


<p><b>A THEORETICAL REVIEW ON THE PRESENCE AND ANALYSIS OF ERRORS IN THE PROCESS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING</b></p>			<p><b>Linguistics</b></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> error classification, mother tongue influence, linguistic levels, L2.</p>
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p>			
<p>This paper investigates the presence and analysis of errors in the process of learning a second language. Errors occur because of the influence of learners' first language on their production of the foreign/second language. This can be regarded as the transfer of elements of one language to another in terms of lexis, grammar, phonology, etc. This paper focuses on the main types of errors, main linguistic levels, extralinguistic phenomena, and most importantly ways of improvement. For the study to achieve its objectives a literature review was undertaken that included, among other things books, policies, journals, and research articles on the same issue under study. In this paper, we aim to layout a theoretical framework of the general considerations of linguists regarding the main linguistic errors. Many researchers have performed studies on this issue. They consider their studies important to determine what kind of errors learners make when learning a second language.</p>			

**1. Introduction**

The theoretical perspective of error analysis in L2 learning integrates insights from cognitive, constructivist, sociocultural, and linguistic theories. It views errors as an inevitable and meaningful part of the language learning process, providing valuable clues about the learner's cognitive strategies, developmental stage, and influence on L1. Error analysis challenges the earlier behaviorist view of errors as purely negative and instead offers a constructive lens through which errors are seen as opportunities for learning, reflection, and growth. By analyzing errors, teachers can better support L2 learners, tailor instruction to their needs and enhance the overall language learning experience. Error analysis gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to contrastive analysis theory, which was based on behaviorist principles. Contrastive analysis predicted that learners would transfer structures from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2) and that errors were caused primarily by this negative transfer (interference). However, contrastive analysis could not explain many errors that had no link to L1, which led to the development of error analysis.

Error analysis in L2 learning is a critical approach within the field of applied linguistics, aimed at examining the errors made by learners to understand their learning process and challenges. It helps educators identify common difficulties, adjust teaching strategies, and ultimately improve language acquisition outcomes. Error analysis in L2 learning plays a pivotal role in understanding how learners process and acquire a new language. Rather than viewing errors as purely negative, this approach sees them as a natural part of learning that offers insight into the learner's progress and needs. Through systematic analysis of errors, teachers can better support learners, focusing on areas of difficulty, improving teaching methods, and ultimately enhancing language acquisition outcomes.

From a sociocultural perspective, language learning is viewed as a socially mediated process. Errors, within this framework, arise not only from internal cognitive processes but also from the interaction between learners and their environment (teachers, peers, cultural context). According to Vygotsky (1978), learners acquire language through interaction within their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), where they can perform tasks with the help of a more knowledgeable person (teacher or peer). Errors provide important feedback about what learners can do on their own and where they need assistance. From the perspective of universal grammar (UG), a theory proposed by Noam Chomsky, errors in L2 learning are seen as reflective of the learner's attempt to apply the innate grammatical structures common to all human languages. In this view, the mind is prewired with a set of universal principles that guide language acquisition. However, learners must adapt these universal principles to the specific rules of L2.

### 1.1 Errors in Learning a Second Language

According to Lennon (1991), an error is a linguistic form or combination of forms that, in the same context and under similar conditions of production are unlikely to be produced by native speakers' counterparts. According to behaviorist theory, errors appear when old habits inhibit the learning of new habits. This results from a lack of knowledge of the correct use of linguistic items. Ellis (1887) highlighted the distinction between errors and mistakes. He stated that errors reflect gaps in the learner's knowledge when he does not know what is correct, and mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; thus, mistakes may be committed by learners as well as by native speakers, who despite knowing the rule, are unable to employ it at the very moment because of external factors such as stress, hurried speech, or purposefully, as a discourse strategy. If learners use an incorrect form consistently, it might suggest that they truly do not know the rule and therefore commit an error. In contrast, if the learner's language is inconsistent and the use of the correct form alternates with the correct one, it might be inferred that the learner knows the rule but is unsuccessful in applying it persistently. Tinkler (1976) noted "Mistakes, unlike errors, are not systematic and are omitted from error analysis". An error "cannot be self-corrected", whereas a mistake "can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker".

Corder (1967) tries to justify that errors are significant to teachers, researchers, and learners. He ascertained that errors are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, they tell him/her if he/she undertakes a systematic analysis and how far toward the goal the learner has progressed. Errors provide teachers with immediate feedback on what needs to be improved, so they provide the teachers with positive information about the learners' progress. Second, they provide the researcher with evidence of how language is learned or acquired, and what strategies the learner employs in the discovery of language. Third, errors are indisputable to the learner because the making of errors is regarded as a device that the learner uses to learn. They reflect the stage of acquisition a learner has achieved. Errors can be recorded over time, and in this way, a learner's progress can be traced.

Gass (2008) defines errors as "red flags" that provide evidence of the learner's knowledge of the foreign language. Other authors have suggested that errors can be understood as "a reliable

and accurate source of information about the development of language learning”. Even though correct production is an ultimate goal for both teachers and learners, thinking of errors as compatible creates barriers and makes learners too shy to speak in lessons as well as in real-life encounters. Currently, this assumption is being overcome, and the notion that students should be encouraged to speak in lessons as much as possible is widely accepted.

## 1.2 Classification of Errors

Richards (1974) proposed three ways of classifying errors namely, interference errors, intralingual errors and developmental errors. The interference (interlingual) errors are those caused by the influence of the learner’s mother tongue (L1) on the production of the target language in areas where the languages differ. (Robinet & Schachter, 1983). This phenomenon has been examined for more than six decades. Linguistic factors at different linguistic levels, as well as psycho-socio affective factors, have been studied. Some researchers view it as an unconscious learning strategy, whereas others view it as a cognitively conscious strategy. Certain scientists consider interference errors to be important phenomena in language learning, whereas others minimize their intervention in L2. Some experts believe that they are important at the beginning of the learning process but that they disappear as competence increases. Others maintain that this phenomenon does not disappear even in highly competent bilinguals. In addition, interlingual errors are “similar in structure to a semantically equivalent phrase or sentence in the learner’s native language” (Dulay et al., 1982), and the errors result from mother tongue “interference” or “transfer”. Therefore, the errors reflected the native language structure.

The second classification, by Richards & Sampson (1974), showed that intralingual errors reflected errors contributed by the target language itself, autonomous as the NL. Richards and Sampson asserted that intralingual errors “reflect the learner’s competence at a particular stage and illustrate some of the general features of language acquisition instead of the incapacity of the learner to separate”. The study further indicated that intralingual errors resulted from overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rule restrictions, and developmental errors. Intralingual errors are errors that result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than from language transfer. They occur as a result of the learner’s attempt to construct concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it. These errors are common in the speech of second language learners and are often analyzed to determine what types of strategies are being used by the learners (Keshavarz, 2003).

Finally, developmental errors reflect the strategies learners use to acquire language. These errors showed that learners, sometimes completely independent of the native language, made false hypotheses about the target language on the basis of limited knowledge. Dulay & Burt (1974) reported that many errors were developmental errors.

Some authors, such as James (1998), have proposed four sources of errors interlingual, intralingual, communication strategy-based (subdivided into holistic strategies or approximations

and analytic strategies or circumlocution), and induced errors (resulting from incorrect instruction of the language). Hendrickson (1980) suggested differentiating between global and local errors. Global errors are errors that hinder understanding and are more serious than local errors, which affect only single-sentence constituents. Global errors are errors in the overall structure of a sentence, thus making the sentence difficult to understand (Ellis, 1997).

As mentioned above, according to researchers, errors do not originate in the influence of the first language but rather are the result of an imperfect knowledge of the second language. They concluded that language acquisition follows a universal order. For example, different learners with different mother tongues have the same difficulty in learning Language 2. Krashen suggested that the transfer phenomenon was only due to ignorance and did not play an important role in learning language 2. Other authors in the same area have suggested that errors can be understood as “a reliable and accurate source of information about the development of language learning”.

### **1.3 Mother Tongue Interference as the Main Cause of Errors**

The term “mother tongue” refers to different names such as the native language, first language, and primary language. Mother tongue interference or language transfer is the influence of one language on another. Dulay (1982) defines interference as the automatic transfer, owing to habit, of the structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. Lott (1983) defines interference as “errors in the learners’ use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue”. The behaviorist view of language transfer was reduced to habit formation. According to the behaviorist perspective linguists define learning in terms of imitation, practice, reinforcement, and habit formation. The view is that the habits of language interfere with the new habits of L2. Cook (2003) noted that learning a language is a process of habit formation. Ellis (1997) refers to interference as “transfer”, which he says is “the influence that the learners’ L1 exerts over the acquisition of L2.” He argues that transfer is governed by learners’ perceptions about what is transferable and by their stage of development of L2.

According to Behla (1999), although foreign language learners appear to be accumulating enough knowledge, they encounter problems organizing coherent structures when speaking and relying on mother tongue structures in the foreign language, revealing a gap between gathering knowledge and producing orally. In cases in which the gap increases and becomes more complex to solve, the possibility of mother tongue interference emerges. For Weinreich (2010), mother tongue interference refers to “those instances of deviations from the norms of either language which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e., as a result of language contact, it will be referred to as interference phenomena.” Michael Swan (2008) said, “It is quite an illusion to think, as even literate people sometimes do, that meanings are the same in all languages, that languages differ only in the forms used for those meanings”. He also noted that when a person is acquiring a second language, that person tends to economize the words used when speaking the target language, which makes the communication

ambiguous. Saville-Troike (2006) defines language interference as the inappropriate influence of the L1 structure or rule on L2 use.

The innatist perspective supports the view that humans in general are born with innate knowledge of the principles of universal grammar. Krashen (1988) suggested that humans acquire L2 in the way that children pick up their mother tongue with no conscious attention to language form. On the other hand, adults learn L2 through conscious attention and the role of exposure to input in L2 acquisition.

Interference with the mother tongue refers to the inhibition of the child's mother tongue in learning other languages. It is the presence of linguistic structures and structural elements of the mother tongue in the second language learning process.

According to Lott (1983), three factors cause language interference as follows:

1) The Interlingua factor: Interlingua transfer is an important source of information for language learners.

2) The overextension of analogy; typically, learners are wrong in the use of vocabulary (the same word in two languages with different languages or meanings) because of the similarity between the first language and the second language.

3) Transfer of structure; the transfer of the mother tongue falls into two types: positive transfers and negative transfers. When the habits of the two languages are similar, positive transfer occurs. In any other case, it is a negative transfer. Negative transfer refers to an instance of an error-induced transfer because the old habitual behavior is different from the new behavior being learned.

According to Weinreich (2010), the following are the factors causing language interference:

A. speaker's bilingual background as the learner is influenced by both the source and the target language. Bilingualism is one of the main factors of interference, as the speaker is influenced by both the source and the target language.

B. Disloyalty to the target language when the learner uses an uncontrolled structure of their first language elements to the output to the target language.

C. The limited vocabulary of the target language forces the learner to switch to his mother tongue especially while speaking the target language.

Factors such as overgeneralization of target language rules, literacy level, and social context, as well as the environment of the learner, also influence the development of interlanguage. As an example, with respect to language one transfer, an Albanian native speaker who is learning English might incorrectly produce: *Have many books on the table* (*Ka shumë libra mbi tavolinë*) or *Sam hurt the foot* (*Sam hurt his foot*).

## 1.4 Main Linguistic Levels of Error Occurrence

Transfer is a reality in the process of second language learning. Ellis (1986) argues that transfer is the influence of L1 grammatical rules on L2. Those rules of the first language are fixed in the brain and interfere with the second language, resulting in positive and negative interference. When the grammatical structures of both languages are similar the structure of one can be applied to the other. This kind of interference facilitates the learning process. Negative transfer occurs when different units and structures of both languages interfere with the learning of L2. This type impedes this because the learners use the structures and rules belonging to their language L1 to construct messages in the foreign language, which can lead to errors. According to Ellis & Brown (1997), errors occur because learners do not know what is correct. Therefore, that determines the deficiency in the learner's knowledge as long as mistakes reflect what the learner is unable to perform in regard to what he or she knows. The effects of language interference can be in any aspect or level of language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, as the main areas. They pronounce certain words incorrectly or with difficulty, confuse items of vocabulary, and map L1 grammatical patterns inappropriately onto L2.

With the respect to the negative influence on pronunciation, learners build their own language sound patterns on the basis of their prior knowledge, which occasionally contradicts the correct language sound patterns of English. There may be several kinds of different elements in the sound system between the two languages. First, it is the existence of a given sound in the latter, which is not found in the former [tʃ] [ŋ]. Second, there are differences in the sound distributions. The learners practically use Albanian pronunciation sounds and then transfer them into English. This leads them to produce phonological errors. Phonological differences are very serious obstacles to Albanian learners being able to acquire a native-English speaker accent.

The vocabularies of certain languages are mostly about words of surroundings connected to life. In this way, a person who is trying to master a foreign language will learn new words that are not in his/her native language or that are different. In this case, vocabulary is vital. The more vocabulary a person knows, the better it is to learn an L2. Lexical interference can be various. It occurs as the transfer of morphemes of the first language into the target language. It can be a combination of both languages to create new words. It can be the wrong use of words, narrowing or expansion of the word meaning, or formation of non existing lexical items using foreign suffixes. Krashen's Equivalence Hypothesis explains the fact that some students tend to generalize the meaning of words or phrases and give them a completely different meaning simply because they find it similar to concepts from their mother tongue; a good example of this is when students in their early second language acquisition process use the phrase (*at all*).

Grammatical interference concerns changes in the structure and structural elements in the process of language learning. Interference occurs in the fields of morphology and syntax. In the

process of forming words, there will be a process of changing words because of the importation of affixes, but it still has a meaning.

Syntactic interference occurs when the structure of the first language is used in the target language. Studies have shown that languages are classified according to how they combine morphemes to form words. There are two basic morphological types of language structure, analytic and synthetic with several subtypes. Analytic languages are so-called because they are composed of sequences of free morphemes. English is an analytic language. Chinese is a pure analytic language. In these languages, a structure must occur in a particular sequence if the sentence is to convey the desired meaning, e.g.: *John glanced at Mary*. If we rearrange those words, we either come up with nonsense: *Mary John at glance*, or another sentence whose meaning is distinctly different: *Mary glanced at John*.

The ordering of words in sentences determines in part, whether a sentence is grammatical or not and what the sentence means. One of the many rules of English requires that the grammatical subject of a sentence normally precedes the main verb, which in turn normally precedes its direct object, (*Yesterday I met Tom. He had bought a new bike*). An important fact about rules of word order is that they are language specific, that is, languages vary in how they order words. Analytic languages have a fixed word order. In synthetic languages, affixes or bound morphemes are attached to other morphemes so that a word may be made up of several meaningful elements. Hungarian is a synthetic language. Albanian is also a synthetic language. In these languages, there is a free word order, if we change the order of the elements of the sentences, the meaning does not change: *Peshkatari kapi peshkun. Peshkun e kapi peshkatari*. Another rule of Albanian syntax is that the grammatical subject of a sentence normally may not precede the verb as it becomes clear by the inflectional form of the verb. Some examples of interference can be seen in the grammatical properties of parts of speech. For example, the irregular plural of nouns, (*news* – ordinarily singular in English, *lajm – lajme* - countable noun in Albanian), the possessive form of nouns (*Sam's book* in English - *libri i Semit (not Semit libër)* in Albanian), order of adjectives (*a small black leather wallet* in English – *një kuletë lëkure e vogël e zezë* in Albanian), interrogative form of verbs (*He speaks English – Does he speak English?* in English, *Ai flet anglisht – Flet ai anglisht?* in Albanian), causative constructions (*She has had her hair cut* in English, *Ajo ka prerë flokët-* in Albanian), etc. The greatest impact of mother tongue interference can be seen in speaking as a language skill, in writing but more in grammar as a language area. This leads learners to make errors.

## Conclusion

The role that students' L1 plays in learning a second language is debatable. Supporters of the monolingual teaching approach believe that learners' L1 should not be allowed, as it decreases their learning of the new language and prevents them from receiving useful input in the target language. However, advocates of the bilingual approach suggest that its use enhances the process of second language acquisition. Interference with the mother tongue refers to the inhibition of the

child's mother tongue in learning other languages. It is the presence of linguistic structures and structural elements of the mother tongue in the second language learning process. When learning second language, learners already have one language present in their minds, thus making it difficult to learn a second language without using linguistic features of the first tongue. The effects of language interference can be in any aspect or level of language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, as the main areas. Phonological differences are very serious obstacles to Albanian learners being able to acquire a native-English speaker's accent and intonation. Lexical interference can vary. It occurs as the transfer of morphemes of the first language into the target language. It can be a combination of both languages to create new words. It can be the wrong use of words, narrowing or expansion of the word meaning, or formation of non existing lexical items using foreign suffixes. Grammatical interference concerns changes in the structure and structural elements in the process of language learning. Interference occurs in the fields of morphology and syntax. Syntactic interference occurs when the structure of the first language is used in the target language. The greatest impact of mother tongue interference can be seen in speaking as a language skill, in writing but more in grammar as a language area. This leads learners to make errors. According to behaviorist theory, errors appear when old habits inhibit the learning of new habits. This results from a lack of knowledge of the correct use of linguistic items. They can be understood as "a reliable and accurate source of information about the development of language learning." When correcting, teachers should consider the purpose of a specific language exercise, i.e., perceiving the benefits that can be drawn from the errors. They must keep in mind when and how to provide feedback to make it most effective. They should also be aware that the errors that learners make are also a kind of feedback on their teaching. Researchers have concluded that language acquisition follows a universal order. For example, different learners with different mother tongues have the same difficulty in learning L2.

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