

ERRORS AND ERROR ANALYSIS IN TESL: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

It is known that for a number of reasons students of a particular language group will certainly have special difficulties in learning certain features of a second language. Many teachers in Malaysia, for example, who have taught English as a Second Language for some years and marked quite literally thousands of English compositions, have already developed well-based but often impressionistic ideas about those aspects of the English Language that seem to pose recurring problems for the students. These are commonly referred to as "predictable errors". Error analysis is one way to help increase our knowledge of what these "predictable errors" are.

THE UTILITY OF ERROR ANALYSIS

One of the aims of error analysis is to help teachers assess more accurately what remedial work would be necessary for English as a Second Language (ESL) students preparing for an English Language test, so as to help these students avoid the most common errors. An error analysis can also assist ESL teachers consider the answers to such problems as: what aspects of the second language, with regard to their sequencing, are most important in teaching the target language; and what items in the syllabus deserve special emphasis?

The significance of students' errors is presently receiving increasing attention in the field of second language teaching. In recent years error analysis has become a popular method for language teachers to decide on the appropriate items to be include in materials for classroom teaching. The relevance of error analysis to ESL teaching and material preparation makes it a useful area of investigation. Fries (1940) asserted that the general assumption behind language-error counts is that specific items in a particular grammar syllabus need to be selected and to be provided for on "the basis of the errors of school children" and as a consequence, the "first step is to ascertain the rules which are broken."

Error analysis is a basic step in providing the grounds for an assessment of the learner's competence in his use and knowledge of

a second language. Error analysis is vital to the language teacher who needs to know, in advance as far as is possible, the type and importance of the errors a particular group of students would be likely to make, the various causes of such errors and the techniques of correcting them.

The lack of acquaintance with error analysis is often the cause of the language teacher and his students wasting a considerable amount of time before the teacher finally discovers what type of errors his students make; what priorities he should adopt in their correction; and what corrective techniques are the most effective and most appropriate. In the correction of errors, guidelines are essential to help establish a scale of relevant priorities. A lack of acquaintance with error analysis will sometimes cause the teacher to become concerned with insignificant errors and bypass others that are quite important.

Though the employment of error analysis in ESL teaching has been questioned by some language teachers and linguists, it does have certain advantages that the ESL teacher cannot entirely overlook. Error analysis is a means of discovering the differences between the target and native languages and the major areas of difficulty for the students. Writing in *Papers in Language and Language Teaching*, *Stevens (1965)* points out that:

The systematic analysis of recurrent errors, using the categories and techniques of modern linguistics, is a fruitful area for further research. By concentrating on the more obvious points of difficulty, it makes an immediate contribution to the task of language teaching; and by being a partial, limited study it can be completed more rapidly than can full bilingual comparisons. Error analysis is not a substitute for contrastive analysis, but it is a practical alternative ...

SOME GENERAL TYPES OF ERRORS OF MALAYSIAN ESL LEARNERS

In trying to overcome the problem of classroom errors, the ESL teacher's attention is very frequently drawn to contrastive linguistic analysis in which comparisons are made between similar and

dissimilar features of two languages. The general contention is that in such an investigation most of these classroom errors can be predicted through analysis of the differences between the two languages. Not all errors, however, are the result of such similarities and differences. No teacher of ESL can deny that there are some errors that are analogous to those made by native speakers. There are also errors that become an inevitable part of the learning process in which the ESL learner is constantly trying out new and different forms both of speech and of writing.

There are several general types of recurrent errors that can be observed in a Malaysian ESL learner's acquisition of a second language. For example, such a learner often makes one type of error that he claims to be a "slip" in the usage of a single word or a carelessness in the spelling of a word in a sentence. These are usually errors arising from faulty pronunciation. Examples of these errors, which are innumerable, are:

- (a) The headmaster and I went **together** (together)
- (b) Malik won the first **price** in the race. (prize)
- (c) The road was very **croudded**. (crowded)

Many errors made by the Malaysian ESL learner are also related to his confusion with structural words which often results in the wrong use of prepositions. Thus, the learner either omits the prepositions, or uses them wrongly, or inserts them where they are not required. The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) Zarina has been sick **from** Sunday. (since)
- (b) The teacher discussed **about** the trip. (omit about)
- (c) After the trip we attended our work, (**to** omitted)

The Malaysian ESL learner, however, does not only encounter trouble with the wrong usage of prepositions as shown in the preceding paragraph; he also commits errors as a result of his confused use of structural verbs, verbals, concord and tenses. The learner's failure to discriminate correctly between the English conventions regarding tense usage and 'tense sequences' causes errors of the following type:

- (a) Maimon walked too fast and he **cannot** follow her. (could not)
- (b) My father made me **did** the hard work. (do)
- (c) Each of the students who was present **have** several tickets. (had)

A student who has difficulty with the construction of sentence patterns is likely to make errors as shown in the following sentences:

- (a) Why he went to school?
- (b) Daud asked what is your address.
- (c) He told me how much must they pay for their car.

Many of these errors, due to wrong or faulty construction of sentence patterns, can be further classified into different fine categories of error. The sentences (a) and (b) above are best defined as errors in question word order.

INTERLANGUAGE ERRORS

There are errors caused by the interference of the learner's mother tongue, and these are termed interlanguage errors. Sometimes interference from Bahasa Malaysia is quite evident in some errors in word order and sentence construction. An example of word order error is the placing of the direct object after an adverbial modifier as in: "She saw there several people from Penang" instead of "There she saw several people from Penang". Another example of word order error involves the placing of a temporal modifier immediately before a local one, as for example: "Ahmad returned last week from Ipoh," instead of "Last week Ahmad returned from Ipoh", or "Ahmad returned from Ipoh last week". Other examples of interference errors are represented by the following sentences:

- (a) The police has many cases to solving.
- (b) It is therefore because he has failed his test.
- (c) Using of electricity in village benefits all the villagers.

INTRALINGUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL ERRORS

Richards (1971) points out that there is a different class of errors observed in the acquisition of English as a Second Language. He calls this class of errors "intralingual and developmental errors" and these, he asserts, frequently occur regardless of the learner's language background. Examples of these intralingual and developmental errors are:

- (a) Ali didn't saw the man.
- (b) The children made him to do it.
- (c) My friend coming from Kuantan.

Richards contends that intralingual and developmental errors do not necessarily reflect the learner's inability to separate two languages but that such errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage in his effort to study English as a Second Language. Richards (1971) and Cook (1969) believe that the origins of intralingual and developmental errors are found (i) within the structure of the English Language itself, and (ii) through reference to the strategy by which a second language is acquired and taught.

One kind of intralingual error that very frequently occurs in the Malaysian ESL learner's written work is the use of the auxiliary in a negative statement of the simple past form. This is a case of over-marking of the tense, and the following are examples of this type of error:

- (a) My sister did not worked on that day.
- (b) Ali didn't saw the man.
- (c) I didn't knew the answer.

This kind of error is one that contrastive analysis does not generally predict nor does contrastive analysis give the ESL teacher any explanation for it. It is a class of error that is sometimes difficult to eradicate though it is an error one might expect from anyone learning English as a Second Language. At times when the teacher believes that the correct form has finally been mastered by his students, the error has the tendency to show itself again; sometimes it coexists with the correct form.

Intralingual and developmental errors were defined by Richards (1971) as "typical of systematic errors in English usage of speakers of particular tongues." These are recurring mistakes that may persist from week to week or from one year to the next with any ESL learner. Corder (1967) states that errors that are representative of the recurring errors of ESL learners, "cannot be described as mere failures to memorise a segment of language, or as occasional lapses in performance due to memory limitations, fatigue, and the like".

The following are examples of these developmental errors:

- (a) She is **standing** there since this morning. (has been standing)
- (b) Ramli **had written** this letter yesterday. (wrote)
- (c) An accident **was happened** on the road. (happened)

Errors of this type are chiefly due to faulty comprehension of rules already learned. In (a): She is standing there since this morning, both the continuous and the present tenses are used. In (b) Ramli had written this letter yesterday, the learner has probably hypothesized that the action completed in the past has become more than "simple past" and thus he has used **had written** instead of **wrote**. In (c) An accident was happened on the road, the form **was** has been hypothesized by the learner as a marker of the past tense.

Developmental errors can sometimes be due to the ESL learner's application of his "common sense" and the use of a statement of fact, especially when the solution to his doubt is strengthened by his native usage. In the case of "Malaysian English", a sentence like:

"You do not yet answer my second question,"

may be a case where the learner has used that "common sense" to try to express an action that he sees as unperformed and therefore is not completed. Besides, to say "You do not yet answer my second question," as the learner sees it, is perfectly correct by his native usage. Other examples are the responses to Yes/No questions:

- (a) Yes, I didn't do the job.
(No, I didn't do the job.)
- (b) Yes, Su Heng does not like cakes.
(No, Su Heng does not like cakes.)
- (c) Yes, it isn't easy to learn English.
(No, it isn't easy to learn English.)

OVER-GENERALIZATION OF ERRORS

Faulty generalization or over-generalization involves a case where a deviant structure has been constructed by the ESL learner based on his experience of other structures in the target language. This is one of the major causes of intralingual errors, and some typical examples are:

- (a) My sister **live** in Bentong. (lives)
- (b) I like him and he **like** me too. (likes)
- (c) Malik does not **asks** the man for the car. (ask)
- (d) That villager cannot **works** on Sunday. (work)
- (e) Last week we **climb** Gunung Tahan. (climbed)

Richards (1971) assumes that over-generalization "may be the result of the learner reducing his linguistic burden" and in such sentences as (a) and (b) above "with the omission of the third person -s, over-generalization removes the necessity for concord, thus relieving the learner of considerable effort". In Bahasa Malaysia both sentences (a) and (b) are correct and the errors occur because the learner might have fallen back on the use of knowledge of his native language to help construct those sentences in English. Or the Malaysian ESL learner might have mistakenly made an over-generalization. As Duskova (1969) points out, in English "all grammatical persons take the same zero verbal ending", except for the third person singular in the present tense. Duskova also explains that the omission of the third person -s marker "may be accounted for by the heavy pressure of all other endless forms".

The deviant structures which occur in sentences (c), (d) and (e) above are typically the result of over-generalization. The Malaysian

ESL learner has mistakenly over-generalized the use of the third person -s marker for the verbs, producing sentences like:

- (c) Malik does not **asks** the man for the car. (ask)
- (d) That villager cannot **works** on Sunday. (work)

In (c) the error lies in the use of the wrong form of the verb after do. In (d) the student used the wrong form of the verb after a modal verb. Sentence (e), Last week we climb Gunung Tahan, is the result of the absence of the -ed marker in Bahasa Malaysia. The notion of past action in the native language is usually indicated lexically in the sentences or stories or written passages. The -ed marker in the English language thus sometimes carries no meaning to the Malaysian ESL learner, especially in narration.

In encountering difficulties with sentence construction the ESL learner usually has sets of patterns in his mind but he is insecure or uncertain in allotting these patterns according to the correct English usage. The rules, that the learner might have, are applied to the best of his knowledge so that his constructions are "correct" in themselves but incorrect in that particular setting. This failure to learn the appropriate conditions under which certain rules apply is another major cause of intralingual errors. This ignorance of rule restrictions is possibly the cause of the following errors:

- (a) Sham told to me the news. (omit to)
- (b) It is time for going. (to go)
- (c) One of the teachers have a big car. (has)
- (d) Maniam and I have no books to read them. (omit them)
- (e) They decided to discuss about the plan. (omit about)

The sentence, **Sham told to me the news**, has been wrongly constructed based on the learner's analogy of the use of the pattern: said to me. The error in **It is time for going**, comes about as a result of the learner making use of a previously acquired rule in the construction of patterns such as: This paper is for writing on. The error in (c), **One of the teachers have a big car**, is the result of the learner's application of the pattern: Teachers have cars. The construction of **Maniam and I have no books to read them** is based

on the transitive pattern where the word **read** requires an object. The misuse of the English preposition in **They decided to discuss about the plan**, is the result of the learner encountering a particular preposition with one type of verb, and attempting by analogy to use the same preposition with a similar verb. Therefore, a sentence like, **They talked about their project**, leads to the faulty construction: **They decided to discuss about the plan**.

Other than over-generalization and the ignorance of the rule restrictions, the incomplete application of rules is another cause of intralingual errors. This is especially seen in the construction of patterns of question and statement forms. Sometimes a statement form may be used by the ESL learner as a question, or a question word may be added to the statement form. Examples of these errors that have been caused by the incomplete application of rules are:

- (a) We do not know where is the police station.
- (b) What work I must do?
- (c) I know that are they playing.

While discussing the systematic difficulty in the use of questions, Richards (1971) observed that the ESL learner who is primarily interested in communication "can achieve quite efficient communication without the need for mastering more than the elementary rules of question usage." As a consequence, Richards added, the "motivation to achieve communication may exceed motivation to produce grammatically correct sentences." Richards' observation seems to fit in well with H.V. George's (1972) observation that the motivation to observe and correct errors by the ESL teacher and student does not correspond to the motivation to improve performance and that "the effort of working through 'remedial tasks' is not associated with a reward in terms of effectiveness of communication." Turning to "Malaysian English" George points out a case where "a teacher may complete a drill on question word order in which **Where are you going?** occurs a score of times, then when the bell rings and a mischievous learner moves to the door, the teacher himself calls out **Ali, where you are going?**" It is not surprising therefore for Richards to conclude that "despite extensive teaching of both the question and the statement forms, a grammatical question form may never become part of competence in the second language" and that "redundancy may be an explanatory factor" for it.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that interference from the native language is a source of difficulty in second-language learning. Many of the "common errors", however, can be accounted for as errors that have been derived from the strategies used by the learner in his continual struggle to acquire the second language. Many of the errors could also be derived from mutual interference of items within the target language.

Peter Strevens, in a paper delivered at the GAL Meeting in Stuttgart, November, 1969, described the study of error analysis as "a crucial component in our search for adequate theories of language learning and language teaching." Error analysis in TESL, then, is a step in supplementing the teacher's awareness of the ESL learners' partial knowledge of the second language.

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IN SEARCH OF A RESEARCH: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Academic research takes on an exciting and enriching aspect for most of us in love with English language teaching. The more zealous teachers are constantly in search of a research.

Research is a point of view, an attitude of enquiry of a frame of mind. Research asks questions which have hitherto not been asked and it seeks to answer them by following a fairly definite procedure.

The ordinary classroom teacher who is most qualified for research is least concerned with it, as he is already too occupied with the humdrum work of teaching and correcting his students' work. Generally, he lacks the social incentives that can inspire him to this task of dedication. Perhaps he is frightened of research. He thinks that only learned scholars and university professors, living in secluded corners of the academic world, free from the fret and the fever of life, are capable of research.

Little does this teacher realize that if most teachers develop a habit of recording their crude experiences and discussing them among their friends as well as in conferences organized even at local levels, the world of the students in the classroom would be immensely richer by these teachers' experiences. If the teacher's experiences are based on the deliberate application of principles to classroom situations, on the deduction of principles from an adequate sample of data, on follow-up work which he can pursue to a very limited degree for about ten to twenty years, on tested results, and on his suspended judgement which puts a check on too hasty generalizations, and if his experiences are based on "a willing suspension of disbelief" in scientific methods, they will prove more effective than any research work based solely on some elaborate statistical operations.

PROBLEMS FOR RESEARCH

Practical difficulties in the classroom, discrepancies overlooked by others, analogy, synthesis of previous research, and cross-

fertilization of teaching techniques and ideas, are some of the main sources of problems for research. Experiments which have failed, techniques which have been applied to English as a native language, methods of language teaching used in different countries, English language curricula that are essentially based on the needs of the students and of the country, as well as techniques of evaluation, have to be reconsidered from time to time from the points of view of research, because sociological and technological changes today tremendously affect the English language and its classroom methodology.

If a teacher develops in himself a questioning attitude, a healthy scepticism towards accepted values, and a doubting psychology with respect to traditional objectives, methods and techniques of evaluation, he can handle a number of current problems in English language teaching. Each of these problems is discussed briefly. These problems, however, are not presented in any order of importance or preference.

Predicting learning difficulties – In the process of analysing how students learn a language, learning difficulties can be detected. Generally, to predict the learning difficulties of a student on the basis of structural, lexical, and phonetic analyses of English and the native language of the student, it is essential to discover those points of difference in respect of vocabulary, word-order, sound, stress or intonation.

It is sometimes necessary to assess the learning difficulties of items in a specified syllabus. An indication of the type of difficulty of each language structure taught can help to reveal the students' mastery of the target language, and the items which pose too many difficulties may have to be revised or taken out of the syllabus.

ESL textbooks and readers – How should one prepare a set of graded language textbooks based on the pre-calculated difficulty indices of structures, pronunciation, and spelling, as well as suited to the ages, abilities, aptitudes and social needs of the students? The problem in this area is to frame textbooks which will be human and yet based on sound linguistic analyses and evaluative techniques.

What should be the purpose of ESL readers? Should they help provide drill situations or should they develop comprehension of

language material learnt in prose lessons or should they develop the students' mastery of the language structures already learnt? Or perhaps they should aim at none of these but aim at moving the students to humour and delight, at broadening their horizons of interests, and at making them visit fairy lands. In short, should the purpose of ESL readers be social communication?

Language skills – These have not yet been properly analysed as far as ESL teaching in Malaysia is concerned. The problems in this area involve seeking answers to questions such as:

- (a) What is the number of skills which a student may reasonably be expected to master in a specific language class at a specific level of proficiency?
- (b) What specific skills are involved in developing word-consciousness, in organizing ideas, and in writing essays at advanced levels of learning?
- (c) What specific skills are involved in more specialized use of the English language such as spontaneous speech, academic writing or literary translations? How can these skills be developed?
- (d) What skills are involved in listening and reading comprehension or in appreciating a piece of work written in the English language, and how can they be developed?

Errors – Error analysis studies are not uncommon in English language teaching. However, in the treatment of errors in the ESL classroom, answers have to be found to questions such as:

- (a) What types of errors drop out at different maturity levels of ESL students?
- (b) What types of errors are most persistent in different ESL classes or levels of proficiency?
- (c) What is the place of incidental and deliberate teaching in the prevention and cure of errors?
- (d) What types of errors are most influenced by native languages?

Correction of errors – One of the more common questions asked about correction of errors concerns the effect of the correction of mistakes upon the students in the learning process. One of the results of the research that can be anticipated is that unless accompanied by an adequate follow-up requiring, on the part of the individual students, the drilling in of the correct items in which mistakes have occurred, mere crossing out of the mistakes does very little towards eliminating them. If that is so, the technique of correction has to be changed. That leads one to ask: Is it possible to mark a few errors for a month or so and then to proceed on to mark other types of error? If so, what errors should first be marked and corrected? What kinds of mistakes can be left for students' self-correction?

Composition – In the teaching of composition in the language classroom it is necessary to determine if the grading of composition pieces should be in terms of the length of compositions, the length of sentences, complexity of details or the variety of sentence structures. It might be a good idea to prepare a list of topics suited to the interests of the students at different levels of proficiency. Teachers' analyses of students' abilities involved in writing a dialogue, a short story, or different types of essays and letters, will be useful with a view to improving the students' writing tasks in the language classroom.

Vocabulary – In trying to enrich students' knowledge of the target language, one often asks: How should one prepare a list of the minimum number of content words for different students with different levels of language proficiency? Some teachers argue that with the advent of the structural approach, the age of vocabulary selection and grading is over. But in the teaching of English, the pronunciation difficulties in different linguistic areas, the use of loan words, technical words, and the semantic implications of content words all need further research.

Spelling – Among the spelling problems of ESL students are those that involve specific factors contributing to the spelling difficulties. What are these factors? More research would be necessary to pinpoint exactly what these factors are. What classroom exercises would be useful particularly in helping students learn to spell properly in the target language? Are

language games, for example, helpful in developing spelling ability of ESL or EFL learners? This is an area that needs further research.

Examinations – The examination system should be consistent with the curriculum. It should be looked upon as a means of testing students' achievements and improving upon the techniques of classroom teaching. The results of an examination should indicate if the desired objectives have been achieved and whether adequate learning experiences have been provided.

If a structural syllabus is used, oral tests have to be devised. Hence, tests are required, for example, to measure a student's ability to recognise and differentiate between such contrasting sounds as those in /pen/, /pin/ or /kot/, ko:t/, which measure the student's ability to make such sounds as may not exist in his native language, and which measure his consciousness of stress and intonation. The other problem in this area is to devise adequate tests which measure the student's oral production of sentences in carefully manipulated situations.

In Malaysia today, there are no proper diagnostic tests in English which actually diagnose ESL students' difficulties. Studies are needed of (a) variation in the performance due to the nature of the test used; (b) adequate mapping of the whole area of difficulty; (c) frequency of appearance necessary for adequate testing of an element; and (d) approximation in the test to actual language situations in speaking and writing.

Objective tests of English language structures based on learning-difficulty are badly needed. What is much more significant here from the teachers' point of view is to construct tests and language exercises that could measure the ESL students' mastery of those sequences that are different from those of the native languages since testing of isolated structures would be rather unnatural.

Classroom research – In any class of students with different levels of language proficiency, a primary concern is that of provision that can be made to meet the needs of dull, average, and bright students. A technique of grading the language materials as elementary, intermediate, and advanced may be appropriate. However, closely associated with this problem is the principle of repetition. It has to be determined how many times a language item

should be repeated in order to ensure permanent learning. How many repetitions do average, dull, and bright students require? The presentation of the language material required skill, art, tact, and patience on the part of the teacher. It has been seen that, in the early stages, less proficient students love to produce sentence patterns orally, but after a few lessons their enthusiasm subsides. They become disinterested in mechanical drills.

Here are a few problems that can be dealt with by experienced teachers: What extra incentives should be provided to students in order to remove drudgery and to quicken the pace of learning? Sometimes a little praise, sometimes cooperation in the form of group learning, sometimes competitions, and on yet other occasions the gratification of their curiosity to know about the people of other lands, about the flora and fauna of other countries, about new scientific inventions that can awe and stun them, will sustain their interest in language learning. But all these pose another problem of balancing the dry bones of the English language against the juicy, racy, and delicious flesh of the subject matter. And then it is to be determined whether the classroom situations of language learning are consistent with mental processes used by students in real life situations. For example, do students actually gain more knowledge when they are required to convert direct into indirect speech, or statement patterns into question patterns?

SOME RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

1. **Data from students' activities** – One of the simplest and the most effective methods of research is to observe students in the ordinary course of life, particularly in an academic environment. One can observe students' interest in reading, writing, and drawing; the way they comprehend a piece of English prose or the way they develop word-consciousness and the way they master spelling in the target language.
2. **Data from students' production** – The written work of students can be utilized in tackling problems such as the determination of vocabulary growth among different levels of students. Data from students' written output can help provide answers to questions like: How does the choice of words, phrases, and clauses reflect the qualities of the

students' written proficiency in the English language? What elements of composition are indicative of the students' maturity of thoughts?

3. **Data from specially arranged situations** – The administration of spelling tests, diagnostic tests, and tests in fundamentals of English are some of the means of observing students in specially arranged situations. Research using control and experimental techniques can be rewarding too. For example, in a research project an experimental group could be taught a structural syllabus while a control group was taught the translation and the Direct Method and the results were used to compare the two groups of students. The structural syllabus served as an experimental factor. In such a project both the groups selected should be similar in sex, age, social background, intelligence as measured by a standardized test, and in teacher-student relationship, in order that the data obtained be relevant and realistic.

The use of incentives, classroom size, the play-way method, the separate and "together" methods of teaching homonyms and the sequence technique of composition teaching, can be experimented with by the control group technique. Inferences drawn from controlled situations will generally be valid if they are applicable to real life situations.

4. **The use of questionnaire** – The use of questionnaire to elicit data from low proficiency ESL students is of doubtful value. However, questionnaire can be used in pooling the experiences of teachers and opinions of experts, who often notoriously differ in almost all aspects of English language teaching. It is relevant to note that this technique will not yield fruitful results if the questions are biased and reflect the opinions of the framer of the questionnaire. Most of the questions must not be of the "yes" and "no" type.

5. **Compiling case histories** – A teacher wishing to begin research in education might well begin by writing the learning history of a few selected students. Reading and writing disabilities of some students learning English can be diagnosed by the compilation of case histories.

The techniques discussed above do not exhaust those that exist in the field of research today. There are many other techniques which are both useful and pragmatic for the language teachers to adopt.

The counting of learners' errors for diagnostic and remedial teaching of English, the use of the interview technique in studies relating to capitalization and punctuation, the maintenance of cumulative records, the construction and standardization of good objective tests, follow-up techniques, the use of cheap and handy audio-visual aids, and the use of linguistics in the classroom are all helpful in conducting research in problems associated with English language teaching.

CONCLUSION

This presentation is mainly concerned with the posing of English language teaching problems. Asking questions which gives one the pleasure of ignorance, is easier than answering them.

Nonetheless, the problems posed indicate some of the current research needs in the teaching of English as a Second Language in Malaysia. It is hoped that this presentation has given teachers some ideas of research potentials which they could work upon and eventually help contribute to the effective teaching and learning of the English language.

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SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

For a teaching program that is sensitive to the precise needs of the learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), linguists have made use of contrastive analysis as a basis for sequencing and for developing teaching materials. A contrastive analysis entails an extensive and difficult study contrasting the phonology and the structures of the first language with that of the second. It is usually a project that requires highly trained linguists. Another practical method of gaining the information required to prepare classroom materials for ESL teaching is error analysis. Error analysis will take time but it can be attempted by teachers with limited or little linguistic training.

SEQUENCING THE TEACHING MATERIALS

After an error analysis has been made, sequencing comes in. Sequencing determines which teaching items should be presented before others. It is a process in which numerous variables have to be taken into account. In choosing the teaching items and sequencing them for a course of study the errors committed in the students' compositions are to be made use of in the development of materials that will enable the students to develop a correct habit. These items are arranged in such a sequence as to lead the students systematically through the whole range of the situations to which these patterns have practical relevance.

Although there is no definite answer as to how sequencing should be done, an examination of the types of recurrent errors, made possible by error analysis, can help suggest the proper sequence to adopt in ESL teaching. For example, if most of the errors in word order concern the question form, these errors like **Why she was there then?** and **What he is doing now?** suggest that the appropriate sequence would be to teach the positive form of any statement before the question form. Hence, the teaching of "He is playing." to be followed by "Is he playing?" leading to "Why (where, what, etc.) is he playing?"

Another example is the ESL students' misuse of the English determiners which is not confined mainly to the English articles:

Determiner-errors such as "many question" and "some pupil" could also occur. This implies that it is necessary to impress upon the learner the notion of plurality through the use of the right determiner. Perhaps the determiners can be more effectively taught through contrast in which both the English articles and the determiners "some" and "many" can be taught. For example, the article "a" can be introduced with "some" and "many" through contrasting sentences like:

I want a book.

I want **some** books.

I want **many** books.

Such contrasting sentences can also be made use of in a lesson in picture composition using multiple-picture study (see *sample* (2) on page 113). For example, from the picture-study the teacher can introduce contrasting sentences (with reference to the pictures shown) such as:

The son has a present.

The father has **some** presents.

Father and son have **many** presents.

The teacher can also manipulate further use of **a**, **some** and **many** by presenting such sentences as:

The son has **many** presents.

The son has **some** pencils.

The son has a new bicycle.

SOME SAMPLE EXERCISE FOR ESL TEACHING

The sample exercises given below are intended to help ESL teachers prepare further practice material for use by their ESL learners whose areas of weakness might have been detected through an error analysis.

It is emphasized that the teacher should use the sample exercises made here merely to make up his own teaching material based upon

(a) his knowledge of how much his students have learned, and the vocabulary and grammatical features that have been taught, and (b) the specific difficulties his students have in the ESL classroom. The author recognises the fact that there is no general agreement among teachers regarding the most effective methods to be used in teaching ESL. It is expected of the teacher to use his own critical judgement in making use of the sample exercises given so that he could make his work and teaching suitable to his class.

Sample (1) – Picture composition: single-picture study

At this stage the learners are merely asked to give an oral description of scenes involving one or two figures. Some examples are:

- (a) A newspaper-seller by the roadside.
- (b) Two monkeys climbing up a coconut tree.
- (c) A paḍi-planter ploughing his field.

After several oral lessons the learners may be asked to write their oral descriptions on the piece of paper.

Later, scenes involving more than two figures are given and the learners are asked to express orally in their own words the actions and/or feelings or thoughts in the pictures. A free or guided approach can be adopted here. For the latter the teacher needs to prepare a few contextualised key-questions or he could work out a detailed network of questions that will establish the picture story as a whole. Alternatively the learners can concentrate on presenting an account of the picture story without much guidance from the teacher. Written work may follow after the oral presentation.

Sample (2) – Picture composition: multiple-picture study

Four to six pictures are usually used and the learner can perform the following exercises using the pictures given:

- (a) arranging all the pictures in sequence so that they tell a coherent story, for example:

Picture 1 Father and son are giving each other some presents.

Picture 2 They hug each other.

Picture 3 They are singing.

Picture 4 The son tries out his new bicycle.

Picture 5 The father admires his new pipe and new necktie.

Picture 6 The son has taken all his presents to bed with him.

- (b) giving an oral description of what is happening in the picture story;
- (c) opening "windows" at the bottoms of the pictures to check if the numbers there are arranged in correct sequence;
- (d) reading off captions written in the "windows" at the tops of the pictures. The captions must be complete well-formed sentences.
- (e) writing out the story told by the captions.

Sample (3) – Picture composition: guided language practice

The multiple-picture study will be used but the "normal" expressions in the captions are now to be altered. The teacher can change the verb in the title or in the first sentence, for example from present to past, or he could change the nouns to include the first person singular so that he could furnish the stimulus for an exercise where the learner is indirectly obliged to use different structures while concentrating on describing the picture story. The exercise can be done orally first and then the written work may follow.

Sample (4) – Picture composition: expanding sentences

Oral and written practice work in expanding sentences based on the multiple-picture study or the single picture study can be done with (a) items selected from lists given by the teacher, or (b) items made up by the students. These extra items should best

describe the additional information as being presented in the picture-study. For example,

- (a) The (1) padi-planter is ploughing his (2) field (3)
 - (1) dirty, old; smiling, young.
 - (2) big, green; small, dry.
 - (3) with a new plough; with the help of a buffalo.
- (b) The (1) father and the (2) son are giving each other (3) presents.

Sample (5) – Exercise on unity of subject in simple composition

This could be done in two ways. The first method involves the preparation of original sentences on index cards which are then jumbled up in a box. For example, the following sentences are written each on an index card:

Dogs are clever animals.

I like to take him for a walk.

They live in a hen-house.

I have a big, black dog.

Each lays an egg every morning.

They can catch thieves.

Hens are very useful birds.

His name is Lassie.

My mother has six hens.

The student who gets the box has to sort out the sentences according to the topic. He will recognise that there are two topics – hens and dogs – and he will have to arrange his sentences to make two short compositions, one on dogs and the other on hens. After separating the two topics, further arrangement of the sentences is needed to get them in their best order. Finally, the student writes out the arranged sentences in his book.

The second method involves what is called "dissected paragraphs." A continuous paragraph of five to eight sentences is written down with each sentence on a separate index card. All the sentences are then jumbled up and put into a box. The student is required to rearrange the sentences in the right order. The paragraphs to be "dissected" for this exercise should best be selected from some past lesson in the class reader.

Sample (6) – Guided composition: Paragraph writing

This can be done by providing outlines and model paragraphs. Initially, the outlines are given and the students use them to write their own paragraphs. The students are later invited to compare their own paragraphs with the teacher's model. An example is as given:

Instruction: Use the outline given to write a paragraph on "Crotalus' last fight".

Outline:

- (i) A shot rang out.
 - (a) Crotalus collapsed.
 - (b) He was wounded.
- (ii) Crotalus struggled on the ground.
 - (a) Wriggling, he tried to get up.
 - (b) A second shot rang out.
- (iii) Crotalus fell never to rise again.

Teacher's model:

Bang! Crotalus' raised head crumbled forward. His slimy body instantaneously dropped to the ground. Blood oozed out from the spot where the bullet went through. Valiantly, Crotalus wriggled. He did not want to admit defeat. His gallantry enabled him to make a last stand against the homesteaders. With a surge of determination

and struggling, he tried to raise his body. Another shattering shot rang out. Crotalus gave a jerk and remained motionless. More blood covered his body. He died a heroic death amongst the slain members of his tribe.

Sample (7) - Directed writing

The student reads a short passage after which he performs the exercises that follow the reading. The student is asked to complete some sentences based on the passage read by filling in the blanks with (i) only one word, or (ii) more than one word. The following is an example:

Instruction: (A) Read the passage below:

Kassim arrived at the bank of the river. It was flooded and the currents were very strong. He could not cross the river in his sampan. He turned back and went to Kampung Melayu by a different road.

Instruction: (B) The following sentences are about Kassim's journey. Write the missing word or words in the space.

- (1) The river was too dangerous _____ Kassim _____ cross.
- (2) Because of the strong _____ Kassim's sampan could not cross to the other side.
- (3) Kassim had to go to Kampung Melayu by _____ a different road.
- (4) Kassim was afraid _____ cross the flooded river, _____ he turned back.
- (5) He did not cross the river as he was afraid his boat _____ over-turn.

Sample (8) – Controlled writing

1	2	3	4	5
Heng Anita Ghazali etc.	has been to	Penang Klang Ipoh etc.	but he/she has never been to	New York. Pekan. Raub. etc.

Column (1) contains the names of some of the students in the class. Columns (3) and (5) contain the names of places given by the students themselves. The last few minutes of the lesson are used for writing down a few sentences from the table.

Substitution tables provide rapid practice in sentence structures, grammatical points and the structure of phrases. The structural patterns should normally have been taught before they are practised. Substitution tables can be followed by various exercises in which the learner makes up his own tables on the pattern outlined by the teacher for substituting words in some of the columns. Some examples of the substitution tables that can be used are:

- (i) for practice on two actions in the past; one definite and one continuous:

I was eating my lunch I was running down the road I was talking to my sister I was calling for my dog	when	the police arrived. I saw my teacher. my mother walked up. I heard a scream.
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- (ii) for practice on two actions taking place at the same time in the past:

"Good morning,"	he cried	as he opened the gate.
"Hello,"	he said	as he smiled at her.
"Hi!"	shouted my cousin	as he rushed out.

- (iii) for practice on the use of article before common nouns:

She	goes	to a school to study.
Ahmad	walks	to a hospital for treatment.
Mahsuri	runs	to a market to buy meat.

- (iv) for practice on the use of definite article before nouns:

He	cycles to	the school near Kapar Road.
Linda	walks to	the church with red roof.
Shamsiah	runs to	the station on Harper Street.

Sample (9) – Exercise on the use of the verb "to be" in THERE-sentences

Exercise 1: Match the sentences in Part A with those in Part B.
No. (1) has been done for you.

Part A.

- (1) (b) – Thousands of Malaysian students are studying at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- (2) _____ A huge library is on the UKM campus.
- (3) _____ Two gymnasias are on the western side of the campus.

- (4) _____ Only one student store is on the huge campus.
- (5) _____ Many beautiful trees are at the entrance of the University.
- (6) _____ Several parking lots are at the northern side of UKM.

Part B

- (a) There are two gymnasia on the western side of the campus.
- (b) There are thousands of Malaysian students studying at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- (c) There is a huge library on the UKM campus.
- (d) There are many beautiful trees at the entrance of the University.
- (e) There is only one student store on the huge campus.
- (f) There are several parking lots at the northern side of UKM.

Exercise II. Read the following passage and then fill in the blanks for each sentence that appears below the passage.

Twenty buildings are on the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia campus. There are new and brownish buildings. One of these is First College on the eastern side of the campus. Several thousands of teachers are teaching at U.K.M. One of them is a distinguished professor of chemistry in the country. Another is a well-known biologist teaching in the Department of Biological Research. Several foreign students are at U.K.M. too. There are many Asian scholars working at U.K.M. too. A large and modern library is on the southern end of the campus.

- (1) There _____ a famous biologist at U.K.M.
- (2) There _____ twenty buildings at U.K.M.
- (3) There _____ a huge library on the campus.
- (4) There _____ a college on the eastern side of the campus.
- (5) There _____ several foreign students at U.K.M.
- (6) There _____ several thousands of teachers at U.K.M.

CONCLUSION

The students' varying degrees of proficiency in English can often make it quite difficult for the teacher to determine which new teaching items have to be introduced, which ones need to be re-learned and to be reviewed, and which items have already been well-mastered. One possible solution to this problem is error analysis. The classification and the analysis of the errors in terms of grammatical features will help to provide information that could be used to construct teaching materials pertinent to the specific needs of the ESL learners.

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