

The Abstract

Resorting to erroneous and deviant forms is an inevitable part of the process of second language development and these errors, by providing feedback, can be quantified and judged in the total assessment of the learners' linguistic competence. Moreover, the deviations from the norms of the second language (L2) bear many pedagogical and theoretical implications for the researchers, language teachers, and material designers. Contrastive and error analysis in the course of their development and as two interrelated disciplines have assisted the analysts in a few ways, one of which is investigating and analyzing the sources of the syntactic errors which are regularly and systematically committed by L2 learners. These disciplines have to concern themselves with the applied goal of correcting and eradicating the learners' errors, the systematic study of which gives valuable indications of language learning strategies and hypothesis. The systematic analysis and classification of errors can be of great application in error prediction which is of big importance and utility to language teachers.

One major goal of the present study is analyzing the developmental and interference syntactic error patterns of the Iranian adult learners of English and their application of the rules of grammar and syntax in the light of the errors

which are seen to recur regularly and frequently in their compositions. The study tries to shed light on how a contrastive analysis of the syntactic structure of English and Persian can contribute to the eradication of the learners' syntactic errors. As the main concern of the study is to find suitable answers to the following questions:

1. What are the major causes of the syntactic errors which Persian English learners (PELs) produce in their compositions?
2. How can a contrastive analysis of the syntactic structure of the two languages, here Persian and English, in the light of the collected errors contribute to the eradication of the learners' problems?
3. What is the significance of the errors which are frequently repeated by these learners, and how can these errors assist the researchers to seek solutions to eradicate them?
4. What can be the assumed sources of these deviations and how the relevant sources can assist the researcher to make hypothesis about the learners' linguistic input?
5. What are the major sources which have a deep impact on the learners' performance?
6. To what extent does the avoidance hypothesis work out in the process of the acquisition of the syntactic structure of L2 and how does this phenomenon affect error types and their frequency of occurrence?
7. To what extent can the sources of the errors help the researcher to find solutions for the elimination of the most frequently repeated errors?

To come to some hypothesis and to seek plausible answers to these questions, the study employed some techniques and procedures. As the preliminary step in **chapter one**, the problem and the purpose of the study are stated. Before everything else, some fundamental questions have been raised regarding the relevance of writing and its importance in the educational system of Iran and the

major causes of syntactic errors committed in writing which the language learners bring with them up to higher levels.

Chapter two presents an overview of the educational system of Iran focusing upon certain specific problems related to the teaching and learning English as a second language. It moreover discusses some historical and curricular considerations which are related to the present study and finally tries to arrive at certain conclusions. In this section the major problems with which this system struggles have been brought into view. This is helpful as the readers will become aware of the setting in which the problems occur and the context in which the learners have to learn their L2.

The **third chapter** is devoted to the study of the related literature belonging to various areas including contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA). To this purpose, the conducted studies, the ideas, and the viewpoints, from past to present, are dealt with in depth. In this respect, some fundamental issues related to the field are also brought into discussion. These issues build up the points such as structuralism and its contribution to pedagogy, versions of CA and their pitfalls, the notions of approximative system, idiosyncrasy and interlanguage and its relevance to fossilization, systematicity and its relevance to CA, markedness differential hypothesis, the relationship between CA and Universal Grammar, and finally the drawbacks of CA. Furthermore, the CAH and its contribution to pedagogy is also considered. In the final part, the simplification and ignorance hypothesis are dealt with. Because of the disadvantages of CA, the study sets to introduce EA as a solution and concentrates on the theoretical and pedagogical assumptions of EA. In fact the study has greatly benefited from all the existing theories belonging to this area. To this goal, some theoretical assumptions such as the notion of an error and a mistake and their differences, the known sources of errors, and the problems that are associated with this classification, and finally the criticism of EAH are brought under scrutiny. In the final part of this chapter, the avoidance hypothesis as a hurdle that blocks the

avoidance hypothesis as a hurdle that blocks the possibility of achieving valid data and the studies related to this field are discussed comprehensively.

Chapter four which builds up the main body of the study modifies the main techniques and procedures having been employed by the researcher throughout the study. To fulfill the main objectives of the study, 103 Iranian L2 learners of English were invited to participate in the experiment for course credit at Islamic Azad University, in Kerman, Iran. As the next step, the researcher used three main techniques to pursue the study: 1) administering Oxford Placement Test, 2) applying a grammaticality judgment test and 3) the most important step which was collecting the subjects' compositions, analysing them and gathering the most repeated errors.

As the first step, The Oxford Placement Test was administered to determine the characteristics of the subjects. The specification thus made helps the researcher to determine the age, sex, and the proficiency level of the subjects. Based on the data collected, the mean square of the test becomes 55.14 with a standard deviation of 8.7 and variance of 75.63. The relevant reliability of the test is calculated to be 0.679 according to Kurdar and Richardson KR-21 method.

The next step is administering a grammaticality judgment test (GJT). It is believed that the GJT can tap the subjects' interlanguage by asking them to determine whether a sentence is grammatically correct or not. The extent to which they fulfill this goal can reveal their linguistic competence. Any difficulty to fulfill this activity is an indication of the learners' failure to work out the language. The test, made up of 40 sentences, 11 sentences containing only interlingual errors, 6 sentences containing intralingual errors, 20 items containing bi-source errors, and finally 3 correct ones, were selected from the erroneous sentences the subjects had produced in their compositions. The outcomes revealed some facts about the subjects' linguistic input and the ability to differentiate mono- and bi-source errors. The difference between the two types of correct and incorrect responses to inter-, intra-, and bi source errors are significant at the 5% level with the tabulated value

of 6.58 at 2 degree of freedom. In other words, it was proved that the learners are far more successful in identifying the errors belonging to the mono-source errors compared with the errors belonging to bi-sources. This indicates that the subjects have difficulty in identifying the errors pertaining to bi sources ; therefore, it is plausible to conclude that they are hard to eradicate. Meanwhile, the exceptionally low frequency of some items in some areas suggests that the learners have serious difficulties with them. For example, 1.9 percent of the correct recognition of the 'passive' misuse or 5.8 percent of the 'article' misuse indicates that the learners have serious problems with these items.

The next important step, or the error analysis processes, was to investigate the essential role of the errors that the subjects had committed in their compositions. In **chapter five**, the researcher presents the results of the analyses of around 200 writing samples belonging to the subjects produced at two intervals on the suggested topics. Later on, all the committed errors were extracted and classified under certain categories and then the relevant frequencies were prepared. The errors with very small numbers were excluded. The next step was interpreting the errors and looking for their assumed sources. The main approach that the study follows was moving from error analysis to contrastive analysis. In other words, after collecting the committed errors, in order to interpret the possible sources, the researcher resorts to CA to locate the L1 sources. The priority was given to the errors with bi-sources. On the whole, the analysis attempts to present two major implications. The sources of the errors with the highest frequency can be attributed to the bi-source errors; for example, most errors of 'prepositions' and 'agreement' and almost all errors of 'article' misuse pertain to both sources: inter-and intra-. Persian lacks any overt , syntactic constituent to correspond with the English article system, and therefore, interference is possible to occur, and on the other hand, a large number of inconsistencies in the English 'article' system can cause confusion, and as a result analogy is plausible to happen. On the whole, the study strongly makes the assumption that rule inconsistency can be one major

source of the analogy of L2 rules, and on the other hand, the absence of one item in learners L2 may cause interference and this is assumed to be one plausible interpretation for the transfer of L1 rules into L2. However, the assumed sources of some of the errors with the lowest number of frequency can be traced back to bi-source errors as the learners prefer to escape from producing them and therefore, they decrease drastically in number. They include the items like 'auxiliaries', 'adverb clauses', 'participles', 'gerunds' and 'infinitives'.

Chapter six concentrates on the major findings of the GJT and the error analysis processes. The findings belonging to four major areas, i. e., articles, prepositions, agreement, and adjective misuse are first of all discussed as these are the areas with the most possible deviations which may pertain to bi-source errors and , moreover, they contain the large number of exceptions in the English grammar rules and consequently a large number of errors emerge as a result of rule inconsistency in the L2.

Another important assumption is the marked fluctuation which exists among the error frequencies. In the same manner, deep variability of the errors proves that locating definite sources of errors and speaking about them with a hundred percent certainty is not logical, nor is it possible to locate the causes feasibly because there are a large number of factors involved which can fundamentally leave their unpredictable effects on the learners' behaviour and their linguistic output. Some of these factors are the cases such as the training effect, ignorance, avoidance, teaching methods and strategies, the assigned textbooks, the needs ,motivation, age and above all the level of the learners, and many others which can influence the learners' performance.

It is later on discussed that the concept of "difference", as the strong version of CA claims, does not necessarily mean "difficulty" in every area, and this assumption has been partially falsified, as some exceptions have been observed. It is, additionally, discussed that the role of avoidance hypothesis is so deep in studies

like this that to draw reliable data and to attribute valid conclusions to them is difficult.

Furthermore, the function of avoidance hypothesis is carefully studied at this stage and some conclusions are drawn. For example, it is proved that the traces of escape can be observed in three different forms: when there is total deletion of some items; when there is partial deletion, and finally when there is no possibility to avoid any items. The first type of avoidance happens when the difficulty of some linguistic forms has been proved experimentally, and the tendency to avoid these structures increases proportionally with the possibility of *committing mistakes by the learners. The learners resort to complete avoidance* when they feel that the form they are going to use is both different from that of their L1 and is assumed to be complicated and therefore escape seems to be inevitable. A careful analysis of the learners' compositions proved that the learners have revealed their tendency not to use some structures like noun clauses in subject position, present and past participles, adverb clauses, gerund and infinitive phrases, and object and possessive adjective clauses. On the other hand, a large number of deletions among articles and prepositions reveal that there is also an attempt to partially escape from producing the items with which the learners have difficulty. Finally and in the same manner, the subjects resort to partial escape as deleting some of the constituents of the sentences does not highly violate the fundamental rules of the sentences they are handling. It means that they can escape from using only those function words which play a syntactic and not a semantic role in a sentence. It can, therefore, be concluded that escape from some content words occurs cautiously but almost frequently and this exposure causes the subjects to produce the most possible and inevitable errors in these areas. Almost all errors of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs are instances of the cases where the learners have not been able to resort to avoidance.

The next part of this chapter offers some suggestions for further study and research work based on the limitations and findings of the present study. The

suggestion made in this part can help the researchers to project their viewpoints toward CA and EA approaches and theories. In fact, the findings arrived at in this study, like those of other studies, have been viewed in accordance with the limitations which the study has imposed upon itself. For example, as a cross-sectional study, the present study suffers from some limitations, and to generalize the results to longitudinal studies does not seem to be plausible.

The **reference section**, is made up of five appendices. In appendix one, we can see a bibliographical presentation of all the references having been used throughout the study. Appendix II presents a selection of subjects' original writing samples. They can help the readers to have access to the context in which the errors have occurred, the subjects' linguistic level, the most important difficulties with which the subjects have been struggling, and the most important 'avoided' items. Appendix III is a collection of sentences containing the errors having been gathered for analysis and interpretation. The sentences here can be considered as a partial context for the readers. In Appendix four a sample of a GJT has been brought, and in the final part of the study, appendix five, the Oxford Placement Test has been presented.