ERROR ANALYSIS: NATURE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY
Error Analysis: Nature, Scope and Methodology

2.1 Pedagogical Significance of Learner's Error

The study of learner's errors is very significant from the pedagogical point of view. It gives a guideline to the teacher/syllabus designer for designing a remedial course of the target language. They may evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching materials and the teaching methods/techniques they use. Learner's errors pin point their difficulties which give insight to the teacher in solving the learners problems. Error Analysis also reflects the process of second language learning. As Corder (1981:6-7) says that:

The differences in first and second languages those proposed by contrastive linguistics do not say anything about the process that takes place in learning the first and second language. The new hypothesis, i.e., the study of errors confirms verification or rejection of new hypothesis with regard to child language acquisition and its implication to the learning of the second language.

According to Corder (1981:10-11), the learner's errors are significant in the following different ways:

1. To the researcher they provide evidence of the system of the language the learner is using at a particular point or in other words we may say as he acquires or learns a second language and while learning it what sort
of strategies he employs.

2. To the teacher in that tell him if he undertakes a systematic analysis as to how far the learner has progressed towards the goal and consequently what remains him to learn further.

3. They are indispensable to the learner.

Noth (1977:98) considers that errors analysis can contribute to linguistic theory in two ways:

1. It can lead to the discovery of new aspects of language use and also,
2. It can be used as a method for the verifications of hypothesis developed within the framework of a linguistic theory.

2.2 Types of Errors

Corder (1967) distinguishes two types of errors:

1. 'Breach of the code', which involves wrong application of grammatical rules, resulting in ungrammatical constructions in learner's performance, and
2. 'Errors in the use of code'. It happens when learner use of the target language in inappropriate context though the construction may be perfectly grammatical.

Corder (1974: 145-48) identifies four types of gramatically correct but inappropriate use of constructions.

a) Refrential errors,
b) Registeral errors,
c) Social errors and
d) Textual errors.
a) **Referential Errors** : In referential errors the speaker uses a term with the intention of referring to some feature of the world to where it is conventionally inapplicable, i.e., when he calls a *hat* a *cap*.

b) **Registeral Errors** : In registeral errors a speaker commits errors in the use of register, i.e., in a naval context he refers to a *naval ship* as a *boat*.

c) **Social Errors** : In social errors the speaker selects forms which are socially inappropriate to his social relation with his hearers, as when a pupil greets his teacher with: *well, how are you today old man?*

d) **Textual Errors** : In textual error the speaker does not select the structurally correct form to show the intended relation between two sentences in a discourse, e.g., in answer to the question: *who is the man over there?*

* John is.

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Burt and Kiparsky (1972) establish errors into a hierarchy of *global* and *local* errors. They define these errors with the following words:

Global mistakes are those that violate rules involving the overall structure of a sentence, the reactions among constituents clauses, or the simple sentence, the rules among major constituents. Local mistakes cause trouble in a particular constituent, or in a particular clause of a complex sentence.

Dulay and Burt (1974) do not blame learners for their errors. They are of the opinion that 'one cannot learn without goofing. They use very mild word 'goof' to refer to an error. Dulay and Burt have divided 'goof' into four types:
1) **Interference Like Goofs**: In the performance of a second language these 'goofs' reflect the structures of the learner's mother tongue.

2) **Developmental Goofs**: Learners, on the basis of inadequate data of the target language, over-generalize the structure of the target language.

3) **Ambiguous Goofs**: Ambiguous goofs can be characterised either as interference like goofs or a developmental goofs which occur during the process of learning a second language, and

4. **Unique Goofs**: Those are goofs in a learner's performance which cannot be described as developmental goofs or as goofs caused by the interference of the learner's first language.

2.3 **Stages in Error Analysis**

S. Pit Corder (1974: 126-28) has discussed three stages in error analysis: recognition, description and explanation of errors. Recognition of errors is a first and most important stage in the error analysis. Recognition of error depends upon correct interpretation of the learner’s intended meaning in the context. Learner’s well-formed and appropriate utterance may also be misinterpreted or treated as erroneous if the investigator do not recognise the intention of the learner. Learner’s utterances may be superficially deviant or superficially well formed but meaning what the learner intended to mean. Thus, identification of learner’s errors depends on correct interpretations from learner’s point of view. If we want to know what the learner intended to say, we can ask him in his mother tongue to tell us what he meant to say (if we know learners’s mother tongue). In this way we can arrive at an authoritative interpretation and hence an authoritative reconstruction of learner’s utterance. If we have written data and we cannot
consult the learner, in that situation we infer the meaning intended by the learner from the surface structure of his text-sentence in conjunction with the information derived from its context. Corder et al. calls such interpretation as plausible interpretation and the related reconstruction as plausible reconstruction.

2.3.1 Description of Errors

Description is a comparative process between erroneous utterances of the learner and native forms of the language. The comparison between the two shows the deviations on phonological, morphological and the syntactic levels of the target language structure where the learners have committed errors. Corder (1974: 128) suggests that “Our objective in error analysis is to explain errors linguistically and psychologically in order to help the learners to learn”. The description of errors follows the categorisation of errors such as grammatical errors which includes, omission, wrong transformation, wrong plural formation, use of wrong verb forms etc. and similarly, the phonological, morphological and semantic errors with all sets of their sub-classes.

2.3.2 Explanation of Errors

The explanation of errors is concerned with accounting for why and how errors come about. The explanation of errors is an investigation into the reasons as to why the learner has broken, disregarded, misused or ignored the rules of the target language. Observations suggest that many errors bear a strong resemblance to the characteristics of the mother tongue, indeed many erroneous utterances read like word-for-word translations. Errors arising
from the influence of learner’s mother tongue is termed as transfer errors. There are instances even when a learner has discovered a correct rule he may still continue to make errors because he has not yet discovered the precise application of rule. Learner may produce sentences like *he goed, he cans come*. Errors of this sort are errors of overgeneralization or analogical errors. Analogical errors are inherent and perhaps inevitable in language learning process. Errors also arise from the methods or materials used in the teaching which is termed as *teaching-induced error*. Errors of this class represent inefficiency in the learning-teaching process.

Richards (1971 b: 12-14) also recognizes the transitional stages in second language learning where learner deviates from the norms of the target language. He believes in L1=L2 hypothesis when he states that "the second language learner's errors are not by nature different from those made by the children learning English as a mother tongue". Richards regards learners errors in the following words:

Sentences containing errors would be characterized by systematic evidence. While the learner’s correct sentences do not necessarily give evidence of the rules the learner is using or of the hypothesis he is testing, his errors suggest the strategies he employs to workout the rules of the new language and the rules he was developing.

2.4 Taxonomy of Errors

Richards does not believe that the native language is the only source of errors. He gives the following taxonomy of errors:

1) Errors due to interference involve instances of errors resulting from the
transfer of grammatical and/or stylistic elements from the source language to the target language.

2) Overgeneralization is that which covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of some other structure in the target language.

3) Performance errors involve unsystematic errors that occur as result of memory lapses, fatigue, confusion, strong emotion etc..

4) Markers of transitional competence are errors that form a natural and perhaps inevitable developmental sequence in the second language learning process.

5) Errors involving strategies of communication and assimilation: these are errors which result from an attempt to communicate in the target language without having completely acquired the grammatical forms of the target language.

6) Teaching-induced errors are errors resulting from pedagogical procedure contained in the text or employed by the teacher.

2.5 Sources and Causes of Errors

The causes and the sources of the learner’s errors are attributed to two different factors by most of the scholars:

1) Errors due to Interlingual factors.

2) Errors due to Intralingual factors

2.5.1 Interlingual Errors

Contrastivist have already established that the major source of errors in learner’s performance was directly attributed to the interference
from the learner's mother tongue. The learner while learning a second language transfers elements of his mother tongue whenever he feels difficulty to perform in the second language. Tarone (1969:16) has established following three types of transfer:

1) Negative transfer refer to situation in which the learner's attempt to use inappropriate sound patterns and elements of the mother tongue in place of the patterns of the target language.

2) Positive transfer refers to the situation where the learners do not face any difficulty in producing an item which is common in the native and the target languages.

3) Divergent negative transfer is another type of situation where the second language learners perceive the target language elements as most difficult. It takes place in the case of the purely non-cognate situation.

Several Scholars have recognised the interference of learners's mother tongue in learning a second language which manifests itself in the form of interlingual errors. Chau (1975) in his study of English speakers learning Spanish as a second language found 51% interlingual errors. George (1972), Dulay and Burt (1972), Lane (1989) and Ervin Tripp (1970) have also recognised the errors which occur due to the interference of the mother tongue.

Majority of the scholar are of the view that the pull of the mother tongue is the greatest source of error committed by the learners of the second language. The scholars like, Fries (1954), Lado (1957), Lee (1957), Ferguson (1965), James (1972), Selinker (1972), Harrison (1973), Richards (1974) and
Wilkins (1974) and Taylor (1975) etc., have recognised the pull of the learner's mother tongue in learning a second language.

2.5.2 **Intralingual Errors**

A number of scholars hold the view that many errors produced by the second language learners do not have their source in the learner's mother tongue. On the basis of empirical study, Richards (1971a) and George (1972) have come to the conclusion that the great majority of the errors either could not be traced to sources in the learner's native language or could be explained with reference to other sources.

Selinker (1972:209) also have the view that the interference from learner's mother tongue is one but many of the several sources of errors in second language performance and hence other sources such as intralingual confusions and faulty pedagogical procedures may also be the source of errors.

Krashen (1976:157) also do not give importance only to mother tongue interference. To him "many of the errors in the second language acquisition are 'developmental' rather than solely a result of interference". Intralingual errors may be classified into the following four categories:

1. Errors due to overgeneralization.
2. Error due to ignorance of rule restriction.
3. Errors due to incomplete application of rules.
4. Errors due to false concept hypothesis.
2.5.2.1 Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is the process of learning which results from the fact that the learner uses what he already knows about target language in order to make sense of new experience. The most common structures of the target language are overgeneralised by language learners. The majority of interalingual errors are instances of the process of overgeneralization in both the first or second language learning. Corder (1973:289) considers overgeneralisation as an inevitable process in learning the second language. Language learners use this process because they have tendency of "redundancy rejection". George (1972), Schuman (1974), Jacobovits (1969) and Duškova (1969) have also recognised the process of overgeneralization in language learner's strategy.

Urdu/Hindi speakers learning English also employ the same process of overgeneralization in their English performance. For example, a learner has learnt a rule for forming plurals. This let him predict that a noun can be made plural by adding '-s'. However, when he says the *childs are going, he has overgeneralised the rule, since child is one of the exception to it. In a similar way, until he learns that went and gone lie outside the scope of the general rule for forming the past and past participles tense, he is likely to produce overgeneralised forms such as *goed.

2.5.2.2 Ignorance of Rule Restrictions

The learners of a second language usually produce erroneous structures because they fail to understand the restrictions on the existing structure. They apply the rules of target language in inappropriate context.
Richards (1974) accounts the rule restrictions errors in terms of analogy and lack of understanding of the rules. Analogy plays significant role in the misuse of preposition and article usage.

2.5.2.3 Incomplete Application of Rules

Learners of second language sometimes apply incomplete rules consequently, their performance becomes erroneous due to incomplete applications of precise rules in the target language. This type of errors have been observed in learning the interrogative sentences of English. Richards (1971:118) have also mentioned the difficulty of learning -wh question.

Following are some examples mentioned by Richards.

* Why the hall was air conditioned?
* Where the film is running?
* What you are doing?
* Where you come?

2.5.2.4 False Concept Hypothesis

A learners of a second language, having limited knowledge of the rules and structures of the target language, internalise some false concept about the structure of target language. Urdu speakers learning English also commit the errors like:

* He is goes to school.
* He was played.

This type of errors occur due to the wrong interpretation of 'is'
and 'was' where learners treat 'is' as a marker of present tense and 'was' a marker of past tense. Richards (1974:178) calls this type of errors as the developmental errors which derive from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.

2.5.2.5 Teaching Induced Errors

Apart from the Intralingual and Interlingual errors, scholars have assigned the errors in the second language to the method of teaching. Corder (1974) describes many errors in the use of a second language in terms of teaching induced errors. Filipovic also views 'bad teaching as a source of errors'. Tongue (1975) describes 'incorrect exposure' as a source of errors in learners performance. He states that:

Many of our students encounter more incorrect English than correct English - newspapers, public notices, advertisements and official documents of various kinds containing errors at all levels of English from syntax to style.

Filipovic (1972) considers faulty method of teaching, bad teacher-pupil relationship and poor memory retention as a source of errors in the use of the second language.

2.6 Aims and Objective of the present study

Keeping in view the significance of Error Analysis in the process of second language learning and teaching, present study aims at the analysis of errors made in English by Urdu/Hindi speakers learning English in their respective school. It has been observed that the learner do not get perfect command or atleast workable knowledge even though they devote more than
ten years in their schooling.

This happens because teacher generally do not look towards the language development in their respective learners and learners also do not devote sufficient time in learning English. They spend few hours in a week along with a lot of other assignments. In our country, the teaching method and procedures may also be blamed which are not effective to achieve the desired goals. Learner suffer from the lack of effective teaching materials. Keeping this in view, the aims and objective of the study are:

1. To identify most common errors committed by Urdu/Hindi speakers learning English as a second language.
2. To identify recurrent patterns of learner's errors at various levels.
3. To analyse and classify the various types of errors and find out their source and cause.
4. To present remedial strategies on the basis of findings which could be helpful in effective curriculum development.

2.7 Informants and their Language Background

The informants of the present study are native speakers of Urdu/Hindi. They use Hindi/Urdu in both formal and informal communication purposes. Our informant may be called the member of a homogenous group in the sense that they use Hindi/Urdu as mother tongue, they have less occasion to speak or hear English in their daily life.

2.8 Methodology

2.8.1 Elicitation of data and material used for the present study.
The informants of this study were thirty one school students studying in high school. They represented the age group approximately fourteen to seventeen. For the analysis of phonological errors the data have been elicited from the informants through a text (containing about four hundred words) taken from their book prescribed in their school (see appendix). Subjects were also asked to read the passages and a list of two hundred words (see appendix) which contains the major phonemes of English in different environments (i.e., initial, medial and final). The performance of the learner was tape-recorded, subsequently transcribed into phonemic transcription and compared to Received Pronunciation (RP).

The data of morphological and syntactic errors were collected from the:
1. Half yearly examination scripts of the learners.
2. Home assigned works.
3. Questionnaires.

The answer books of half yearly examinations comprised:
1. Long essays.
2. Descriptive answers.
3. Precis writing.
4. Fill in the blank question on grammar.
Home assignment also follows more or less the same patterns as of examination. But it is completed by learners in different settings and sufficient interval of time.
The questionnaires have been presented to the learners in different settings and time intervals. The questionnaires have been prepared to get predictable and expected errors in the use of the following parts of speech and transformation of sentences:

1. Article,
2. Verb,
3. Preposition,
4. Conjunction,
5. Active-passive transformation and
6. Direct-Indirect transformation.

Learner's performance was also tested through free composition. Learners have been asked to write an essay on topic of their own interest. In this way, we have collected the spontaneous written production of learners.

2.9 Presentation of Findings

The present analysis of errors committed by Urdu/Hindi speakers learning English would consist of the following steps:

1. Identification of errors from the answer scripts work book and questionnaire,
2. Classification of error types i.e., phonological, morphological and syntactic errors,
3. Explanation of source and causes of learner's errors i.e., Interlingual or Intralingual,
4. Discussion and conclusion followed by the implication of the findings of the present study, and
5. Remedial suggestions.