An Analysis of Errors Made by Turkish and Persian Speaking EFL Students Majoring in Translation

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ABSTRACT

The present Research investigates errors made by Persian (monolingual) and Turkish (bilingual) speaking students of English as a foreign language (EFL).The subjects of this study were 20 undergraduate translation students studying at the University of Tehran, and also 20 undergraduate translation students studying at the University of Tabriz. The subjects were asked to translate different predetermined Persian sentences into English. Then, after the administration of the test, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) and Keshavarz's classifications model of error analysis for analyzing errors were used. Next, the data were analyzed by running an independent samples test by SPSS in order to reject or support the hypotheses of the study. The hypotheses in this study are: 1.There are statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' and those made by monolingual EFL learners. 2. There are statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' morpho-syntactic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners. The result of this study shows that the learners of the target language deviate from TL rules, so we can say that interference from their mother tongue is not the core cause of the two groups' errors under the investigation, although there are some differences between the two groups' errors, they are not statistically significant.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Contrastive Analysis, Surface Strategy Classification of Errors, Morpho-syntactic errors, Lexico-semantic errors

INTRODUCTION

The last twenty years of enthusiasm for contrastive analysis in foreign language teaching can be traced to Charles Fries who, in 1945, wrote:

The most effective materials are those that are primarily based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, rigorously compared with a parallel description of the linguistic communication of the learner.

Error analysis began in 1960s by Stephen Pit Corder (1967) and his colleagues. Corder explains the importance of error analysis as "the study of error is part of investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect, it resembles methological study of acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of linguistic development of a learner and may give us indication as to learning process" (1967, P. 125).

However it is important to mention that there is a difference between error and mistake. Mistakes are non-systematic errors which can be self-corrected and errors are systematic which cannot be recognized and corrected by the learner while occurring repeatedly (Gass & Selinker, 1994). So studying learners' errors has priority to their mistakes.

Behavioristic psychology influenced Error analysis to predict learners' first and second language errors differences. Since contrastive analysis was not able to predict all kind of

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errors, error analysis approach delivered to cover its limitations. The major finding of the error analysis is that EFL learners' errors are the result of interference of the grammar of the new language. Error analysis makes a distinction between errors and categorizes them in different classification.

Contrary to strong version of contrastive analysis in error analysis EFL learners' errors were not considered as "sign of inhibition" (Corder, 1967). However there has been still criticism for error analysis practicality because error analysis just focused on learners output and lack of information about what is considered error and what can be its' constitutes in addition according to Johnson & Johnson "error taxonomies often confuse description with explanation" (1967, p. 112).

As Corder (1967) emphasizes, error analysis is necessary in three ways: it will tell the teacher what requires to be taught; it will tell the researcher how learning proceeds and it is a means whereby students test their hypotheses about the language they are learning. It is hoped that the practical applications of this study will be of use and of help to Iranian EFL learners. Teachers would be able to have information of what areas should be emphasized and what kind of materials requires more attention in EFL classrooms. So, there are some reasons why a study of this kind is of great importance. *Firstly*, the language teachers can be able to choose and adopt materials that help EFL learners. *Secondly*, as Fries (2002, p.56) maintains "there is fairly conclusive proof that teacher feedback results in a lot of correct revisions by students; however, this improvement may well be drawing solely on express data." So, students' errors are very important and useful feedbacks and conjointly supported their errors, teachers can improve their abilities in teaching. *Thirdly*, according to Lee (2004) learners think and believe to get feedback from their teachers and hope that it would be very useful for them. Finally, teachers require understanding and knowing the causes of errors and the reasons for their occurrences, by doing error analysis, it becomes clear for them that on which parts they should give an emphasis in their teaching

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture, each productively once trying to talk the language …and receptively once trying to perceive to know and understand a language …as practiced by natives …in comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or problem in foreign language learning (Lado, 1957).

In foreign language learning, error correction has become one of the important teaching processes. But actually, few teachers know a lot about error analysis and a few related theories. They usually take so negative attitudes toward errors that they could not tolerate any errors and have a tendency to correct them as before long as they could find any. As a result, although they assume they have been working hard enough and spend much time and energy functioning on error correction, their effort is not effective and also the students do not believe they have benefited a lot.

On the contrary, the students typically feel upset, for they have found that there's a great gap between themselves and their lecturers in dealing with errors and understanding of error correction. So, the present study helps Turkish and Persian speaking students majoring in translation to tackle their errors and prevent from recommittance of them

There are two hypotheses to be analyzed during this study:

H1: There are statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' lexico-semantic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners.

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H2: There are statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' morpho-syntactic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mokerian (1986) conducted an error analysis at the University of Shiraz. The subjects in his study were 396 freshman students taking general English courses at Shiraz University within the winter of 1986. The students were asked to write compositions on the subjects "Why do you learn English?" the whole number of sentences accumulated and studied was 2457, of which 755 were completely correct.1702sentences were syntactically and morphologically incorrect. The results of Mokerians' study showed that 35.95% of the errors studied are ambiguous, 31.05% intralingual and 28% interlingual.

Felix (1980) describes associate English boy learning German who used the word "warum" to mean each "why" and "because". Felix points out that in, say, Spanish or Greek, this one word will carry these two meanings. Thus had the boy been Spanish, his error would virtually actually be known as interference. Errors, Felix suggests, can invariably correspond to structures in some language. Butterworth (1978) detected that Ricardo, a thirteen year recent Spanish boy learning English, usually used subject less sentences. He thus attributed this to interference since it's utterly acceptable to omit the topic in Spanish. Felix, however, points out that it's conjointly common in FLA to miss out the topic of a sentence. Dulay and Burt (1974), when learning 513 errors made by Spanish kids learning English, over that overall, but five-hitter of the entire errors were completely because of interference.

Sajjadi (1987) investigated the consequences of three totally different tasks on the performances of a group of Iranian university freshman students at Shiraz University. A placement test was given 450 students. Thirty-nine students who scored almost equally asked to perform the two task of 1) image description 2) translation. He concludes that:

1. The amount of designs created by FL learners correlates with the amount of tasks that they perform.
2. Learners' identity accounts for what's labeled as sex-linked variation, i.e. males and female subjects score otherwise for constant task in the same setting.

Newmark and Reibel (1968) echo Chomsky's opinion and criticize the reading that sees the role of the learner as nothing however a generator of interference as ignoring the learner's contribution to his own learning. They're of the opinion that cognitive content rather interference is the real explanation for most errors. Wardhaugh (1970) contends that contrastive analysis makes unrealistic demands of current linguistic theory as there is as yet no comprehensive linguistic theory to formulate a set of linguistic universals, nor is there a theory of contrastive linguistics into which we can plug linguistic descriptions of languages being contrasted. He holds that linguistic theory at this time is unequipped to put in writing synchronic linguistics of languages, in addition to check them. Moreover, no language has been tolerably represented to allow an entire comparison between it and the other language. He additionally argues that the claims supported the hypothesis aren't supported by actual facts, that contrastive analysis predicts errors that don't occur and doesn't forecast others that do occur.

In sum, we can conclude that elements from maternal language will generally facilitate the training of second language once leaner's fully alert to the structure of their maternal language and target language. On the other hand, if the learners are unaware of their first and target language type, any transference results in interference and impedes learning of the

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second language.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The subjects of the current study were twenty undergraduate Persian speaking students majoring in Translation learning at the University of Tehran and twenty undergraduate Turkish speaking students majoring in translation studying at University of Tabriz. Their participation was voluntary. Persian sentences were arbitrarily extracted from thesis defended at Shiraz University, the reliability of which has been confirmed, and therefore the subjects were asked to translate them into English.

The present study occurred within the spring and fall semester 2013 between undergrad students majoring in translation. The researcher asked them to translate the Persian sentence into fluent English. It ought to be noted that, the participants weren't allowed to use any reasonably dictionaries. They were additionally allowed to leave at any time they wanted to. Then, after the gathering of the information, frequency of the learners' errors was counted. Additionally, the researcher manipulates Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) classification model of errors in order to classify them. Finally, an independent samples test was run by SPSS software to find out whether the variations between the errors made by the two groups beneath the investigation are statistically significant or not.

RESULTS

Analysis of the First Question

Are there any statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learner's lexico-semantic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners?To analyze the first question, an independent samples test was run which is represented in the table 1:

Table 1. The total results of the subjects' lexico-semantic errors obtained through running Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t-test for Equality of Means*			
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*
Lexicosemantic	Equal Variances Assumed	.314	.579	1.015	38	.316	.350
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			1.015	37.804	.316	.350

According to the results above (table 1) the researcher has manipulated non-parametric analysis of the data in order to find whether there are any statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' lexico-semantic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners or not. So, the independent samples test was run. Since the obtained significance is 0.316 in comparison with 0.05 level of significance in behavioral sciences, one can state that there is not any statistically significant difference between Turkish and Persian speaking translation students in their use of lexico-semantic errors. In other words, it can be stated with 95% confidence that the bilingual EFL learners 'lexico-semantic errors are not less than those made by monolingual EFL learners. (p>0.05)

Analysis of the Second Question

Are there any statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' morpho-syntactic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners? To analyze the second question, an independent samples test was also run which is represented in the table 2 below.

Table 2. The total results of the subjects' morpho-syntactic errors obtained through running Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t-test for Equality of Means*			
		F	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*
morphosyntactic	Equal Variances Assumed	.997	.324	1.389	38	.173	3.750
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			1.389	34.747	.174	3.750

According to the results above (table 2), the researcher manipulated non-parametric analysis of the data in order to find whether there are any statistically significant differences between bilingual EFL learners' morpho-syntactic errors and those made by monolingual EFL learners or not. So, the independent samples test was run. Since the obtained significance is 0.173 in comparison with 0.05 level of significance in behavioral science, one can state that there is not any statistically significant difference concerning the total number of morpho-syntactic errors between Turkish and Persian speaking translation students in their use of morpho-syntactic errors. In other words, it can be statedwith95% confidence that the bilingual EFL learners' morpho-syntactic errors are not less than those made by monolingual EFL learners. (p>0.05)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the hypotheses of this study shows that there aren't any statistically significant differences between these two groups in morpho-syntactic errors, in which these learners made such types of errors because of their unfamiliarity with the appropriate application of the target language structure.

Second, the teachers should help students to become aware of the fact that there are some words that untranslatable and therefore the best way to learn them is to ask an expert to find out their right equivalent within the target language. Third, the lecturers should give an emphasize on the learners' errors indirectly, offer them feedback and then correct them, and may use the most effective strategy to tackle the learners' errors. Finally, totally different EFL materials should be developed for college students with different language background.

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