

**The Effect of Error Analysis on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners of L2
Adjective Knowledge**

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Abstract

The present study intended to investigate the effect of Error Analysis on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of L2 adjectives. The question of this study followed the fact that whether Error Analysis has any effects on intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of L2 adjectives, In order to find the answer of this question, this article considered some issues about Error Analysis and their effect on L2 adjective knowledge. For this reason 60 intermediate EFL learners were selected by OPT test and were divided in two groups (a control group and an experimental group). Then the pretest of L2 adjectives knowledge was administered in both groups in order to find out about L2 adjectives ability. Then treatments were administered in both groups. Treatment in control group was the traditional way of teaching adjectives without attention to source of errors and in experimental group was teaching adjectives by using Error Analysis and considering the type and source of errors. After that the posttest was administered in both groups in order to find out the amount of progress between pretest and posttest. At the end, the data was analyzed by two ways, Independent sample t-test and One-way ANCOVAS. And the result of study showed that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected so the Error Analysis had positive effect on L2 adjective knowledge.

Keywords: Error Analysis; Error Taxonomies; L2 adjectives knowledge; EFL Learners.

Introduction and Review of the Literature

In Error Analysis, the data was described in terms of misinformation, omission, addition and misordering lending the hypothesis that stabilization. Learners make errors in comprehension and production. According to Lennon (1991), errors were linguistics form or combination of the forms which were under similar conditions of production in the same context that not be produced by native speakers. Corder (1967) stated that the errors provided the researchers the evidence of how language was learnt and was used as devises by which learners discovered the rules of target languages.

Error analysis was as a branch of applied linguistics in 1960s and was based on three major parts: 1. Determining the cause of errors. 2. Identifying strategies that learners use in learning a language. 3. Getting information on common difficulties in

language learning and use them in teaching and preparing the teaching materials. There were two types of the errors:

1. Interlingual errors that referred to errors which were rooted in mother tongue.
2. intralingual errors were classified as:
 - a) Overgeneralization that happened by the extension of L2 language rule.
 - b) Simplifications that in it learners use simpler linguistic rules than those found in the target language.
 - c) Developmental errors referred to those natural stages of development.
 - d) Errors of overproduction that referred to structures being used too frequently.
 - e) Errors of avoidance were resulted from failure to use certain target language structures.
 - f) Induced errors were resulted from transfer of training.
 - g) Communicative based errors were resulted from strategies of communication.

They were two major approaches to the study of learners' errors namely Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. According to Corder (1974, p. 25) "It is very difficult to assign the cause of failures in comprehension to an inadequate knowledge of particular syntactic features of misunderstood utterance". Error Analysis was emerged from contrastive analysis (Keshavars, 1999, p. 11, 42). The study of second language learners' errors has been emerged since 1970s. After that many researchers have devoted their time to find the cause of the errors that the L2 learners make in their production. Brown (2000) believed that the occurrence of errors was inevitable in learners' production and if learners neither made error nor received any feedback on their errors and the acquisition process would be impeded. According to Londono Vasquez (2007), Error Analysis was used as a fundamental tool in language teaching in order to determine teacher's point and readdress his/her methodology for fulfilling the students gaps. Error Analysis was a procedure used by both teachers and researchers who collected samples of learners' language, determining, describing and classifying errors according their cause and their nature and then evaluate them with the purpose to find "what the learner knows and does not know" (Corder, 1974, p. 170).

One central issue in Error Analysis was distinction between the errors and mistake. According to Corder (1967), errors took place as a result of lack of knowledge and mistakes were related to speaker speech faults which were not as a lack of knowledge.

Mistakes were as a result of memory limitation, competing plans and lack of automaticity. Corder (1967) proposed that Error Analysis should be restricted to the study of errors and the errors provided the teachers understanding about how language was learnt and was used as devices by which learners discovered the role of target language.

As Ellis (2003, p.15) noted that “at first, with the study of the errors, teachers understand that why learners make errors and provide useful information about learner language. Secondly, the type of errors can help teacher which way is useful to solve the errors. Thirdly, maybe making errors may actually help learners to learn when they self-correct the errors they make”. According to James (1998), Error Analysis attempted to describe learner’s interlanguage independently and objectively. The distinction in Error Analysis was related to the mother tongue which was not supposed to be mentioned for comparison and it involved linguistic aspect of learners’ errors. Error Analysis was characterized by an overemphasis on production data.

Diminishing of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of communicative fluency. EA fails to account for the strategy of avoidance. EA can keep us closely focused on specific languages rather than viewing universal aspect of language. The language systems of learners may have elements that reflect neither the target language nor the native language, but rather the universal feature of some kind. This view is in keeping with bio-programming theories of second language learning.

The purpose of Error Analysis was to help learners to learn a language. There was a need to evaluate errors, so some errors could be considered more serious than others because most of these errors were more likely to interfere with the intelligibility of what someone said. Teachers guided learners in deciding on the error correction strategy when the learners’ errors were frequent, global such as interfere with the comprehensibility of the text, and stigmatizing which was caused as a negative evaluation from native speakers. (Bates et al, 1982).

As far as the severity of errors is concerned, they can be classified as global and local. Global errors are those in the use of the major element of sentences structure. For example: missing, wrong or misplaced connectors make a sentence or utterance difficult or impossible to understand. Global errors hinder communication and affect overall organization of the utterance and prevent the hearer from comprehending some aspect of the message. Local errors, on the other hand, usually don’t prevent the message from

being heard, often because there is only a minor violation of one segment of the sentence, allowing the hearer/reader to make an accurate guess about the intended meaning. A successful evaluation of errors can help the teachers how they should address learner's error.

Error Taxonomies

Identifying and describing the origin of learners' errors were an activity which has received much attention during the last three decades. Error taxonomies refer to different classifications of errors which are related to production and distribution of part of language. Richards (1971) believed that, there were three sources of errors:

1. "Interference errors: errors base on the use of elements from one language while writing and speaking another language.
2. Intralingual errors: errors reflecting general characteristics of the rule learning, such as:
 - (a) Overgeneralization errors, for example: ("He can sings" where English allows "He can sing" and "He sings"), this kind of intralingual errors is when the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the second language.
 - (b) Ignorance of rule restrictions, for example: ("He made me to go rest" through extension of the pattern "He asked/wanted me to go"). In this kind of errors the learner applies rules to context where they are not applicable.
 - (c) Incomplete application of rules: for examples: ("You like to sing?" instead of "Do you like to sing?"). In this form, the learner fails to use a fully developed structure.
 - (d) False hypothesis: for example: (the use of "was" as a marker of past tense in "One day it was happened") and this form is because of the learners do not fully understand a distinction in the target language.
 - (e) Developmental errors: errors that happen when learners attempt to make hypothesis about the second language on the basis of limited experiences."
 - (f)

Another classification of errors was done by Dulay and Burt (1974), who classified learners' errors into three broad categories:

1. Developmental errors which were similar to L1 acquisition.
2. Interference errors which reflected the structure of the L1.
3. Unique errors that were neither developmental nor interference.

After that Dulay et al. (1982), described four criteria for classification of errors that are named:

1. Linguistic Taxonomy (included categories that were based on descriptive grammar of L2, these grammars emphasized on basic sentences structure).
2. Surface Strategy Taxonomy was based on the ways surface structures were changed. Learners might add unnecessary ones or might omit necessary item, or they could misform or misorder items.
3. Comparative Analysis Taxonomy, that in it, a researcher should classify the error types based on comparison between structures of target language errors. Comparative Analysis Taxonomy was divided in four categories: interlingual, developmental, ambiguous, and other errors that in these four groups the first two categories were major and the second two ones were drawn from the first two ones.
4. Communicative Effect Taxonomies were based on the effect of errors on the reader and listener and were divided in “global errors” that significantly hinder the flow of the communication and “local errors” which do not (Burt & Kiparsky, 1972).

According to Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977), in Richards classification in 1971, the distinction between developmental errors and intralingual errors was a little ambiguous, so that Richards in 1974 changed the classified errors based on their cause in two categories:

1. Interlingual errors: the errors were caused by L1 interference.
2. Intralingual and developmental errors: these errors were caused by the difficulty or the problem of language itself and most of the time happened during the learning process of the L2 language at a stage when the learners had not really acquired the knowledge.

Other classification of errors proposed by Brown (1980):

1. Intralingual transfer that was the negative transfer of items within the target language or incorrect generalization of the rules in L2 language.
2. Interference transfer that caused by the negative effect of L1.
3. Context of learning: In a classroom context, the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to made wrong generalization about the language and this overlaps both types of transfer.
4. Communication strategies that was an idea when linguistic forms were not available to the learner for some reasons and there were five main communication strategies, namely: Avoidance, Prefabricated patterns, Cognitive and personality style, Appeal to authority, and Language switch.

After that, James (1998) tried to show the different types of errors based on overinclusion, omission, misselection (wrong word not wrong form using), blending (when two alternative grammatical forms were combined to produce an ungrammatical blend) and misordering. So based on this, he proposed four cause of errors.

1. Interlingual errors were based on L1 influence on L2.
2. Intralingual errors were caused by the target language itself such as misanalysis (wrong hypothesis), false analogy, incomplete rule application (overgeneralization or undergeneralization as the learners did not use all the rules), overlooking co-occurrence restrictions (this kind of error occurred based on overlooking the exceptional rules), exploiting redundancy (this error occurred by carrying considerable redundancy), system-simplification or overgeneralization (errors were caused by the misuse of the grammatical rules or words), hypercorrection or monitor overuse (the kind of errors were based on the learners' over cautious and strict observance of the rules).
3. Induced errors which were the result of being misled through the way in which the teachers gave definitions.
4. Communication strategy-based errors that were divided into circumlocution or analytic strategies and approximation or holistic strategies.

Explaining the Source of Errors

Error Analysis has been essentially one of the labeling subgroups with a corpus and is divided in two major sources of errors: L1 interference and L2 overgeneralization. Besides L1interferences and L2 overgeneralization of target language linguistic

materials, some of the other important suggested sources of L2 error include context of learning and strategies of second language communication. In what follows, all these concepts can be addressed in some details.

L1 inference is the notion familiar from the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, but the effect of L1 inference in Error Analysis is as just one of the sources for L2 errors, rather than the overriding source. Nonetheless, Interlingual transfer is a significant source of error for all learners. The beginning stages of learning a second language are especially vulnerable to interlingual transfer from the native language, or interference. In these early stages, before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw. While it is not always clear that an error is the result of transfer from the native language, many such errors are detectable in learner speech. Fluent knowledge or even familiarity with the learners' native language of course aids the teacher in analyzing such errors.

Overgeneralization is the other source of L2 error. One of the major parts of learner language research has been its recognition of sources of error that extend beyond interlingual errors in learning a second language. Interlingual transfer that happens within the target language itself is a major factor in second language learning. The early stages of language learning are characterized by interlingual transfer but once learner have begun to acquire parts of the new system, more and more intralingual transfer is manifested. As learners progressed in the second language, their previous experience begins to include structures within the target language itself. It is important to note that the teacher cannot always be certain of the source of an apparent intralingual error, but repeated systematic observations of a learner's speech data can often remove the ambiguity of the single observation of errors.

The next major source of errors, although it overlaps with both types of transfer, is the context of learning. Context refers to the classroom with its teacher and its materials in the case of the school learning or the social situation. In a classroom context the teacher or the materials can lead the learner to make fluently in the language. This is what is alternatively that is called a false concept, transfer of training or an induced error. Student always make errors because of misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or even because of a pattern that was rotely memorized in a drill but improperly contextualized.

Finally another source of the error is related to the communicative strategies which the learners use to fill the gap in their knowledge. Communication strategies refer to the

ways learners with limited command of the language use to express a meaning in a second or foreign language. Learners obviously use production strategies in order to enhance getting their message across or compensate for missing knowledge, but at times these techniques can become the source of error.

Experiments on Error Analysis

Some studies identified the frequency of error types among EFL learners. Some of them have tried to observe errors which were caused by the L1 influence (Chen, 2006; Kao, 1999; Lin, 2002; Tseng, 1980) and other research involved those errors that were general among all EFL learners. Richards (1971) stated that learners' errors were the result of L1 inference and most of these errors were derived by the strategies of their first language. Error analysis would allow teachers for understanding what areas should be focused on. Neumann (1977) made an attempt to investigation the errors at elementary learners and intermediate. In order to this research, the most frequent errors were related to intermediate students, and the errors were in verb, noun modification, proposition, lexical options, number agreement, noun, adjective parts, and adverb of time and adverb of place. These studies have paid attention to different level in structural and lexical errors as, reported in Hatch (1983, p.103).

Kim (1989 cited in lee, 2001) conducted the study on two-hundred Korean EFL learners and using their English translation of Korean sentences and based on this research she stated that most of errors resulting from L1 structure were (24%) higher than overgeneralization errors (23%). Jiang (1995) analyzed Taiwanese EFL learners' errors in English preposition and stated that most of errors were derived from language transfer. Horney (1998 cited in Chen, 2006) employed error analysis to examine the error types in Taiwanese EFL students' English composition writing by 80 students, in his research classified the type of error based on their functions. Kao (1999) worked on 169 compositions of Taiwanese students to find out their L2 difficulties. Based on this research 965 errors were grammatical, (almost 60% of errors). And other errors were related to lexical errors and semantics errors. Welting (2004) tried to develop the linguistic category based on more lexical and linguistic errors. Otoshi (2005), proposed the linguistics taxonomy of grammatical errors were based on five error categories, (verb errors, wrong word, article errors, noun ending errors, sentences structure) and claimed these categories have been considered as a major errors in L2 writing literature. Chen (2006) proposed structured-linguistic error taxonomy, the major error types of this

taxonomy included: errors in using verbs, noun, article, pronouns, preposition and conjunctions. In Iranian cases of error analysis, there were some researches based on the influence of Farsi as the learners' native language. Javidan (1980), in his research, tried to investigate the difficulty order and the source of the errors which were followed by adults Iranian students in their learning of certain grammatical structures of English, he proposed that the general difficulties order in his study was similar to other reported in the case of adults' errors. In another study, Tabatabai (1985) conducted the study on differences L1 and L2 errors and stated that the 891 errors were detected in 10 major categories (articles, incorrect and confusing tenses, prepositions, conjunctions, numbers, adjectives, predicates, subjects, pronoun and verb phrases).

Koosha and Jafarpour (2006) tried to determine the extent to which Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocation of prepositions was affected by their L1 and the result of this research indicated that Iranian EFL learners tended to carry over their first language collocation of patterns to their target production. Khodabandeh (2007) classified Iranian EFL students' difficulties. In this study 58 male and female students of English took part in and were asked them to translate some sentences. All the students' translations were analyzed in order to investigate cross-linguistic problems in translating. The result of the research showed that the students had grammatical and lexical errors in their sentences. Ahmadvand (2008) worked in analyzing Iranian EFL learners' errors in their written productions at the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels, he reported, omissions, additions, and regularizations were among the most frequent types of errors and negative transfers accounted for only 30% of all errors and most of the errors were based on misinformation. Ahmadvand (2008) decreased the role of L1 in learning of English.

Methodology

The quasi-experimental research was followed by this article. Participants were selected via an Oxford placement test. The test was composed of 40 questions, which fall into different categories. The selected students randomly divided in to two groups, an experimental and a control group and each group was consisted 30 students in intermediate levels. Pretest of adjective knowledge was administered as one of the primary source of data for this investigation. It included 100 items about the different part of adjective knowledge. In the next step, the treatments were administered in both groups. Treatment in control group is the traditional way of teaching adjectives without

attention to source of errors and in experimental group was teaching adjectives by using Error Analysis and considering the type and source of errors. At the end of the course the posttest was administered in both groups. The posttest was the same with the pretest in the way of test-retest and was consisted 100 questions. At the end, the collected data was analyzed through SPSS program.

Data Analysis

There were two ways of analysis of data in this research. The first one was an independent sample T-test which was conducted between scores of posttest and the second one was analysis of covariance (one-way ANCOVA) which was used for comparing the mounts of progress from pretest into posttest in each group, at the end collected data was analyzed through SPSS program.

Result and Discussion

The results were demonstrated through different tables, such as the table of independent sample t-test between the scores of posttest, and analysis of covariance between the scores of pretest and posttest in both groups.

Independent Samples Test

t-test for Equality of Means					
df	Sig. (2-tailed)		t		
knowledgeofL2adjectives		Equal variances assumed	5.350	58	0.000
		Equal variances not assumed	5.350	55.404	0.000

The result of table showed that the observed t was 5.350 while the critical value of t was 2.000, so observed t was > bigger than the critical t. and the amount of significant here is 0.0 that was acceptable too. It was included that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected

ANCOVA results for the experimental group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1916.745 ^a	1	1916.745	12.688	.001
Intercept	3493.370	1	3493.370	23.124	.000

PreEX/PosEX	1916.745	1	1916.745	12.688	.001
Error	4230.055	28	151.073		
Total	106372.000	30			

The results of Table revealed that the effect of the independent variable (using Error Analysis and considering the type and source of errors) on the dependent variable (Knowledge of L2 Adjectives) was significant. $*p < .05$, so the result was acceptable and This was good since ANCOVA “ assumes that the relationship between the dependent variable and each of covariates is linear” (Pal lent, p.293).

ANCOVA results for the control group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	766.344 ^a	1	766.344	6.720	.015
Intercept	753.895	1	753.895	6.611	.016
PreCON/PosC ON	766.344	1	766.344	6.720	.015
Error	3193.023	28	114.037		
Total	50925.000	30			

The result was shown in this Table indicated that the value of $F= 6.720$ was under the 0.05, $*p < .05$, thus there was the effect of the independent variable (ordinary ways of teaching adjectives as a treatment) on the dependent variable (Knowledge of L2 Adjectives) too. But the amount of this effect was lower than the effect in experimental group, and there was the significant difference between them. F-value in experimental group was upper than the F-value in control group. By the result of research study the null hypothesis was rejected and the result showed that the using Error Analysis in classroom had more positive effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learner’s knowledge of L2 adjectives.

Conclusion

In this article, a significant difference was existed between the two groups on knowledge of L2 adjectives. The difference between the learners’ performance of the experimental group and the learners’ performance of control group was significant. And although there is an amount of effect in both groups, but the effect in experimental group based on the considering error analysis was stronger than the effect in control

group without attention to source of errors in teaching knowledge of adjectives. So it must be said that the using error analysis and considering source of errors had more positive effect than ordinal teaching adjective (without attention to source of errors) on Iranian intermediate EFL learner's knowledge of L2 adjectives.

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