CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY
AND DATA COLLECTION
3.0 Introduction

In any field of empirical and investigative study and analysis methodology is significant in order to achieve concrete results. Following a methodology is essential for any scientific and systematic study or work. In this present study various methods have been used for its successful completion. Before mentioning the methods used methodology of error analysis in general is also discussed.

3.1 Methodology of error Analysis

In any case of learning faults or errors are indispensable. People learn better from errors they commit. It is a natural way of learning. It is assumed that the learners of second language with the same mother tongue develop more or less the same inter language at any point in their learning career and the level of acquisition can be ascribed to individual variation in intelligence, motivation and perhaps attitude (Nanjaiah, 1994) The longitudinal study of language development of a second language learner would rely heavily upon the techniques of what is called error analysis just as the longitudinal study of the infant learning his/ her mother tongue depends on the analysis of his idiosyncratic sentences (Brown, 1977). The methodology of describing the idiosyncratic dialect or the learners language is otherwise called error analysis. This methodology is equally applicable for the idiosyncratic dialects in dialects including the second language learners’ dialect which is variant from the target language and thus the first stage in error analysis is recognition of idiosyncrasy. A learner’s sentence may be superficially well formed and yet to be idiosyncratic such sentences are called covertly idiosyncratic. If they are superficially ill formed in terms of the rules of the target language they are called overtly idiosyncratic. In certain cases they are neither covertly or overtly idiosyncratic. If the sentence appears to be superficially well formed in terms of the target language but nevertheless cannot be interpreted ‘normally’ in context
and then that sentence in covertly idiosyncratic and must be interpreted suitably. In such a context reconstructed/ reformulated sentences must be made to compare with the original. A reconstructed / reformulated sentence is what a native speaker of the target language could have said to express that meaning in the context. It is also said to be a translation equivalent. It can also be superficially ill formed 'according to the rules of the target language and be overtly idiosyncratic. Seeking the scope of interpretation a well formed sentence can be made to compare it with the original.

Making a plausible interpretation is, certainly a difficult task. The analysis / interpretation is made possible and plausible by the help of mother tongue of the learner. The process of identifying idiosyncrasy and the production of a reconstructed sentence is done with the help of two sentences; the idiosyncratic sentences and well formed sentence with the same meaning. Usually, even though the learner would have used and ungrammatical sentence or a sentence with errors he would have used with the same meaning and it is termed as “intended meaning”. But there can be problem of interpretation in terms of similar plausible sentences as in the case of the sentences He asked a dictionary. The sentence can be reconstructed as He asked for a dictionary or He consulted a dictionary. In the former case an addition of a preposition is required and in the latter case the substitution of a lexicon is required. Here we have to consider the context under the background of the sentence. In such cases comes, the mother tongue for rescue of the investigator. He can, for classification, interact the learner in mother tongue for authentic interpretation and the idiosyncratic nature of learner’s language cannot be solely explicable in terms of his mother tongue. It may be related to what he has been taught in the classroom. The idiosyncratic sentences of the learners are in a way the result of what the teachers do in the class to teach that language and for the interpretation is easier for them. The close association of the teachers with the learners make them able to identify the developmental traits.

In the second stage, a bilingual comparison could be made by translating the sentences. The languages are described in terms of a common set of
categories and relations i.e., in terms of a formal model. But it involves several technical problems which are not discussed here.

The third stage and the ultimate object of error analysis is explanation. The theoretical object as Corder (1967) noted is to elucidate what and how a learner learns when he learns a language. The applied object is to enable the learner to learn more efficiently by exploiting one's knowledge of dialect for pedagogical purposes and it depends on the first object. The first two stages are linguistic based whereas the last stage is psycholinguistic because it attempts to bring out the nature of the learner's idiosyncratic dialect.

As mentioned in the introductory part the language is a sort of habit formation or habit structure. There occurs the influence and interference of the mother tongue which in turn creates some blocks in the process of second language acquisition. The learners may carry over the habits of the mother tongue into second language and as a result a language transfer occurs making most of idiosyncratic sentences of the second language learner bear a sort of regular relation to the sentences of his/her mother tongue.

Language learning is some sort of data processing and hypothesis forming activity of a cognitive sort. According to this view the learners sentences which we refer to as idiosyncratic or inter language are signs of false hypothesis which, when more data is available and processed, either by direct observation or by statements by the teachers; i.e., correction and examples, enable the learner to reformulate a hypothesis more in accordance with the facts of the target language (Hocket 1948). The habit formation theory of learning that has been ruling the realm for several decades showed no particular interest in the idiosyncratic sentences of the learners. This has been discussed in detail in the introductory chapter under the headings 'errors and error analysis'. The teacher should help the learner with the right sort of information or data for him/her to form a more adequate concept of rules in the target language and thereby enable him to use that language better. The method of error analysis therefore, does not simply study the performances of the learner in the target language but it intends to help the learner improve his language skills in the target language all together.
3.2 Methodology followed in the present study

The present study is an objective and empirical study. An attempt is made to collect the learners' language in various forms and using various methods. The actual sentences of the learners are collected by conducting tests, administering questionnaires, tape recording the readings of passages, sentences and words, casual talks with the learners, class room interaction exercises etc.

Since the area of study is Wayanad 16 schools from different parts of the district were selected and 4 to 8 students were chosen from each schools. Of these 16 schools, 6 are Govt. Higher Secondary Schools, 5 are Aided Higher Secondary Schools and 2 are Unaided Higher Secondary Schools. 3 are Govt. Vocational Higher Secondary Schools (see appendix). As mentioned elsewhere the learners belong to higher secondary level considering they have acquired sufficient language skill and the language they produce will be well accountable for considering for error analysis. A total of 72 students participated in the tests and the language of all these students is elicited in this study. Out of these 72 students 15 were English medium students and 12 belonged to SC and ST category. In addition to the questions pertaining to language data, a set of questionnaires was administered to each of the students to collect data about his/her socio economic conditions and motivational factors to help the investigator to know whether these conditions and factors hinder or help the students' rate of learning English as a second language.

Questions comprising morphological, phonetical, syntactic and semantic aspects have been included in the questionnaire. These questions are intended to know how far the learners have acquired the English grammatical systems such as auxiliary, concord, word order, word classes or forms, transformation, translation etc. For the purpose of analysing the phonetic aspects the passages sentences and words have been recorded. The class room interactions and the answer sheets of the tests are also taken for the study. Another set of questionnaire was served to the principals of the schools to get information regarding the schools and the general assessment of the students and the schools with regard to English course.
The questionnaires were distributed in higher secondary schools in different schools in different parts of the district so as to cover all the areas of the district under study. As we have seen, Wayanad is divided into three taluks and all the tests are covered in these areas. From Vythiri taluk 4 schools, from Sulthan Bathery taluk 7 schools and from Mananthavady taluk 5 schools were selected for the study. There was a positive response from the authorities and the students and they co-operated with the tests conducted in their schools.

Another source of the data is the written and spoken interactions of the students. A lot of data are collected from their spoken communication in the classrooms and outside and the written materials like class notes, compositions, class tests and terminal examination answer scripts etc. These items provide ample structures to be studied and analysed.

3.3 Data Collection

Various tools have been used for the empirical study of the errors of the data collection of the learners.

The chief tools used for collection of data are:

1. Questionnaires: Three questionnaires were used. Two of them used among the students and one among the heads of the institutions.
2. Tape recording in the forms of:
   (a) Reading of a passage
   (b) Reading a list of words
3. Participant observation
4. Answer scripts
5. Dictation

3.3.1. Questionnaires

Three questionnaires were administrated to collect data for the study. Questionnaire I contained content questions of controlled types. Such as ‘fill in the blanks’ with suitable words-verb forms, articles, prepositions etc., transformation of sentences, translations from English to Malayalam and vice versa, completion of sentences and composition question under uncontrolled situation which they were to write spontaneously. Questionnaire II consisted of...
questions to elicit the socio-economic and educational background and the attitude of the informants. Questionnaire III was for the heads of the institutions regarding the details of the schools. The questionnaires are given in the appendix.

3.3.2 **Tape recording**

The recording was done with the purpose of eliciting the phonological aspect of the language of the learners, they were given the following tasks for recorded for the study.

a. Reading a passage: A passage from their text book was given for reading. The passage contained only simple and familiar words so that they could read rather easily and only such simple and familiar words and usages are considered for the study.

b. Familiar and frequently used words. These words are very commonly used words with peculiar phonological natures.

3.3.3 **Participant observation and discourses.**

Malayalam, being the mother tongue of the investigator as well as the informants, it was easy for the investigator to obtain personal, societal and situational information without personal and psychological restraint. Boas (1911) puts it rightly, ‘A command of the language is an indispensable means of obtaining accurate and thorough knowledge’. The investigator being a teacher dealing with the students in the age group of 15 to 20 get ample exposure to the language learning process and the language developed by the learners. A lot of classroom experience with the wards familiarized the investigator to the inter language of the learners and this has been used as a source of data.

3.3.4 **Answer scripts**

The answer scripts of the informants is a good source of the original language expression of the learners belonging to the plus one and plus two levels. Though there may be some duplication the majority of the expression would be personal. A lot of data is collected from the answer scripts of the learners. The data from the source has been very helpful for the present study and have been taken for analysis.
3.3.5 Dictation

Only with the familiarity with the vocabulary of the target language the learner would flourish in that language. Dictation is found to be a feasible method of collecting data in this respect. A dictation of 40 words was conducted among the students to check their knowledge in vocabulary and the spelling errors.
CHAPTER FOUR
IDENTIFICATION OF ERRORS
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Identification of errors

4.0 Introduction:

In the attempt to identify the errors and their rectification, several problems faced by the learners were brought to light. The linguistic level classification of errors is discussed in the introductory chapter. Here in this chapter we discuss the identification of errors on the linguistic basis, the need for rectifying the errors similar study in the field, areas of the errors identified and measures to be taken for rectifying the errors.

4.1 Identification of errors on linguistic basis

Error is a deviant structure of the target language of a second language learner. It is labeled differently as learner’s language, developmental language, idiosyncratic dialect approximative system inter language etc (c.f. p-101) As described as a special sort of dialect it is apparently different from the normal structure of the target language. Such structures are evolved by the learners during the conscious attempt of the learner to produce utterances and written forms, what the learners familiarized with the new language and the influence of the mother tongue. Corder (1981) noticed that the spontaneous speech of the second language learner is language and has a grammar and the learner’s language is a dialect’ in the linguistic sense. The learner’s language is an idiosyncratic dialect and it shares some rules of grammar of the native language and the target language i.e. L1 and L2.

The meeting of the two languages and the development of idiosyncratic dialect of the learner before the complete acquisition can be explained with the help of a diagram.

Native language ——— Target language

Idiosyncratic dialect

Figure : 1
This idiosyncratic dialect is not a dialect in the Saussurean sense as it does not constitute a language which is a shared behaviour of a social group. It is a dialect developed and possessed by an individual learner of the target language and it is thus called in the second language acquisition learning context. Corder (ibid) distinguishes it from the idiolect, which is a personal dialect. The idiolect has all the linguistic characteristics of a language or a social dialect where as idiosyncratic dialect does not possess all the linguistic characteristics of an approved language or social dialect, it shares the characteristics of two languages: the native language and the target language which are otherwise named L1 and L2.

The structures found in the idiosyncratic dialect are unique and are not found in either L1 or L2. But it is a resultant of an effort of approximating to the target language (L2) It is systematically developmental and is a sojourn language. It does not stay with the learner for ever. The learner quits it immediately when he / she familiarizes with the rules of the L2 and gets used to it. Therefore, it is a language form that happens to be in possession and use with the learner in the process of approximating the L2.

The idiosyncratic dialect is a deviant and a variant form which is easily distinguishable from the L1 and L2 and at the same time it possesses the elements or traces of both native and target language on account of the interference of target language as well as the mother tongue.

![Diagram](image)

Figure : 2

There is a possibility of clash between what is known and what is vaguely known resulting a distorted or deviantly variant form.

All the deviations cannot be attributed to the influence of the L1. Even if the L1 is set apart and deliberately concentrating on the target language the
problem cannot be avoided. Certain unique rules in the L2 will lead the learner to do some guess work which turn to be right or wrong. Those forms which are wrong or insufficient result in errors. When a continuous effect is made in familiarizing the L2 the learners acquires / learns certain rules of grammar of the target language. In the process of using these rules he sometimes flaws. He/she may forget some rules and substitute something else, miss some necessary elements, misplace, misspell and even venture to add some thing of his/ her own which in fact does not exist and he/she makes the idiosyncratic dialect something linguistically unique and interesting. We call such expressions ‘errors’ in this discussion.

The language analysts or language teachers who know the rules of grammar of the target language or who are a native speakers of the target language can easily identify the erroneous constructions of the learners. If the variable causes only once or at one place it may not be an error, it may be a slip or laps. If the sentence does not suit to the context or., it becomes an unacceptable sentence it may be regarded as an error. If the same lapses are recurred such lapses will also be counted as errors.

To identify the sentences if they are correct or incorrect the analyst must make a reformulated form containing the message intended by the learner. Comparing the sentences constructed by the learners which are termed as errors with the formulated forms, the erroneous parts in the learner’s structure can be identified. A close analysis of the sentence will tell us what kind of errors occurred and the developmental devices applied by the learner. But the analysis is not an easy process as Corder (1981) states that the learners cannot be controlled as we control a computer ..... and the learner is not simply a data processing machine. We do not control the input of the learner we can only infer the nature of output from the learners linguistic performance. Therefore, Corder (ibid) suggests longitudinal studies of a learner’s language. He regards the test conducted to study the learner’s language as an experimental approach and the subsequent error analysis a clinical approach to the same problem. What is to be found out is the degree to which the learner expresses his ‘message’ by
means of the categories and rules which the native speaker of the target language uses. As far as the learner is concerned the concept of ungrammatically or deviance is not applicable to him. Everything he utters is by definition, a grammatical utterance in his dialect. Considering Lyon's (1972) three processes of 1) **regularization**, the process of re-structuring an utterance in order to eliminate the sorts of the adventitious failures of performance already is slips of the tongue 2) **standardization**, restructuring the speaker's utterances to remove the systematic variation between utterances from different individuals due to personal and socio cultural factors and 3) **de-contextualization**; the most severe difficulties felt precisely because the learner is the only informant based on the target language the description of the errors is possible. Corder (ibid) finds that so long as the study of a learners language is target language based, however, there is always the tendency to normalize and decontextualize in the direction of the target language, that is, to relate the learner's utterances not to the sentence of his dialect, but to the equivalent sentences of the target language. The attempt is not merely to trace and list out the inadequate or incorrect sentences of the learner but to analysis the 'transitional idiolect of the learner and the process of his attaining or approximating the target language.

For the present study learners' sentences are listed and those sentences will be related to the reformulated sentences in the target language so that the deviation from that target language if any can be identified. The bilingual contrasts can be thus noted. A contrastive analysis approach also is applied to certain extent. The languages, English and Malayalam belonging to two different language families are different to a great extent in the language habits.

The errors or the ill formed sentences of the learners are compared and contrasted. In other words we compare what the learner actively said or wrote with what he/ she ought to have said or written to express what he intended to express. Corder (1987) calls it **reconstructed utterances** i.e., the correct utterances having the meaning intended by the learner. To put it differently we compare the erroneous or deviant utterances of the learners with what a native speaker would have said or written to express that meaning and the process of
identifying errors is that we compare the original sentences with the reconstructed sentences. The reconstructed/reformulated sentences can be regarded as the translations of the learner’s own sentences into the target language. Subsequently the real problems or the areas where the learner faltered can be noted and explained. Superficially these errors can be errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of relation, errors of ordering etc. For instance the sentence, *I have take the book is intended to mean I have taken the book. Here, the learner makes an ‘error of selection’; he chose the present form of the verb ‘take’ which is in the place of the past participle form of the verb, taken. When a learner produces a sentence such as *taken the books, he might have intended the form I have taken the book. But he omits the auxiliary have and when he makes a sentences like *He is likes ice-cream the anomalous finite is is wrongly added making an error of addition. The expected form is the target language would be He likes ice cream. A sentence contrived as *I have been not told about the matter there is an error of ordering. The negation word not is to be proceeded by been. The reconstructed form will be I have not been told about the matter. In all these examples sited, the reconstructed forms will tell us how and where the learner deviates. When all the errors are properly identified and sorted the interpretation of the errors will be done.

4.2 Need for identifying the errors

Identification of errors is an important part of error analysis and error analysis is part of the methodology of psycho linguistic investigation of language learning. Analysis is possible only after the identification of the errors subsequently we can examine the errors and find out the kind and nature of errors and the reasons why such errors occur and suggest ways to rectify the errors.

The process of identification helps us know whether the sentences of the learners are deviant or not. Corder (1981) roughly classified the utterances of the learners into three categories 1) Superficially deviant 2) Superficially well formed and appropriate in the context 3) Superficially well formed but inappropriate. What we are concerned are the first and third categories which
would be considered as errors. A close examination of the sentences only will help us identification and the linguistic explanation of these errors.

4.3 Similar studies in this field.

Several studies have come in the area of second language acquisition and problems related to the acquisition. Error analysis being a very important part of it has been taken up as the topic of researches. Among the Malayalee researchers V. Symala has made a comprehensive study in this area. Her research dissertation, ‘Acquisition of English by Malayalam Children’ and the book ‘Language Acquisition Theory and Practice, deal with the errors of Malayalee learners of English and the problems and errors of the learners encountered while acquiring English. S. Nair (1986) made several studies on the errors of learners of second language learners of Malayalam. Nanjaiah (1994) researched on the errors in the written English of the PUC students with Kannada mother tongue. Bhaskar (1962) attempted “Analysis of Common errors in PUC English” Chald T.T (1915) wrote on ‘Error Analysis, Contrastive Analysis and Students’ Velayudhan (1970) studied the contrastive phonology of English and Malayalam. The present study researches the errors of the second language learners of English with Malayalam mother tongue in Wayanad District in Kerala.

4.4 Areas of the errors identified

The present study, dealing with the errors of Malayalam learners of English as their second language covers important areas of the language. The areas covered are:

1. Phonology
2. Morphology
3. Syntax
4. Semantics

In the phonological area a short comparison of English and Malayalam phonologies are attempted for the better understanding of the acquisition of phonology. The errors committed in the acquisition of consonant sounds and vowel sounds and suprasegmental elements such as stress, intonation etc., are
examined. In the case of vowel sounds the problems in the areas of pure vowels and diphthongs are specially considered. For the study of spelling and orthography the compositions and dictations are used.

In the morphological area also a comparison is attempted between English and Malayalam morphological systems. Word classes, inflectional and derivational morphemes of nouns and verbs.

A discussion is made with the help of a comparison between English and Malayalam sentence patterns and structures in the area of syntax. The use of articles, prepositions, auxiliary system, concord, tense system, word order, the constructions such as passive voice, reported speech degrees of comparison, interrogation, negation; conditional sentences are also given in this area to test how far the learners are able to construct structures in different ways.

In the semantic area the understanding the message of the sentences and the ability to construct meaningful sentences are tested. Attempt of the learners to translate and Malayalam into English and the use of apt words are considered in this part.