the idea of the TL which let him produces an incorrect form of language while the mistake refers to the failure of linguistic knowledge of the learner to do an act (Ellis, 2008). Dell (1986 p. 284) sees a slip of the tongue as perhaps an unintended deviation from speech pattern which is not habitually. Based on this, “a slip of the tongue” can be identified “as an error” that is reversible or repairable (Poullisse, 2000, pp. 136-137). From this, error and mistake are probably associated with both writing and speaking while a slip of the tongue is associated with speaking only as a kind of error.

The Connection of Error to ELT

Learning English either L2 or an FL requires a process of stages, during which errors, mistake or a slip of the tongue are likely to occur during the process of learning (Darus, 2009, p. 487). Some researchers (e.g. Corder, 1967) believe that errors can be concrete evidence that education usually takes place. Moreover, he emphasises that if incorrectness is studied systematically, this can lead to insights significantly into how a learner learned a second or foreign language. He further asserts that studying learners’ errors of performance or usage could have practical application immediately for English teachers.

Based on this view, errors are providers of feedback because they provide some information about how useful is their language (Darus, 2009). Ancker (2000) agrees that unusual or wrong use of a word is part and parcel of the language learning process in reality. Therefore, they can be accounted as one of the

cognition ways of acquiring a language. According to this view, errors are directly related to teaching and learning a language. And so, they are relevant to ELT.

Reason for Error Correction in ELT

Although there is the general belief that a wrong utterance or an unusual form should be corrected, some theories in Second Language Acquisition deny the role of error correction by supporting that students go through systematic stages in learning and they just acquire a structure when they are ready for it, but not before. However, There is no doubt that conversational interactions are very important; however, focusing too much on “what they say” rather than on “how they say it” can be dangerous. This can result in a situation where learners provide each other with input which is often incorrect and incomplete and which other learners process as if it were right. This can lead us to support that form focus and error correction is also necessary, that correction of errors should be made, otherwise they can create false hypothesis and fossilize. However, we cannot take it too seriously as too much emphasis on accuracy will inhibit students to talk. The right balance is again sought and we must not forget that when correcting it is important to take into account the students sense of achievement, success and learning preferences. Students’ attitude towards correction is sometimes positive, specially in advance levels where students specially want to be corrected in order to improve their language and avoid errors to be fossilized (Martinez, 2007,p.5). In this regard, Language Teachers need some standard codings for corrective feedback which could help the learners notice the specific error to be corrected.

Some of the useful codes for correcting Errors in ELT

Sp	incorrect spelling
W.O.	wrong word order
W.F.	word form
W.W	wrong word
T	wrong tense
S/P	singular or plural form wrong
^	something is missing
[] or /	something is not necessary
?M	meaning is not clear
P	punctuation wrong
//	new paragraph needed
++	good word/sentence

(Adopted from UCLES 2009)

Conclusion

The conducting of the error has been the most inevitable process in the world when the foreign language or L2 has been acquired. The learners who have been in process of this language learning will be benefitted by the errors they have made. This will help them to get the response and feedback on the work they have produced. In various efforts, the learner will get use to and will be able to successfully attain their required goals and objectives. Weireesh (1991, p.13) has been in concern that the errors made by the learners are of the significant and specific prominence for the reason that the making of the errors in the work has been regarded as a device that the learners will use in order to make themselves learn from it. Conferring to him, the Error is a valued help and support to classify and clarify the problems and difficulties confronted by the language learners. He carries on by the same stance that the Error has been serving as a consistent response to plan and make a corrective coaching manner. Candling (2001, p. 69) in concern states that the second language learner and the errors they made are significantly important for the recognition and understanding of the procedures of getting hold of the foreign language or the Second Language Acquisition in ELT.

Recommendation:

Therefore, government at various levels, NGOs, and wealthy individuals are pleased to organise workshops for teacher training with a focus on standard codes for error correction in ELT class; in order to update the education sector which hopes to add value to the nation's economy and enhances L2 teaching and learning for a better production of competent graduates in the end.

Reference:

- Ancker, W. (2000). Errors and corrective feedback: updated theory and classroom practice. *English Teaching forum* 38(4), 20-24
- Anyidoho, L.A. (2002). Analysis of the writing of final year university students. *Ghanaian Journal of English Studies*. 1, 58-72.
- Brown, J.D. (2006). *The principle of Language Teaching and learning*. Longman: New York.
- Candling, R. B. (2001). *Vocabulary and language teaching*. New York: Longman Inc.
- Corder, S.P. (1967). The significance of learners' error. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 5 (4), 161-169
- Darus, S. (2009). Error Analysis of the written English Essay of Secondary school students I Malaysia: A case study *European Journal of social science volume 8, no. 3* (2009)
- Du, X. (2009) The Affective Filter in Second Language Teaching, School of Foreign Languages of Qingdao, University of Science and Technology, *Asian Social Sciences Vol. 5, 8, August 2009* www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/3457/3131
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition: Oxford applied linguistics*, Oxford University Press, ISBN

- Fang, X. & Jiang, X. (2007) *Error Analysis and the EFL Classroom Teaching*, <http://Eric.ed.org> accessed on 13/4/21
- James, C. (2013). *Errors in Language learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*, Routledge, London and New York <https://books.google.ac.uk> accessed 28/7/18
- Keshavarz, M.H (2003) The Role of Error Analysis in Teaching and Learning of Second and Foreign Lang., www.macrothink.org>download accessed on 13/4/21
- Krashen, D.S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition* <https://books.google.co.uk> accessed 16/7/2018.
- Krashen, D.S. (1984). *Writing research, theory and applications*, <https://books.google.co.uk> accessed 16/7/2018.
- Krashen, D.S. &Terrell, T.D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom* <http://books.google.co.uk> accessed 14/7/2018
- Ludeling, A. , Hirschman, H. & Shadrova, A. (2017) *Linguistic Models, Acquisition Theories , and Learner Corpora: Morphological Productivity in SLA Research Exemplified by Complex Verbs in German*, <https://doi.org/lang.12231> accessed on 13/4/21
- Martinez, S. G. (2007) Should we correct our students errors in 12 learning? ,*Journal of Research and Innovation in the Language Classroom*, 16
- Myles F. (2010) *The development of theories of second language acquisition*, Newcastle University, UK , Cambridge University Press
- Pardede, P. (2018) *Conceptualizing ELT Research: Research Process in Quantitative and Qualitative Study*
- Poullisse, N. (2000). Slips of the tongue in first and second language production, *Studia Linguistica* 34(2)2000p.136-149 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-9582.00055>
- Richards, J.C (1974). *A Non- contrastive approach to Error* <https://books.google.ac.uk> accessed 28/7/18
- Saville-Troike, M. & Barto, K. (2017). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*, (3rd edn) Cambridge University Press <https://books.google.ac.uk> accessed 29/7/18
- Seidlhofer, B. (2004). Research perspectives on teaching English as a Lingua franca, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (2004)* 24, 209-239. Printed in the USA. Copyright © 2004 Cambridge University press 0267-1905/04 DOI:10.1017/S0267190504000145 <https://www.cambridge.org> accessed 8/7/2018.
- Selinker, L. (1972). *Interlanguage. International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10, 209-231.
- UCLES, (2009), Cambridge English language assessment, part of the University of Cambridge. www.cambridgeenglish.org assessed on 6/01/2020.
- Wilkins, D. A (1972) *Linguistics in Language Teaching*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Weireesh, S. (1991). How to analyze inter-language. *Journal of Psychology & Education*.9: 113-22.