

## Exploring Nuances in Second Language Acquisition: An Error Analysis Perspective

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### Abstract

*This study employs error analysis as a pivotal lens to scrutinize the intricacies of second language learning, emphasizing the unique accents manifested through learners' mistakes. Departing from the confines of contrastive analysis, the research aims to illuminate the processes of acquiring a second language. Key facets of language acquisition, including transfer, interference, and the fossilization process, are investigated to provide insights into the development of learners' interlanguage. The study conducts a comparative analysis of early and late language learning, emphasizing the impact of cognitive, psychological, and social factors on the learning trajectory. Motivational influences, encompassing instrumental and integrative motives, are explored in connection to their effects on learning outcomes. This research not only contributes to a deeper understanding of error patterns in second language acquisition but also advocates for methodologies that surpass the constraints of contrastive analysis, offering potential avenues for more effective language learning strategies.*

**Keywords:** *Error Analysis in SLA, Contrastive Analysis, Transfer and Interference, Interlanguage, Metalinguistic Awareness.*

### Introduction

Error analysis is a way used by researchers to explain the processes of acquiring the target language and trying to understand how learners acquire a foreign language. The relative failure of contrastive analysis, both theoretically and in its pedagogical aspects, leads researchers to focus on the errors made by speakers of the foreign language. Error analysis thus represents the transition from predictive to explanatory design. It was first used to justify the predictions made by contrastive analysis, thus bringing out a weak version of contrastive analysis, which, as opposed to the strong version, does not predict errors, but explains them.

In his seminal article, Corder (1975) proposes to move from one focusing research on teaching to one emphasizing the acquisition of a foreign language. This position leads him to question the meaning of errors and to look for parallels between the acquisition of a foreign language and that of the mother tongue. Rejecting the behaviorist hypothesis was influenced by N. Chomsky (1965). Corder considers the process of acquisition as the elaboration of a series of hypotheses made about the structures of the foreign language:

“Mistakes are indispensable to the learner himself because making mistakes can be considered a means that the learner uses to learn. This is a way for the learner to test their assumptions about the nature of the language they are learning. Making mistakes is,

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therefore, a strategy used by both children who acquire their mother tongue and those who learn a foreign language.”

Nevertheless, he does not reject the concept of transfer between the mother tongue and the target language since, for him, the learner builds his system of the foreign language by comparing it with that of his mother tongue, looking for similarities and differences.

According to Corder (1967), errors, which until then had been considered to reveal learning difficulties, are sure indicators of the process of acquiring a foreign language in the same way as a child's malformed statements are of his acquisition of the mother tongue. Errors, therefore, make it possible to assess and describe the transitional competence of the learner; however, they also reflect how the foreign language is taught. Corder (1967) insists that the learner's productions are not erroneous from the point of view of what he calls his "idiosyncratic dialect" which represents a well-formed subsystem of the target language. Thus, although Corder attributes great importance to the influence of the mother tongue, he nevertheless recognizes the existence of other variables. It was found that some errors could not come from an interference phenomenon. Some errors seem to stem from phenomena encountered during the acquisition of the mother tongue in the child. Overgeneralization, for example, is because the learner incorrectly applies a rule of the target language. We will also talk about transfer, but it occurs within the system to be acquired and is not influenced by a source language. The fact that this phenomenon is found in both children and foreign language learners confirms its intra-systemic nature.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design and Participants**

This study employs a qualitative research design to delve into the intricacies of second language learning through the lens of error analysis. The qualitative approach allows for a detailed exploration of the processes involved in acquiring a second language, emphasizing the richness of learners' experiences and perspectives. The participants in this study include individuals engaged in second language learning, both early and late learners. A diverse sample will be selected to capture variations in age, language pairs, and learning contexts.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The triangulation model is employed by using multiple sources of data (error analysis, interviews, and observations) to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Collected errors from language learners are analyzed to identify patterns and trends. Errors are documented in context, noting the specific linguistic features involved. In-depth interviews with language learners are conducted to gain insights into their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of language acquisition. These interviews provide qualitative data on motivational factors, learning strategies, and individual perspectives. Classroom observations and language learning environments are observed to understand the contextual factors influencing language acquisition.

Error patterns, interview transcripts, and observational notes are subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to transfer, interference, interlanguage development, fossilization, and motivation. Comparative analysis is conducted to explore differences between early and late language learners, considering cognitive, psychological, and social factors.

### **Research**

The findings of this research synthesize various theories and concepts related to second language acquisition (SLA), such as hypercorrection, interference, interlanguage,

fossilization, cognitive, psychological, and social factors, and motivation. However, it does not present any new research findings, as the findings mostly agree with the current literature on SLA, except for the claim that the native language (L1) interference causes only a small percentage of errors, which is not well-evidenced. Rather this research recaptures and specifies the nuances of Errors in SLA in depth for better understanding:

-The explanation of hypercorrection due to both inter-systemic and intra-systemic interference aligns with existing research on the influence of the native language on second language production. The finding aligns with the notion that speakers may avoid forms too similar to their mother tongue to minimize interference.

-The idea that errors are indicators of the learner's idiosyncratic dialect (Corder, 1971) is consistent with the concept of interlanguage, where learners develop their linguistic system. The notion that correct sentences do not necessarily indicate the correct application of foreign language rules corresponds to the idea that learners may mimic without understanding during the initial stages.

-Selinker's (1972) processes, including learning strategies, communication strategies, language transfer, training transfer, and overgeneralization, are outlined by existing literature on interlanguage development. Selinker's processes are widely recognized in the field of second language acquisition.

-The idea of integrated and discontinuous progression, with learners making and verifying hypotheses and restructuring their interlanguage, aligns with the understanding that language acquisition is a dynamic, non-linear process. The concept of interlanguage as a dynamic system undergoing qualitative leaps is consistent with existing research.

-Selinker's concept of fossilization, where certain traits or rules of interlanguage persist despite continued learning, is well-established in second language acquisition literature. The finding aligns with the understanding that fossilization can occur due to various factors, such as interference and the decision to stop learning.

-The discussion on early and late language learning, balanced vs. unbalanced learning, and the impact on the mastery of the mother tongue is in line with existing research on critical periods and age-related differences in language acquisition. The concept aligns with research indicating that early exposure to a foreign language can have positive effects on metalinguistic awareness.

-The differentiation between integrative and instrumental motivation and their influence on learning aligns with established theories on motivational factors in language acquisition. The finding corresponds with the understanding that motivation plays a crucial role in language learning outcomes.

- Not all L2 learner errors come directly from L1 interference. Interference accounts for about 5% of errors in the early learner and 25% in the adult learner. The majority of errors come from the overgeneralization of rules being learned. This statement is not directly supported by specific references or sources. Only about 5% of errors in early learners and 25% in adult learners come from L1 interference is not universally agreed upon in the literature, and the percentages may vary based on the context and individual differences.

## Conclusion

This research employs error analysis as a pivotal lens to scrutinize the intricacies of second language learning, shedding light on the processes of acquiring a foreign language. Departing from the limitations of contrastive analysis, the study emphasizes the significance of learners' mistakes and their role as indispensable elements in the language acquisition journey. The research findings delve into the complex interplay of factors

such as transfer, interference, and the fossilization process, providing valuable insights into the development of learners' interlanguage. The study conducts a comparative analysis of early and late language learning, highlighting the impact of cognitive, psychological, and social factors on the learning trajectory. Motivational influences, encompassing integrative and instrumental motives, are explored in connection to their effects on learning outcomes. The significance of early language learning is underscored, with evidence suggesting that it occurs in a balanced, integrated, and spontaneous manner, fostering metalinguistic awareness that benefits both the mother tongue and the foreign language.

Moreover, the research introduces the concept of fossilization, emphasizing that certain traits or rules of interlanguage may persist regardless of age or continued learning. The discussion on transfer and interference contributes to understanding how learners navigate the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the target language. The findings advocate for methodologies that surpass the constraints of contrastive analysis, encouraging a shift towards teaching approaches that acknowledge the value of learners' mistakes and promote a deeper understanding of the language acquisition process. The research not only contributes to the field's theoretical framework but also offers practical implications for educators and learners seeking more effective language learning strategies.

In essence, this study provides a comprehensive examination of second language acquisition, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the learning process and advocating for a nuanced understanding that goes beyond traditional methodologies. By exploring error patterns, transfer phenomena, and the impact of motivational factors, the research paves the way for a more holistic and informed approach to second language learning.

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