Contrastive Analysis

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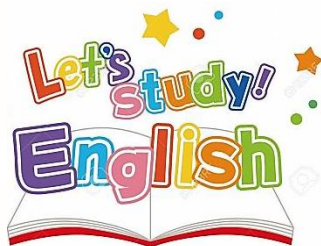
4 Open Learning

1 Translation Department

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Let's study! English

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GOOD MORNING!

We are on page 32. The paragraph is entitled *"Levels of Correctness"*. From the title, what do you expect the paragraph is about?

Student: Mistakes.

Professor: So, some mistakes are acceptable, and some are not. Some mistakes are deadly mistakes. Some mistakes are within the student's current level, and some are beyond their current level.

> ### Levels of Correctness
>
> *It is necessary to note that levels of correctness should also be varied according to learners. In other words, beginners will produce eliminatory errors, but when they move to higher stages, many of these eliminatory errors will be eliminated and the remaining will be of a* **fossilizable nature.**

So, we would still have some errors that cannot be corrected. *Fossilizable nature* means these errors cannot be corrected.

> *What is difficult to deal with is the kind of errors produced by advanced learners, since the explanation of the sources of errors needs more efforts on the part of the teacher.*

So, it is much more difficult to deal with errors produced by advanced learners. It would be difficult for you to explain their errors because they would not acquire straightforward rules. You would, often, hear yourself saying, *"That is what native speakers say and do."*

> *Advanced learners will also be more adventurous in their production and will run into problems in areas such as collocation that are*

difficult for the teacher to explain and the learner to remember. As an example: why do we say 'a piece of timber' but not 'an item of timber? When does the noun 'timber' become countable? How big does a piece of wood have to be before it becomes 'a timber'?

There are some things that cannot be explained. You just say, *"That is what native speakers say or do."* This is the idea of dealing with advanced learners' errors.

The Suggested Solutions

Linguists differ in the solutions they suggest for correcting errors.

We, ourselves, suggest a lot of methods and ways to correct our students' mistakes. That is why we will see some of them repeated.

__Corder__ (1973) believes the idea of making a comparison with the reconstructed form in the native language of the learner may be useful.

The name of the linguist is important.

So, it might be useful for you to tell them that this structure in the target language is similar to another structure in their mother tongue.

Also he sees that linguists should do their best to make the learning materials meet the needs of learners.

Sometimes, the learners do not perceive the value of what they are learning. We have to adapt the material in order to meet our learners' needs.

Let us say we have a student who is learning English in order to use it in their work. They are working as an accountant, for example. Actually, we need to design material for them in order to meet their needs. They do not need to know all the grammar or the vocabulary. They need to know specific vocabulary that they can use in their work like vocabulary related to the accounting field. So, it is very important to take the learners' needs into consideration when you select material for your students.

Another solution is through concentrating on a certain type of error and giving the suitable instruction, till students overcome the reason that leads them to commit this kind of error.

You suggested this earlier. You said that you have to hold a session in order to instruct students on some common mistakes.

> *A further way to correct errors and eliminate them is confined to the use of the computer.*

Nowadays, we can use technology in order to correct our students' mistakes.

> *Since computers are available on a wide range nowadays, it is possible to benefit from this technology in finding a way to improve learners' skills of writing and consequently avoid committing errors. The solution suggested by some linguists basically "describes an attempt to involve the computer as an aid in the process of pre-identifying errors in the improvement of written work.*

For example, the grammatical mistakes would be underlined in red, and the vocabulary mistakes would be underlined in blue. This is how you can identify the mistakes made by your students. It is an easy way. You can highlight those mistakes for your students. You can ask them to correct them themselves or you can correct them yourself (as a teacher). It depends on your purpose and on the level of your students.

On page 34, we have some advantages of using the computer. You can read them on your own.

We will move to the next chapter because we do not need all information. It is a repetition, so we are not going to repeat ourselves.

Now, go to page 44. This summarizes everything we have learnt and dealt with in the first chapter. We are going to go over it quickly, and then, we are going to start with the next chapter.

> *A Critical Viewpoint:*
>
> *As it is stated at the beginning of this research, the reason behind browsing all the above proposed techniques of analyzing learners' errors is to achieve a better understanding of the frequent difficulties that students face in the process of learning a second or a foreign language, particularly, in developing writing skills.*

So, they pay a special attention to writing.

The aim is to understand our students mistakes in a better way.

> *These techniques may reveal the reliability of the teaching materials, as well as the effectiveness of the teaching methods. So, our aim is to provide learners with the suitable devices to improve their performance in the target language.*

When they suggest new ways for students to correct their mistakes, they want students to improve their performance in the second language.

To conclude all what is said about the concept of analyzing learners' errors, it is clear that this idea has been far from being accepted before 1960s, and rather undesired. After this date, views have changed, in the sense that linguists became interested in studying the errors produced by learners and considered them systematic. The studies are made on the basis of the contrastive analysis between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language, <u>considering the mother tongue interference to be the major source of errors</u>.

So, contrastive analysis considers the mother tongue of the learners to be the major source of the errors.

The discussion about these errors has witnessed a radical development with the statement of the Error Analysis hypothesis, which focused not only on the mother tongue interference, but also on several factors such as social, psychological, and other factors. Linguists start postulating various techniques to apply this hypothesis. The Error Analysis theory is still used by many linguists despite the evolution of contrastive linguistics with its new interests such as the pragmatic and textual factors, and the modern techniques it proposes to make an analysis of learners' error.

Here, they are making a comparison between the error analysis theory and the contrastive analysis theory.

<u>**The error analysis theory**</u> focuses on factors such as <u>**social, psychological,**</u> and other factors.

<u>**The contrastive analysis theory**</u> focuses on the <u>**pragmatic**</u> and <u>**textual factors**</u>.

This is important to remember.

Chapter Two

Sources of Errors

Generally speaking, linguists who adopt the Error Analysis hypothesis share the same following points concerning the sources of errors:

What are the sources of errors according to the error analysis theory?

A- Mother tongue interference or language transfer, …

The transfer might be negative or positive. When you transfer an element form your mother tongue to the target language successfully, which means that this structure does exist in the target language, then we call this a *positive transfer*.

When you take a certain structure and apply it in the target language in a wrong way, then this is something we call *negative transfer*.

> ***… where the habits and rules of the native language of the learner interfere and prevent him from acquiring the rules of the target language.***

In Arabic, we know that, for example, the adjective comes after the noun like in (بيوتٌ جميلةٌ). Maybe, the student wants to say to the same phrase in English. They might end up saying ***"houses beautifuls"***. Here, the student made two mistakes. One of them is related to the order, and the other one is related to pluralizing. In English, adjectives cannot be pluralized.

> ***This factor can be seen clearly on the semantic level, when the learner tries to realize in the target language the semantic features of his message in the same way as in his native language.***

We can talk about the literal translation here. Sometimes, you want to say something in the target language, but you fail to use the appropriate words, so you end up having something that we call literal translation.

> ***B- Some kinds of errors result from the nature of the written samples collected to be the data for the analysis.***

How can the text that we have be a source of errors?

Student: Maybe, it would be a source of errors if it was translated in a wrong way.

Professor: Exactly! The text, itself, may contain errors. The errors may be the result of wrong translation.

> ***C- Since the learning process extends over time, some errors may result from the partial knowledge which students have of the target language.***

For example, imagine a student who is in the third grade. Maybe, they would start learning about the plural in English. As a beginning, you can tell your student that in order to make a word plural, you have to add an -s. We have a lot of exceptions. The third grader might come across

some words that do not follow the rule. This student, right now, has a partial knowledge of the bigger rule.

قد يرتكب الطالب أخطاءً كونه لا يعلم كل القاعدة فمن الممكن أن يصادف كلمات لا تنطبق عليها هذه القاعدة.

> *D- The element of choice is considered one of the sources of errors. In this case the learner faces difficulties in categories where choices exist only in the target language and not in his native language.*

Maybe, you have more than one way to say something or to make a word plural. Sometimes, you have multiple uses of a specific tense, but you do not have these multiple uses in your mother tongue language.

> *E- Overgeneralization of the rules of the target language is considered a source of learners' errors.*

Overgeneralization of the rules means (تعميم القواعد).

For example, I tell my students that when they want to make the verb in the simple past tense, they have to add -ed. A student may overgeneralize the rule and use it with all verbs such as eated, drinked, etc. Where does this overgeneralization come from?

> *This factor also includes:*
>
> *1) Ignorance of rule restrictions*

The student does not know that we have some verbs that do not follow the general rule.

> *2) Incomplete application of rule*

The student does not know the full rule.

> *3) False concepts*

False concepts means (مفاهيم خاطئة).

تأتي المفاهيم الخاطئة من كون المدرس لم يعطي الطلاب القاعدة بشكلٍ كاملٍ أو من كونه لم يخبرهم بوجود حالاتٍ شاذةٍ.

> *F- Another source of errors is related to the nature (psychology) of the learner and the learning strategy he adopts.*

We said that some students may take a long period of time to say an utterance because they want to make sure that each word they say is accurate and correct and that they do not have any problems with anything they want to produce. This is, actually, related to the psychology of your learner. They do not want to be embarrassed.

> **G- There are certain skills of the target language, whether they are lexical or grammatical, that are inherently difficult to learn.**

إذًا، لدينا صعوبة في بعض التراكيب اللغوية سواءً على مستوى القواعد أو الكلمات.

> *Items of this kind generate errors because they turn to be fossilizable and consequently the learner cannot master them. This factor is described by linguists as consisting of features related to the nature of the target language.*

Some structures are difficult to be mastered.

Tell me about some of the features in your L2 that you found difficult to learn and master. Maybe, prepositions are some of them. Prepositions are crazy! We do not know whether to use with, up, on, etc. What else?

Student: Comparative.

Professor: Yes, it is like "as great as" or "as difficult as".

Student: Sometimes, it is hard to know the part of speech you should use.

Professor: You mean the derivations. So, for example, it is difficult to get a noun from an adjective, and vice versa.

Student: Sometimes, the noun and the adjective are the same.

Professor: Exactly! So, some rules are difficult to master. Give me examples in Arabic.

طالبة: التمييز بين الضمة وتنوين الضم.

الأستاذة: ولدينا أيضًا درس العدد والمعدود (يخالف ويوافق ☺).

طالبة: همزة الوصل والقطع.

Professor: So, there are sources of errors related to the nature of the language.

> **H- Transfer of training or the teaching strategies is responsible for some of learners' errors.**

What do you think?

Student: Teacher, sometimes, do affect their students.

Professor: Exactly! For example, I pronounce a word in a certain way because my teacher at school taught us to pronounce it in this way, but it might turn out to be wrong.

On the other side, we have some great teachers who influence their students in a good way, and they would correct for some teachers their pronunciation.

Some teachers ask their students to write the meaning of each and every word in the text above the words. This is, actually, turned out to be bad because, in a way or another, the students fail to understand the text without the translation being given. They fail to think the same way people think in English.

Student: A teacher may make you love the subject or not.

Professor: Yes.

> *I- Other factors that cause learners to commit errors are related to age, social and background factors, modality, intelligence, and maturity.*

Sometimes, **_age_** plays a role. It is common that children learn faster and more successfully than adult learners.

How can your **_social background_** affect the way you learn English?

Student: In some families, there might be a member or some members that speak English, and this would make it easy for the children to learn it.

In other families, there might not be any member that speaks English. They might not be able to teach their children English or help them in learning it because they are unfamiliar with it.

Professor: Exactly! So, the parents may not be able to provide help for their children when they want to learn the English subject at school. If they were poor, they would not be able to afford a tutor; *a private teacher,* to come and teach their children. Maybe, the child will have a very little idea about the subject he is taking at school. Maybe, he would not love this subject.

We have also factors like **_modality, intelligence_** and **_maturity._**

What do we mean by modality? For example, the father knows how to speak this language or he is good at this subject, so the children may love this subject.

> *The difference between the techniques proposed by the Error Analysis hypothesis and the contrastive linguistics on this level of study lies in the fact that the latter considers the mother tongue interference or language transfer to be the main source of errors, and depending on this principle they develop the various ways to analyze the written works. Whereas the former takes all the above mentioned sources when any analysis is to be made.*

The latter is contrastive analysis.

This is a repetition.

The Models of Analysis

The major steps for any model of error analysis are the following:

1- Data collection

What do you do when you want to analyze a text? First, you collect data.

2- Description of errors

Second, you need to identify the errors and describe them.

3- Explanation of errors

Third, you have to explain the sources of errors.

Linguists agree on the previous mentioned steps, and also on the conditions that should be considered in collecting the data which are represented by:

1- The size of the sample

The first condition is the size of the sample. Is it big enough to make a general statement?

2- The medium to be sampled

This is the second condition.

3- The homogeneity of the sample taking into account the learners' characteristics such as age, stage of development and motivation.

Homogeneity means (التجانس). For example, if the sample is about students, then all the students should be of the same level. If you have students from different levels, then of course, they would not make the same mistakes.

We should take into account the learners' characteristics such as age, stage of development *(i.e., level)* and motivation; why they are learning the language. Actually, the motivation is a key factor. There is a difference between a student who is obliged to learn the language and a student who is learning the language just because they want to improve their level. There is a difference in the level of motivation between these two types of learners.

The points of difference between researchers arise from the techniques they adopt for describing and explaining errors:

1- People who adopt the Error Analysis hypothesis develop techniques that depend on describing and explaining errors found in the written work in relation to the reconstructed text or sentences in the target language. However, within this stage there are also other differences because:

A. Some researchers are interested in the semantic aspect of language, as with Kardaleska.

B. Others are concerned with the social and cognitive aspects, like Myles.

C. Whereas there are people who prefer to focus on the grammatical and lexical aspects, such as Harste and Blakesley.

So, the method that the researcher adopts influences the results.

In this respect, it can be said that each of Corder's model of analysis, which depends on dividing the description of errors into superficial and deep, taking into consideration the linguistic element as well as the psychological and social elements, …

In his classification of errors, Corder said that some errors are superficial and some are deep.

Superficial Errors Vs. Deep Errors

Superficial errors do not affect the message, while deep errors prevent the reader or the listener from understanding the idea.

I will give you examples.

o *I want to learn the English.*

The message is still clear, but there is a mistake. This mistake is called a superficial mistake.

o *I could not come to class because I had Cairo envelopes.*

This mistake prevents me from getting the message, so this is a deep mistake.

Skip the rest of the paragraph. Also, skip the next paragraph.

Now, go to page 52. We talked about researchers who adopt the error analysis theory. Now, we will talk about researchers who adopt contrastive analysis theory.

> *2. On the other hand, linguists who adopt the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis tend to describe and explain errors depending on a previous contrastive study they make between the native language of the learner and the target language.*

They make a comparison between the two languages.

> *This study takes into consideration all language aspects. Also researchers differ in the techniques they use for making a contrastive analysis:*
>
> *a. Some follow the traditional way of choosing a feature in the target language and searching for its equivalent in the native language of the learner.*

For example, I want to talk about the past tense in English. I make a comparison between the past tense in both English and Arabic.

I say that we have regular and irregular verbs in English. Also, I say under the past, we have simple past, past progressive, past perfect and past perfect progressive.

In Arabic, we just have (الزمن الماضي).

For example, in English, we use the past perfect for the action that happened first in the past, and we use the simple past for the action that happened next. We do not have past perfect in Arabic.

> *b. Others prefer to use translation in order to collect as many features of the two languages as possible.*

Others prefer to use translation because they can focus on more than one feature of the two languages. For example, on the grammatical aspect, I can focus on more than one tense, plural form, adjectives, etc.

> *c. While another group focuses on the use of the computer corpora in making the contrastive analysis.*

We talked about this previously.

> *The following is an explanation of the way a text is analyzed in the case of adopting the Error Analysis hypothesis:*
>
> *The analyst tends to collect the written samples, taking into consideration all the conditions required.*

The teacher takes into consideration all the conditions required. For example, the time should be enough, the class should be quiet, and the students should be of the same level and age.

> *Then, he will describe the errors in terms of overt and covert, and identify the errors and ignore the mistakes.*

Overt means superficial, and *covert* means deep.

Again, they talk about the difference between an error and a mistake. What is the difference between them?

When you make an error, you do NOT know the rule. Someone may have partial knowledge of the rule of making a verb in the past tense. They might add -ed for all verbs. They might say *"I eated an apple."* This is an error because I have not taught them the rule yet.

When you make a mistake, you know the rule, but you fail to apply it.

If I, as a teacher, gave the student the full rule of the past tense and they write *"I eated an apple,"* then this is a mistake.

> *identify the errors and ignore the mistakes*

Here, we are talking about an error analysis researcher. The researchers identify the errors and ignore the mistakes because they want to know the sources of the errors.

If you are a teacher, you identify the mistakes and ignore the errors.

> *After that, he will explain the errors of the learner on the lexical aspect, the grammatical aspect, the contextual aspect, etc. taking into account the various sources of errors.*

Is the error because of the overgeneralization? Is it because the learner uses a similar structure from their native language? Is the learner applying a rule from their native language?

They take into consideration the 9 sources of errors we talked about.

> *At the end he will be able to achieve a better understanding of the difficulties that learners face by evaluating the quality and seriousness of errors.*

This is how a researcher makes an error analysis.

> *On the other hand, linguists who adopt the contrastive analysis will first make a contrastive study between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language, in order to predict the similarities and differences between them.*

This is the first step.

> *Then, samples of written works are collected under the shared conditions.*

The shared conditions mean the same conditions.

> *Also, errors are described overtly and covertly. When it comes to the explanation of errors, the lexical, the grammatical, the textual and the pragmatic factors will be considered.*

So here, we have four factors to be considered:

1) *The lexical factors*
2) *The grammatical factors*
3) *The textual factors*
4) *The pragmatic factors*

> *What differs is the contrastive study that has been made before, and which will inevitably provide the analyst with more explanation of the errors he will encounter. This way of analysis is extremely useful for teachers so much, …*

Which method is easier?

Student: The second one is easier.

Professor: So, you mean that the first method is more difficult than the second one. The second one is more easier because you know the two languages.

If the researcher is not bilingual, which method would he adopt?

Student: The first one.

Professor: For sure, the first method would be easier for him.

As for me, I think the second method *i.e.,* the contrastive analysis is going to take a lot of time. For sure, you will understand the mistakes and errors better, but I think that only bilingual researchers would do this. The researcher should have a very good understanding of the two languages.

> *This way of analysis is extremely useful for teachers, especially for those who teach English as a foreign language because they will be able to identify the errors easily depending on this contrastive study, and consequently will be able to figure out the difficulties and give their instructions.*

Let us say that your students are from different nationalities. You may not know all their languages. In this case, the first method would be easier for you.

Both methods are useful in certain situations.

Let us say that all the students are Syrian, and the teacher is American. Here, the teacher can use the contrastive analysis hypothesis.

كيف يمكن أن تطبق المعلمة هذه النظرية؟ تقدم لها الجهات المعنية دراسةً حول الفرق بين اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية وعندما تفهم تلك الدراسة، يكون بوسعها أن تسقطها على الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلابها.

Of course, she can also use the first method, but she might not be able to explain all the mistakes and errors.

> *Although all the previous ways of analysis seem useful in pursue of understanding the problems that arise during the process of learning, they still seem traditional and not practical enough to be applied by teachers.*

The book says that these methods are traditional and not practical. They are not practical because they need a lot of time.

Since they are traditional and not practical, what do you suggest in order to understand students' mistakes and errors?

Student: We can create a third method that saves as much effort and time as possible.

Professor: What would that third method be?

The student: We can mix between the two methods.

Student: We can use technology in order to save time and effort.

Professor: In the book, they say:

> *Furthermore, there are languages that have not been studied widely in order to achieve the sought after aim.*

So, some languages have not been studied. This is something that would prevent you from applying these two methods.

> *In the case of our research, there are not so many contrastive studies that have been made between the Arabic language and the English language. That is why a lot of problems face teachers when dealing with errors.*

The book suggests solutions.

The Suggested Solutions

This level of study shows points of difference between linguists. However, the solutions suggested still show difficulty to be applied completely.

Even the suggested solutions have their own problems.

The model of analysis we suggest will, hopefully, be easy and practical for any teacher to apply on his students. At the same time, it provides solution to eliminate learners' errors in the various aspects of language. It is the one stated by Howells, with some modifications, through using the Microsoft Office technology.

The reasons why we choose to support this technique can be summed up in the following points:

They have not told us about the method yet, but they are talking about the advantages of that method. That method was used by Howells.

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1) It is easy and students may like it and even practice it at home.

This is the first advantage.

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2) The use of this way removes the psychological factor that makes students fear to take the risk of putting words on paper.

The exam through the computer is easier for the student.

لن يكون أمام الطالب أحدٌ لذا لن يخاف من أن يرتكب أخطاء. سيكون المتعلم مرتاحًا أكثر عندما يكون المطلوب منه ملء حوار معين بدلاً من وجود شخصٍ أمامه يتبادل معه الحديث.

The student would be relaxed.

This is because when the learner commits errors, either he will be able to correct them himself or the teacher can provide him alone with the suitable instructions.

There is no need to tell the student of their mistakes in front of the whole class.

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3) Many of the lexical, grammatical, and textual errors will be identified by the system,

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While the learner is writing, Word underlines their errors, so the student has the opportunity to correct themselves.

> *so the teacher will have only to concentrate on the content of the work.*

بعد أن يسلّم الطالب العمل، لا يقوم المعلم بالتركيز على الأخطاء كون البرنامج حددها.

This gives the teacher the chance to concentrate on the quality of the ideas.

> *4) The same applies to students who, by getting used to this technology, will be able to discover ways to overcome difficulties in writing, concerning spelling and grammatical rules, for the purpose of giving more interest to the information they have to write.*

When Word corrects the student's errors, then this makes the student takes the risk to make other mistakes knowing that Word would again correct their mistakes. The learner would be more confident to use more good ideas. The student would not be limited just to use simple sentences and simple ideas.

سيكون المتعلم أكثر ثقةً بنفسه ولن يخاف من ارتكاب الأخطاء لأنه يعلم أن البرنامج سيحددها ويصححها.

This would give the learner the opportunity to focus on the quality of their ideas.

> *The application of this model will be on Arab learners. It is divided into three basic phases: the pre-production phase or drafting, which is concerned with the planning to avoid errors,*

In the first phase, you have to draft your work.

> *the production phase or writing*

This is the second phase. It is when you write.

> *and the phase of individual error analysis and identification of linguistic problems.*

This is the third phase.

So, first of all, students have time to plan.

Second of all, they are going to write about the given topic.

Third of all, we are going to have a phase where we can identify our students' mistakes and explain or correct them.

Thank you very much!