

A Study of Lexical Errors Committed by Government College in West Bengal

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Abstract:

This paper presents the report of a study on error analysis carried out on the students among the Bengali speakers at the Government College in Murshidabad. Its aim is to investigate the students' knowledge of English and the problems they have had in learning it. The study was conducted on the students written answer scripts and the question papers were designed by the district education officers. A detailed analysis of the data shows that there are seven kinds of errors found in all the students and they can be arranged in the following order in terms of their severity. They are spelling errors, semantic errors, grammatical errors, reversal errors, addition errors, deletion errors and substitution error. An effect has been made to describe and explain the possible causes of these errors.

Key words: errors, deletion, semantic, scripts

1. Introduction:

English language teaching is an important area of applied linguistics, which deals with the systematic study of English language for the pedagogical purpose. Error analysis is an important aspect of English Language Teaching. It is a type of linguistic study, which focuses on the errors made by the learners of L2 or second language or foreign language. These errors occur in the learning process. Present study investigates into the lexical errors encountered in English answer during the class and exam performances of Bengali medium participants in a government college in West Bengal.

2. The teaching of English in India and West Bengal Government College:

The teaching of English in India is in a chaotic state today. With the great expansion in education that has in the wake of the independence, it has become extremely difficult to find trained and qualified teachers for any subject especially in English. The foundational years for the teaching of English in Schools are in the hands of the teachers, who neither know adequate English nor familiar with latest and far reaching developments in the pedagogy of English.

The situation may be different in few English medium schools. It can hardly be different in schools with English medium classes attached to them, classes to which guardians increasingly send their wards in big cities and small towns in the hope that they may have an adequate knowledge of English by the time they join a university.

3. What is error analysis?

Error analysis is a type of linguistic study that focuses on the errors made by the learners of L2. The field of errors analysis in second language acquisition was established in 1970's by Pit Corder and colleagues. Corder is the founder of error analysis. His famous article is entitled as the significance of learners' errors (1967). Errors used to be 'Flaws', which needed to be eradicated. A key finding of error analysis that many errors produced by learners are based on misunderstanding of the rules of the new language. He counted that errors are important in and of themselves'. In his opinion systematically analysing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine the areas that need re-enforcement in teaching. Error analysis emphasizes 'the significance of errors in learners' in inter-language system (Brown, 2004). The term inter-language, introduced by Selinker (1972), refers to the systematic knowledge of an L2, which is an independent of both the learners L1 and L2.

Corder (1967) and Richards (1971) make a distinction between, errors of competence and errors of performance, which according to them are mistakes and therefore they are unsystematic, whereas errors which reveal the underlying knowledge of the language are errors of competence and are part of the 'transitional competence' of the learners. Corder distinguishes errors from the slips, lapses and mistakes. According to him errors are systematic and give valuable information and regarding the competence of the learner, whereas slips and mistakes which are result of chance circumstances are errors of performance.

4. Methodology:

This study is carried out in Polytechnic college in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. Before carrying out the study, the investigator approached the college authorities and took permission from the principal and controller of examination to take the written papers in graduation level. Many of the pupils came from surrounding many districts in West Bengal.

For the present study the investigator took written answer books in English papers, exams for which were conducted by college authorities. The pupils had 1st unit, 2nd unit and 3rd units were for 20 marks; and the final examinations for 60 marks end of the semester.

4.1 Following technics are being used during the data collection:

1. Answer based on the questions. Comprehension given from the text or passage.
2. Reading of a poem and answering questions based on it or answering where statement is made at the end of the passage.
3. Writing paragraph or a story from the hints given.
4. Writing a letter on various incidents like leave letter, letter for birth day.
5. Celebration and leave for brother's marriage.

6. Change of sentences into voices.
7. Sequential order of sentences.

After getting the paper, the investigator has gone through each paper thoroughly and taken out all the errors at different levels. These errors were taken from the written answer sheet and spoken English. After finding out the errors, the investigator analysed them into lexical errors.

5. Classification of errors:

After getting the papers, the investigator went through all the papers brought out all the errors and categorized them as lexical errors. These lexical errors classified into five types of errors. Following types of errors are given below;

- a. Spelling errors
- b. Semantic errors
- c. Addition errors
- d. Deletion errors and
- e. Grammatical errors

5.1 Spelling errors:

water>watar

fever> fiver

from>fram

birth day >barth day

suffering> suffering

women> woman

bird> bard

vegetable>vejetable

friend>frend

bigger>biggar

college> collage

village>villege

fruits>froots

Spelling errors are the errors in which subject writes the graphemes same ways as he pronounces. They indicate lack of grapheme phoneme correspondence and mother tongue influence. Spelling errors in present study were observed in answer sheet at graduate level in polytechnic college.

5.2 Semantic errors:

dust> dirty

basket>bucket

vegetables> food

they> their

There were hardly any semantic errors in polytechnic college. It might get an errors are due to more emphasis on writing expression (composition, letter and story writing) which

enhances conceptual and cognitive load on the learners mind and makes it difficult for him or her to express appropriately, even though they comprehend the words to a longer level.

5.3 Addition errors:

place> palace

picnic>picnick

kilometer> kilometre

shining> shinning

Addition errors are the errors in which some other segments added to the actual word. These errors were marked by syllable insertion medial, final and germination.

5.4 Deletion errors:

train>tain

different> differ

between>beteen

home>hom

aeroplane>eroplane

Deletion errors are the errors in which subject deletes some of the segments in the words. Deletion errors in the present study were observed in the answer sheets of polytechnic college.

5.5 Grammatical errors:

difference>differences

have> had

saw> see

left>lefted

are> is

could> can

Grammatical errors are those in which subject violates the grammatical rules. Grammatical errors were marked by over generalization, singular, plural marker and tense marker.

Conclusion:

Present study based on error analysis of English answer sheets in Government College in West Bengal. Most of spelling errors were due to mother tongue influence, and lack of grapheme phoneme correspondence. There was a direct correlation between phonemic awareness, mother tongue influence and spelling errors.

Structural errors, like addition and deletion were found in large number in all the classes. Addition errors were marked by syllable insertion, germination, initial and medial phonemes in unpredictable places.

Deletion errors were characterized by consonant deletion, vowel deletion and syllable deletion.

Grammatical errors were marked by overgeneralization, plural > singular, tense marker. These errors reflect lack of awareness of grammatical rules among students.

Present data had semantically related and semantically unrelated errors.

Implication and Future studies:

Present study is based on only analyses of lexical errors in English answer sheets of graduate level in polytechnic college. In future a larger study based on lexical as well as sentential errors and larger sample may provide further insights into the mechanism of error analysis.

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