

Morphosyntactic Analysis of the Use of English

by

Second Language Learners

First Author:

Dr. Rama Rao Chevula
Assistant professor of English
GITAM (Deemed to be University
Hyderabad, India.

Second Author:

Dr. P Lakshmi Narasa Dasu.
Asst. Professor of English
Government Degree College,
Eluru, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Abstract

The present study attempts to explain the cause, scope, and nature of the common errors made by the Second Language Learners of English (ESLs) at the syntactic and morphological level. English is introduced to non-native learners of India at an early stage of education as a second language. It is observed that the ESLs at the Intermediate level of study have a poor grasp of the use of syntax and morphology in order. They lack adequate knowledge of the use of tenses, modal auxiliary verbs, and the resultant syntactical errors in the agreement of subject-verb in sentence construction. The influence of native tongue on English shapes the choice of words both phonically and structurally.[114 words]

Keywords: ESL, morphology syntax, phonics, structures

Introduction

In a poll/survey conducted, it was found that the L1 learners/users of English first think in their mother tongue and later construct their utterances in the L2 (English). Learners use chunks of stored/acquired knowledge from memory and retrieve the same in the target language as a process of translation. Studies have revealed that the learning strategies of ESLs in predicting structures were found to be inaccurate and erratic. Language learning is improbable if L1 users of English focus on individual words to communicate the message without knowing the rules. Possibly in verbal communication, there is a mixing of spoken and written forms. Also, the choice of words affects communication.

In acquiring a second language (L2), the learners have to overcome the interference of the mother tongue (L1). It impedes the development of LSRW skills, relatively on reading and writing. The present study has emerged from the concerns of the interference of L1 into L2 affecting spelling, sentence capitalization, punctuation marks, nouns, forms and patterns of verbs, verb plurals, incorrect subject-verb, adjective-noun agreement, many negations of articles, prepositions, wrong word order, and other grammatical aspects of sentence production. Hendrickson (1987:357) mentions "that errors are 'signals' that indicate an actual learning process taking place and that the learner has not yet mastered or shown a well-structured competence in the target language...". Words combine and form meaningful sentences. Sentences have new properties and serve as a beautiful psycholinguistic process. The syntactic properties and the rules of phrase structure combine to dictate the formation of sentences. However, the syntactic rule poses significant problems to L1 learners. The teaching and learning of English require the optimal development of communicative language competences among learners.

With the publication of Pit Corder's article, **The Significance of Learners' Errors** (1967) was the most favored model of L1 learners in the acquisition of English as a second language. As a support to this, **Corder (1967)** mentioned that mistakes are of no significance to "the process of language learning"ⁱⁱ (P. 167). In Applied Linguistics, an error determines the typical classroom experience faced by the Learner in language acquisition.

Error Analysis is a systematic study of errors used to identify the reasons why L1 Learner deviates from the rules that apply a target language. According to Richards (1985:96), E.A. is a diagnostic tool that enables the learners to adapt to challenges faced in learning a second language. An error is the use of word, speech, or grammatical item imperfectly that conveys incomplete learning.

The impact of learning a second language best reflects on the Learner's use of word order. Word order parameters such as S (subject), O(object), and the V(verb) the main constituents of a sentence differ from language to language. "In English grammar, the rule of thumb is that the subject comes before the verb which comes before the object. It means that most of the sentences conform to the SVO word order.." In Telugu, the most expressive language in the world, the verb generally occurs in the final position in a sentence as SOV with natural permutations and combinations of subject and verb Noun Phrases (N.P.s), as it were.

In the English language, meanings are determined through words. The L1 learners exhibit tense and agreement morphology where simple verbs in their finite forms are inflected as they are the language carriers. The errors that occur in producing L2 arise from Interlingua errors such as interference from the mother tongue, and its influence on the target language structurally.

It is necessary to make a contrastive analysis of the Learner's mother tongue, L1, and the language they want to learn, L2, as it helps in understanding the Interlingua errors. When L1 learners learn L2, they produce sentences out of their practice and possibly commit mistakes. According to Richards (1974:62), the errors are a direct result of learner's attempt to over generalize the language and create a language system that the user has been exposed.

"The term overgeneralization is most often used in connection with language acquisition by children. For example, a young child may say "foots" instead of "feet" by over generalizing the morphological rule"ⁱⁱⁱ to make plural nouns. The errors arising in the process of overgeneralization indicate that the L1 Learner deviates from the standard rule and produces sentences that are structurally different. For Example, *She can drinks coffee* constructed by L1 Learner, namely Telugu speaker, is structurally is not the accepted pattern. Similarly, some other over-generalized sentence patterns found in L1 learners are

- I. *He is eats food[inTelugu]*
- II. *We are work in the factory*
- III. *She will buys tomorrow*
- IV. *He can cooks food in the morning*

Such errors arise due to the mixing of single or multiple structural patterns of other languages known by L1 learners perceive as correct. The kind of linguistic exposure almost occurs unimpaired. Also, in a construct such as *She made the baby to sleep* takes place because the L1 learner picks up as a healthy development of the second language. Very similar sentence structures used are:

1. *She asked me to give the book*
2. *They wanted me to come*

Another common feature found in L2 learners is the use of questions is the incomplete application of rules. The learner tends to use declarative sentence structures instead of interrogative. It is a practice mostly used by Telugu speakers. Here the L2 learners of English do not apply the rule of auxiliary inversion., i.e., the learner places the subject after the finite auxiliary verb, rather than before it as is the case in typical declarative sentences A literal translation, for example, is: What she is doing?/

I Where she is going?[inTeugu]

I. I going to market

II. She help her mother

III. We have staying in Hyderabad

Such errors occur in the use of the verb forms *be* mainly with the lack of understanding of the rules of the target language. The learner uses *be* forms as the markers of present and past tenses for everyday activities and completed activities.

I. He is goes to college every day[inTelugu]

II. She was died last year.

III. We are played the game.

IV. She went to Bangalore tomorrow.

Some typical native constructions of the simple present tense form used by L1 learners,

Eg. I studies one subject daily

The given sentence, though, fulfills the SVO order of the English language is faulty because of retaining the native sentence structuring. The verb in the simple present tense takes *s*, *es* or *ies* when the subject is *He*, *She*, *it*, or *singular noun*. The rule does not apply to verbs if the subject is in the first person. For the sentence to be

grammatically correct, subject, and verb in number and gender must agree in case, number, and gender. Another sentence construction from the native user,

I take all my books and lunch box and go to college and evening comes to home.

The first part of the sentence syntactically fulfills the phrase structure rules —> (Noun Phrase) N.P. followed by the Verb Phrase(V.P. However, the possessive pronoun is placed wrongly as *my all*. The correct use is *all my*. The last part of the sentence is structurally wrong because the user applies the rules of the native language and positions the verb wrongly omitting the subject. Also, the verb does not agree with the subject, "I". Another native influence is the placing of the adverbial preposition *evening*. The correct order is *in the evening*.

**I will get up in the morning at 5.O' clock.*

The above sentence is an expression of an everyday activity that best requires the use of simple present tense, but the learner uses the future form of the verb. Syntactically the sentence is correct but is distorted because of the use of the wrong form of the verb. It infers that the learner is confused in describing the events happening now or yet to happen.

**I goes to college in bus*

The above sentence shows the difficulty of the learner to use the correct verb inflection in its tense form. The user puts a new inflection to the verb *go* when it is not necessary. It happens mainly because of over generalizing the rules of the target language. In English, the verb inflects to agree with the subject in terms of person, number, and gender. Nevertheless, there is never an overt agreement between the subject and the verb.

Nevertheless, another common mistake is the use of the preposition. The learner has used the wrong preposition *in* instead of *by* (*bus*). The source of the error is interlingual. It happens because Telugu speakers use *in* for a mode of travel while in English, it is not so.

Every language arranges the constituent elements of sentences relative to each other and possibly in different ways. The syntactic arrangement of words in a sentence, clause, or phrase determines the meaning of the sentence. It leads to ungrammaticality if the word order is incorrect. As the rules of word order change from one language to another language, the L2 user conveys an intended message depending on the habitual exposure to the forms of language structures and social interaction. Moreover, if the possible word order in the two sentences is different, it leads to error production by the users.

Studies on language transfer claim that the influence of native language habits reflects in the word order and the structuring of the sentence. It is possible for the L1 user of English does not mention who is acting, and the resultant use of verb inflection occurs, as it were. Such acquisition of language transfer results in the construction of the syntactically wrong sentence.

Thus, due to language interference, L1 users or learners tend to transfer items and structures negatively as they make assumptions that the structures in L2 will be the same as their L1. The influence of native language leads to errors in the use of target language as a negative transfer instead of making a positive transfer. Morphosyntactic analysis is a complex task of building a proper relationship between morphology and syntax, which are the most significant grammatical categories and properties in English grammar.

Linguists and psycholinguists rely on the morpho-syntax analysis to illuminate the word order that makes knowledge explicit and which indeed, in the modern approach in understanding the aim and scope of a language and use it effectively in multi-disciplines. Today morphosyntactic analysis is a broad movement in the field of linguistics that is focused on data-driven models so that the learner efficiently uses the data structures and models in the use of morphology and syntax. [1912 words]

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