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THE "S" OF THIRD PERSON SINGULAR IN THE PRESENT SIMPLE:

FROM ROTE LEARNING TO CLASSROOM EFFICIENT PRACTICE THE CASE OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANTINE

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the "Master" degree in

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Dedication

This work is dedicated in memory of my dearest person. My first teacher, whose presence brought life to everything and whose absence brought pain. The person whose words of encouragement are still echoing in my memory…who had always been proud of my continuous success… and would have been the happiest person to see this work accomplished MY FATHER.

I dedicate this work also to MY MOTHER, the symbol of persistence, and to my brothers and their wives and to my sisters and their husbands; as well as, my nephews and my nieces. Another dedication to all my friends especially HANAN and NABILA.

A very special dedication to my dear husband MOHAMED and all his family.

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Special thanks are due to the students for their participation in accomplishing this study.

Abstract

This study seeks to analyze the errors made by first-year students of English at Constantine University. This analysis is in the grammatical categories of the simple present tense. The aim is to determine the real cause of those deviations arising from learning the target language. To find out the extent to which this grammatical area in the English language poses crucial complexities to the learners.

To check the hypothesis of this study, a question-based test was constructed to elicit samples of the participants written productions. Through a quantitative/qualitative treatment of the observed errors in the writings of the learners, errors were sorted out and classified.

The results of the study show that most of the observed errors are due to the lack of awareness of the learners.

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Introduction

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Introduction

This piece of research is divided into two chapters; a descriptive chapter about the review of the related literature, and an empirical chapter.

In the first chapter, we are going to deal with contrastive analysis and a review of error analysis. We also will discuss types of errors and the reasons behind them. In addition to that, we will make the difference between errors and mistakes as well as between language acquisition and language learning.

In the second chapter, we will deal with the analysis of the collected data. As a first step, it will be dealt with the report of the observed errors, then its analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of ESL/EFL learners possess weak performances, and they still go on making errors. Many of those errors are now recognized not to have any clear relation to the features of the mother tongue. A reason an alternative way of looking at them is now to be found.

Errors cannot always be easily identified. They presuppose the norms of adult speakers and deviations from these norms are now considered to be inevitable. From that it can be said that errors in the use of the present simple can be observed as in the omission of the 'S' of the third person singular(she, he, it). For example we say: ' he speak' instead of 'he speaks'.

Students must be aware of this kind of error, and need to make more effort to build their self-efficacy which is a key in effective learning. Hence, an investigation about first year students' awareness of the 'S' of third person singular during the process of writing will be done.

Aim of the Study

Over the past few decades, an impressive number of applied linguists have attempted to probe into the problem of 'error' which has become a topical issue in language pedagogy. Such attempts have aimed at finding practical solutions to these apparent failures that arise in the course of foreign or second language learning. With this end in view, Error Analysis is considered a tool to access and measure the language problems of learners in speech and writing.

The main objective of this research is the identification of the real cause behind the problem that most English students face. That problem is mainly the omission of the 'S' third person singular in present simple. Students have already studied the rule of this tense in early stages of their studies. Through time, they normally no longer forget the rule or do not know how to apply it. But in the current situation, it is not the case, and we are asking why such errors occur.

Research Questions

In this research, we may address the following questions:

1. Under what condition is this error likely to occur in learning English?

2. Why do students forget the 'S' of third person singular while writing?

3. Is it a matter of lack of awareness?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis suggests that 'the lack of awareness of students would give them the opportunity to write correctly concerning tense. In other words:

'If Algerian students are aware of the 'S' omission error, then they will produce correct pieces of writing.'

Means of Research

To fulfill this aim, test the hypothesis and get the needed information, we will study the essays of first year students' because they are beginners. We will analyze their essays written about specific subjects so that they will use the present tense.

CHAPTER ONE

ERROR ANALYSIS   : BACKGRUND AND FUNDATIONS

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Introduction

The uniqueness of humans could not be marked without referring to the gift of language. Therefore committing language errors must mark the peak of human uniqueness. In a provisional way, errors may be defined as unsuccessful bits of language. They are phenomena that could be observed in both foreign language and second language learning. As a matter of fact, many teachers complain about their students committing errors of different sorts. The attempts to account for this phenomenon have developed over time and have been distinct in perspective.

I. Traditional Attitudes Towards Errors

a. The Pre-contrastive Approach

Drid(2003) wrote that early attitudes mentioned that the deviations the learners made in contexts during the process of learning a language are signs or traces of the 17th century. While teaching Latin in Europe, in the use and the learning of a language with moral and religious shortcomings there was a close association of errors. Such "lapses in knowledge" according to Richards and Rodgers (1986) received a violent and cruel punishment. In other words, errors were certainly bad things to suffer from. In this respect, Crystal (1985, 55) wrote: "Throughout this period, a high standard of correctness in learning was maintained, especially in pronunciation. The Benedictine Rule, for example, heavily punished the mistakes of children in Latin classes."

Many efforts were done to collect the common errors of learners in the 1940s. According to Ellis (1985, 51), "Error Analysis consisted of little more than impressionistic collections of 'common' errors and their linguistic classification. The goals of traditional Error Analysis were pedagogic—errors provided information which could be used to sequence items for teaching or to devise remedial lessons." According to Corder (1975) It

was accepted that the production of errors was a mark of inefficient learning and lack of mastery of the rules; the suitable cure for that was thought to be reteaching.

b. Contrastive Analysis

From the 1940s to the 1960s, a decided shift in the approach to analyzing errors was present. This approach was *Contrastive Analysis,* considering the effect of the learners' native language on the production of error. This activity was provided by the publication of Lado's pioneering work *Linguistics Across Cultures.* (James, 1980)

Contrastive Analysis was developed from the practical need to teach a second language efficiently, (Ellis, 1985). This is mainly as Lado (1957,09) wrote, "the teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them." This was the reflection of comparing pairs of languages to establish the areas of learning difficulty. (Ellis, 1985)

1. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

The central object of contrastive analysis is the revealing of the existed differences and similarities between languages. As far as error production is concerned, contrastive linguistic studies have their justification in the predicative power, (Drid, 2003). That's why, according to the *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis*, what is resulted from the differences between the learner's first language and the target one is considered a second language error,(Ellis,1985). In other words, what is known as the *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* claimed that:

"A language learner's first language will have a crucial influence on the learning of the second language. Most obviously, errors made in the process of learning the second language will bear significant traces of interference from the first language (…). The

learners' difficulties can be analyzed, even predicted in advance, by a systematic contrastive comparison of the two languages involved."(Carter, 1993, 14-15)

Lado (1957, 02) states this hypothesis as follows: "Those elements that are similar to his (the learner's) native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult." So according to what Lado said, if the foreign language structure differs from that of the mother-tongue, certainly there would be difficulty in learning and error in performance.

The concept of 'language transfer' should be considered in some detail while dealing with the contrastive analysis hypothesis. Ellis (1985) defines transfer as the process in which knowledge of the first language is used in learning a second language. This concept constitutes the core of the hypothesis, as Lado (1957,02) points out: "Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture-both productively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives."

In the foreign language learning context, the learner already has knowledge of his mother tongue, which he tends to transfer when learning another. Many transfer types could be distinguished depending on its direction and its effect. It can be either *'pro-active'* in which there is the transfer of '*existing skills onto new skills*' or '*retro-active*' which is the transfer of '*new skills onto existing skills*.' It also can be 'positive' and called '*facilitation*' occurring when the first and second language systems are similar, and thus make the learning facile. And it can be '*negative*' called '*interference*' occurring when the systems differ, (Drid, 2003).

2. **Contrastive Analysis Refuted**

In early 1970s, there was a traceable shift of emphasis away from the theory of language transfer and its implications. Contrastive Analysis was criticized for three major points. First, concerning the ability of Contrastive Analysis to predict errors, there were doubts which came into existence when researchers started examining language-learner. Second, concerning the feasibility of comparing languages and the methodology of Contrastive Analysis there were a number of theoretical criticisms. Third, reservations about whether Contrastive Analysis had anything to offer to language teaching were taken into consideration, (Ellis, 1985).

Non-interference errors were recognized. For example, Brooks (1960) provides four causes of the learner's error.

1. The structural pattern is not known by the learner or not familiar to him, that is why he makes a random response.

2. The learner has not made a lot of practice about the correct model.

3. Influence by the first language may lead to distortion.

4.A general rule which is not applicable in a particular instance may be followed,(in Ellis,1985). In this respect, James (1980, 146) cites that, "limitations stemming from the fact that not all errors are the result of first language interference, i.e. interlingual errors. Other major sources of errors have been recognized." He ends by saying that "One must be careful not to exaggerate the claims made on behalf of Contrastive Analysis."

In addition to that, other aspects of contrastive analysis hypothesis were objected, more precisely the validity of equating '*difference*' with 'difficulty' and 'difficulty' with *'error'*. *'Difficulty'* is deemed to be a psychological matter while 'difference' is a purely linguistic one. So, the linguistic difference between two language systems cannot be the interference

of the learning difficulty, (Ellis, 1985). Corder (1973, 229) also points out: "Many teachers will have been glade to find that what was identified as a difference and predicted as difficulty turned out not to be so."

The second equation, i.e. difficulty leading to error was considered to be of doubtful validity. Empirical researches showed that the difficult predicted items on the basis of contrastive analysis did not in reality produce errors. For example, a sentence with many errors might cause no difficulty to the learner, and the opposite is true. So, difficulty and error are not significantly related. This means that the claim of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis leads into questions,(Ellis,1985).

Ellis also mentioned another set of criticisms which shows if *Contrastive Analysis* has any practical worth to language teachers. If interference is not the cause of most errors, then *Contrastive Analysis* has a limited value as it was at first. Therefore, according to Ellis(1985,32) , "the main doubt about Contrastive Analysis from a pedagogic point of view has arisen from changing attitudes to the role of error in language learning." Such criticisms reveal that the *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* fell into disfavor because it was apparent that large numbers of errors could not be predicted or explained by it.

3. The Strong vs the Weak Claims of Contrastive Analysis

The *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* has a number of variants along a "weak strong claim" scale,(Klein,1986,26). It is worth noting that the distinction between these two versions of the hypothesis opened the way to what is known as "*Error Analysis*." The strong version claims that through the identification of the differences between the target language and the learner's first language, all errors can be predicted,(Ellis,1985). It means that these differences can be used to guess all errors that will occur. As Lee (1968, 180) notes: "The prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language." The weak version, on

the other hand, claims "only to be diagnostic," it means to identify the exact cause of that problem. That's why *Contrastive Analysis* is used to show which errors are the result of interference. This means that one must analyze the learner's language to identify errors, then use contrastive analysis to discover which errors are the outcome of the differences between the first and second language,(Ellis,1986). Corder(1975,202) wrote: "The weak hypothesis claims no more than an explanatory role for the contrastive linguistics: where difficulties are evident from the errors made by learners, then comparison between the mother tongue and second language may help to explain them."

Ellis (1985) highlighted that there are some supporters of the strong version of the hypothesis. Nowadays, the idea that the first language is not the sole and may be not even the prime cause of grammatical errors is something obvious and clear. In spite of that, the weak version is not very convincing or good enough, since there must be a comparison of two languages to prove that errors thought to be the result of interference are actually so.

II. **Error Analysis**

a. **Definition**

Ellis (1985) defines Error Analysis as a procedure which researchers and teachers tend to use. Among this procedure, there is a collection of samples of learner language, identification of the errors in the sample, their classification according to their hypothesized causes, and finally evaluation. Error Analysis is a comparative process, as explained by Corder (1973), in the sense that there is a comparison of synonymous utterances in the learner's language and the target one. This is a particular matter of contrastive analysis which deals with two languages, and it is its starting point indicating the same message as error analysis.

Lightbown and Spada(2006) mentioned that the *contrastive analysis hypothesis* cannot explain many aspects of learners' language, and researchers started using another approach to analyzing learners' errors. During the 1970s, this approach was developed and known as '*Error Analysis*', where there is a detailed description and an analysis of the errors that second language learners make. Error Analysis is different from Contrastive Analysis since it did not predict errors; however, it discovers and describes different kinds of them. The hypothesis of error analysis is that, "like child language, second language learner language is a system in its own right-one that is rule-governed and predictable."(Ibid,79-80)

When error analysis became an alternative approach to contrastive analysis, it moved to be a research tool for investigating how learners acquire language. Contrastive analysis involved contrasting two systems, the mother tongue and the target language. There was the belief that errors were produced because of negative transfer arising from linguistic differences between the two systems. However, contrastive analysis was attacked, when many predicted errors by contrastive analysis did not occur, and others that were not predicted to occur did occur,(Ellis and Barkhizen,2005). In this respect, Ellis(1985,53) maintains that "The most significant contribution of Error Analysis, apart from the role it played in the reassessment of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, lies in its success in elevating the status of errors from undesirability to that of a guide to the inner workings of the language learning process." According to Error Analysis researchers, errors are present not only by the attribution of the mother tongue, and are not only predicted from the differences between languages. In this paradigm, only some errors are caused by first language interference, and there are many other sources for their production, (Ibid) .

b. **Objectives**

Richards et al(1992) cited in Drid research (2003) see that the methodology of investigating learner language or error analysis has three main goals. The first aim is to determine the used strategies by learners in language learning, second to identify learner error causes, and third to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials. Then, according to Corder (1975), it comes to be clear that two objectives rule research within this area: a theoretical one concerned with the psychological aspect of the learner language, and the other is practical significant to language teachers. Because of that, Drid(2003) mentioned that there is a distinction between Remedial Error Analysis and Developmental Error Analysis.

1. Developmental Error Analysis

The analysis of learner's errors had a basic contribution to second language acquisition research, in the sense that it is concerned with the development stages in language learning. Among the principles of error analysis, the learner is supposed to construct a 'competence', in the Chomskyan sense, for himself when he formulates hypothesis. In nature, this competence is lasting only for a short time, because his hypotheses are under test and reformulation. It is said that errors are signs of this process; and their analysis provides hints about the used strategies by the learner and the nature and characteristics of his competence at a given stage of its development.(Ibid)

The language of the learner is often referred to as an *'interlanguage.'* Ellis(1985,299) explains this notion as follows: " the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner's first language and the target language. The term has come to be used with different but related meanings:

(1) to refer to the series of interlocking systems which characterize acquisition

(2) to refer to the system that is observed at a single stage of development (i.e. ' an interlanguage'), and

(3) to refer to particular mother tongue / target language combinations."

Several alternative terms have been coined such as: transitional competence and idiosyncratic dialect (Corder,1981), and approximative system (Nemser,1974 cited in Ellis,1985). Developmental Error Analysis tries to shed light on the successive stages in interlanguage development hoping of a better understanding of the second language learning processes and stages.

2. Remedial Error Analysis

The pedagogical facet of the hypothesis is expressed by Remedial Error Analysis. Close to the search for clarifying the nature of interlanguage and the responsible mechanism for the production of error, error analysis is a helpful and useful device to language teachers,(Drid,2003). Such deviations are significant to the teacher, explained by Corder(1981,11) : "In that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn." In this respect, Lee (1983,149) says: "Mistakes analyses based on adequate material show clearly what is most troublesome for the learners concerned and thus where they most need support." According to Corder (1981), from the description of the actual errors, valuable insights could be gained. Using this knowledge, the teacher can provide the language learner with the idea that his hypothesis is wrong, and more importantly, with the right information that helps him to formulate an adequate concept of a rule in the target language. From that, it could be said that remediation can be fulfilled on the basis of the observation of errors.

c. Competence Vs Performance Errors

From an Error Analysis point of view, deviations from the target language are seen as normal aspects of language learning. A crucial role the learner plays, in the sense that he processes input, generates hypotheses, tests them, and lastly refines them. Therefore, an error is a clear sort of his competence- in the Chomskyan sense- (Drid, 2003) ; and it "consists of the mental representation of linguistic rules which constitute the speaker-hearer's internalized grammar."(Ellis:1985,P5). In other words, competence expresses the underlying knowledge of language, which is not perfect regarding to the target language system. It happens that native speakers violate the rules of the target language. This does not mean that the learner does not know what is grammatically correct, but it returns back to some factors which affects his performance.(Drid,2003).

About performance, Ellis (1985,5-6) said " Performance consists of the comprehension and production of language." He also said that the development of competence is the main interest of language acquisition studies. However, because the rules which are in the mind of learner are not open to direct examination, so it is important to examine his performance from what he produces. Thus performance is the main concern of second language acquisition research. It is the evidence for what is going on inside the head of the learner. In connection to that Corder(1981) points out a distinction between the learners' errors and mistakes.

1. Errors

Corder (1973) refers to errors as 'breaches of the code'; in other words, they are deviations from the norm that arise from lack of knowledge about the target language. The native speakers have the ability to correct their own errors; however learners cannot do so. That's why it is referred to their errors as ' breaches of the code.' It is not allowed that the learner breaks a rule he does not know. In this respect, Corder(1975,204) said that errors are: "Typically produced by people who do not yet fully command some institutionalized

language system." From that, it is noticed that the learner is unable to correct his own errors.

2. Mistakes

Corder(1974) said that mistakes are often referred to as ' lapses.' He said that mistakes are made by all learners when they are speaking their mother tongue, and each one can recognize his own mistakes for what they are. They are due to failure to use a known system correctly. Mistakes are made of several sorts: changes of plan, slips of the tongue or slips of the pen and confusion. At the present time, these are subjects to investigate by linguists interested in language performance. Language learners are expected and responsible for such failures in performance and under the same conditions.

To end, it could be said that errors are related to competence; whereas mistakes are related to performance. Errors have direct relevance to Error Analysis, while mistakes are beyond its scope,(Drid,2003).

d. **Language Acquisition Vs Language Learning**

Ellis(1985,06) maintains that, "Second language acquisition is sometimes contrasted with second language learning on the assumption that these are different processes. The term 'acquisition' is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, whereas the term 'learning' is used to refer to the conscious study of a second language."

A lot of differences in the conditions under which learning and acquisition took place are pointed out. This highlights that no transfer from one to another could appear. The process of acquiring language takes place when the infant is growing and developing physically and mentally, and it is important to note that there is a connection or interaction between the two processes. The motivation for learning in each case cannot be the same. For example, a means of non-verbal communication is developed by deaf children to

satisfy their needs, so it is not a must that young children have to acquire language to cope with the environment. Yet it is observed that children whose physical and mental capacities are regarded to be normal, they do learn language, and it is said that it is a natural process and not a result of the discovery of its practical utility,(Corder,1973).

The crucial argument against the idea that language acquisition and second language learning have anything in common is that the learning process takes place after the acquiring process is completed. In other words, "the language teacher is not teaching language as   such, but a new manifestation of language. The language learner has already developed considerable communicative competence in his mother tongue, he already knows that he can and cannot do with it, what some at least of its functions are," (Ibid,113). This could highlight many features in which the circumstances of first and second language learning are different   (learner, teacher and linguistic data), (Ibid).

There is another argument which is with the idea saying that language learning and language acquisition are different processes, in the sense that the language learner is a different sort of person from the infant; in which there is qualitative change in his physiology and psychology during his maturation. These changes prevent the use of the learning strategies that are used in the infancy period. These notions are included within ' the critical period' for language acquisition,(Ibid).

Ellis (1985) dealt with the critical period and said that it is a period when the acquiring process of a language took place naturally and with no effort. It is said that the most favored age for that process is the first ten years. The brain during that period keeps and could easily be shaped. It is also said that the neurological capacity for mastering a language involves both hemispheres at first, but slowly it is concentrated in the left one. The problematic issue which older learners experience was the result of this neurological change.

Language is acquired during a period when the brain is in a specific stage of development. If the language is not acquired in that particular period, it would be very difficult to be acquired later on. But when a language has been acquired, i.e. verbal behavior is   possessed, there would be no psychological or physiological difficulty to the learning of a second language. After the acquirement of verbal behavior, learning a second language is a matter of adaptation or extension of existing skills and knowledge rather than the relearning of a completely new set of skills from scratch. To conclude, it could be said that the process of acquiring language and learning a second one must not be different, however, it is the notion that there are some fundamental properties which are common for all languages, and when these properties are learned before ,through the mother tongue, the learning of a second language would be a small task, (Corder,1973).

e. Methodology in Error Analysis

A number of steps are followed in conducting an error analysis. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005)distinguish the following :

1.Collection of a sample of learner language.

2.Identification of errors.

3.Description of errors.

4.Explanation of errors.

5.Error evaluation.

We are going to shed light and deal with these steps separately, starting by:

1. Collection of a Sample of Learner Language

The data for error analysis is provided through the collection of samples that present the learner language. A huge aware concerning the nature of the collected sample is needed for

the researcher, in the sense that it may influence the nature and distribution of the observed errors. These factors can be taken in two ways by researchers. They can control them, by making the intended sample to be collected specific. This way of dealing permits the addressing of specific research questions in the design of the error analysis. Researchers hope to sample errors by collecting a sample reflecting different learners, different types of language and different production conditions. However, in this case, it is wise and better that full and explicit descriptions of the learner productions are provided, and by that the effect of different variables on errors can be examined, (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005).

2. Identification of Errors

A comparison between the produced language of a learner and that of a native speaker in the same context is involved in the identification of error. The most important procedure is as follows:

- The preparation of a reconstruction of the sample as the one produced by the learner's native speaker.
- The assumption that the learner produced utterance/sentence is erroneous, and the removement of those which are shown to be well formed when they are compared with the produced ones of the native speaker.
- The identification of the parts that are different from the reconstructed version.

The first step is the key procedure, where the problems emerge. This is because it is impossible to reach always an ' authoritative reconstruction' of the learner's utterance.

During the identification of errors, problems are traceable in two dimensions involved in the reconstruction of erroneous utterances. The ' domain' of an error is defined as ' the breadth of the context' in which a consideration is needed to identify an error. The 'extent'

of an error refers to'the size of the unit' in which a reconstruction is needed to repair the error. (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005)

3. Description of Errors

Corder (1974 cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005) maintains: "The description of errors is essentially a comparative process, the data being the original erroneous utterances and the reconstructed utterance." This means that describing the errors of a learner entails specifying how the learner produced forms are different from those produced by the corresponding learner's native speaker. Two steps are highlighted:

- Developing a set of descriptive categories to code the identified errors.
- Recording the frequency of the error in each category.

In the development of descriptive categories, two criteria are established. The system of categories (or taxonomy) which must be 'well-developed and elaborated.' There are two kinds of taxonomy: A linguistic taxonomy and surface structure taxonomy. The linguistic one is taken from a descriptive grammar of the target language which includes sentence structure, the verb phrase, the noun phrase…etc. So errors are classified depending on the violated categories of the target language and not the used ones by the learner. In the other hand, surface structure taxonomy is based on " the ways surface structures are altered in erroneous utterances/sentences." Four principle ways are suggested where learners modify target forms: Omission, addition in which a form appears while it is absent in the well-formed utterance, misinformation where there is the use of wrong form of the structure, and disordering ,i.e. there is an incorrect placement of a morpheme in an utterance, (Ellis and Barkhuizen,2005).

4. Explanation of Errors

From a second language acquisition research point of view, the explanation of errors is the most essential stage in an error analysis. It entails the determination of their sources to know why they are made. The main concern of that issue is the psycholinguistic sources of error. In addition to that, there are sociolinguistic sources.

A clear reason for the errors that learners make is the lack of competence of their second language knowledge during communication. When second language forms are not acquired yet, they need controlled processing that fills up the demand on learners' information-processing systems. The result of that is the use of the acquired non-standard forms. Thus a distinction between errors and mistakes is useful. This makes it easy for teachers to know that their students have not yet mastered some forms, but are able to correct them. Some deviant forms are produced by learners; this means that there is a clear gap in their knowledge. Therefore, it is said that those errors are the result of 'ignorance.' Intralingual errors reflect the operation of learning strategies that are universal, (Ellis and Barkhuizen,2005). A summary of these strategies is provided by James (1998):

- A kind of over-generalization which is false analogy. For example: boy--boys/child-- Childs.
- Mis-analysis.
- Incomplete rule application.
- Exploiting redundancy, which means the omission of grammatical features that do not contribute to the meaning as it is in the case of 3rd person-s.

5. Error Evaluation

In the analysis of learner's errors, error evaluation is not so much a stage. It includes the determination of different errors gravity with a view to decide which ones should receive instruction. The evaluation of an error involves the following steps:

- Selecting the errors which are going to be evaluated.

- Deciding the criterion of the judgment of the errors, and '*gravity*' or ' *seriousness*' is the most chosen one.

- Preparing the instrument of the evaluation of the error, which contains a set of instructions, the erroneous sentences and a method for evaluation. A familiar method involves ranking the list of errors from the most to the least serious ones.

- Choosing the judges, (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005).

III.   The Phenomenal Aspect of Language

a. Grammar

During the process of learning a language, the learner first learns the used sounds in that language, the basic units of meaning, and the rules to combine these to form new sentences. All these aspects constitute the *grammar* of a language. It includes all that speakers know about their language; phonology which is the concern of the sound system, semantics the system of meaning, and syntax which is about the rules of sentence formation. A lot of people think of grammar as the syntactic rules. This sense is what students mean when talking about their class in 'English Grammar,' (Fromkin and Rodman, 1978).

b. Tense

In defining the formal category of *tense,* a reference is usually, made to the non-linguistic concept of *time*,(Drid, 2003).

1. Time

The concept of time is universal and is thought of as a line consisting of three divisions: past, present and future,(Ibid). Quirk et al(1972, 84) see that it is universal in the sense that: "the units of time are extra-linguistic: they exist independently of the grammar of any

particular language. In our use of language, however, we make linguistic reference to these extra-linguistic realities by means of the language-specific category of tense."

2. Tense

It is said in Lyons (1969, 304) that, "the term *tense* comes from the Latin word *tempus*, a translation of the Greek word for *tim*e." Darbyshire (1967) says that tense is a feature of the verb element that expresses time relations. Huddleston (1988,73) states this more explicitly: "we will say that a language has tense if it has a set of systematically contrasting verb inflections, where the primary semantic function of the terms is to relate the time of the situation to the time of utterance. Tense thus involves the grammaticalisation of time relations, (…) it is a grammatical category with time relations as its semantic basis."

2.1.   The Simple Present Tense

The concepts of agreement and number must be understood for the sake of understanding the simple present tense. It is referred to agreement as the requirement that subjects and the simple present verb tense both indicate, whether the subject of the verb is singular or plural, as shown in the example:

 The tree grows   The trees grow (Master,2004) .

c. The Diversity of Language

Speakers of English can very simply talk and understand each other even if they do not speak exactly the same. Among the differences, we may find differences of age, sex, personality…etc. So, every speaker has its own dialect. From that, one can understand that a language is composed of its dialects. The changes occurring in a spoken language in one area are not necessarily spread to another area. Among a group where speakers are in regular contact, the changes will spread among them and relearned by their children. However, when some barriers separate groups such as physical or social

ones, linguistic changes are not easily spread and dialectal differences are getting stronger.(Fromkin and Rodman,1978). From what has been said, two categories of the English language could be mentioned.

1. Standard English

In spite of the fact that any language is composed of dialects, people think of it as if it is a fixed system which is well-defined, has a variety of dialects, and diverges from this norm. A specific dialect may have a prestige that makes it equal to the language itself. The users of this prestigious dialect are mainly political leaders and the upper socioeconomic classes. It is the one which is used for literature, taught in schools, and used by the mass media. Such a dominant dialect is called the *' standard dialect.'*

The standard dialect can be taught to people who are not native speakers, and it is the most widespread dialect. It is easy for speakers of dialects to understand even if they do not use it. The standard dialect is used as the written form that speakers of different dialects should follow. It may have social functions, for instance, to link people and to provide a common written form. Nevertheless, it is neither more expressive, more logical, more complex, nor more regular than any other dialect,(Ibid).

2. Black English

Almost all American dialects are free, only one dialect of them is considered as a victim of prejudicial ignorance. This dialect is the one that is spoken by a huge section of non-middle-class American blacks, which is referred to as '*Black English.'* The main reasons for such ignorance are social, educational and economic ones. The historical discrimination against black Americans created the feature of separation. In other words, it separates black people from others in terms of living, schooling…etc. This is what is meant by a

social isolation. Under these conditions, many blacks no longer consider their dialects as inferior, and it is their positive means of identification.

There are white and black people who think that they can identify a person's race just from hearing him speak, since they believe that different races speak differently. However, this thought is false; because if a white child is raised in an area where black English is spoken he will speak black English and vice versa. Children learn grammar depending on the language they hear, (Ibid).

There are systematic differences between Black English and the standard. These differences could be shown on the level of phonology, in which black English shares with other dialects the lack of any distinction between/I/ and /e/ before nasal consonants, producing identical pronunciations of *pin* and *pen…etc.* In addition to that, there are syntactic differences, which are used to illustrate the *illogic* of Black English. Those differences show that Black English is syntactically complex and is not *logic* as the Standard. These are examples of sentences from Black English and the Standard :

Standard	**Black**
Affirmative: He knows something	He know something
Negative: He does not know anything	He do not know nothing
He knows nothing	He know nothing (Ibid) .

What really concerns us in this example is the verb. In standard English," the third person singular verb forms are inflected by adding to the verb the particular phonetic form that is the same as the plural ending(for example,(z) as in knows, (s) as is kicks, or (iz) as in kisses). The absence of this ending in Black English may be the result of the application of phonological rules,"(Ibid,263).

Conclusion

Since there is a traceable development in the investigation about the production of errors we can conclude by saying that *Error Analysis* has made the view of learning a second or a foreign language wider. This appears when, in spite of regarding errors as the aspects leading to disaster during the process of learning, they became from an *Error Analysis'* perspective a positive factor to the language learning process. Along with this chapter, *Error Analysis* indicates that *Contrastive Analysis* is appealed to explain only a portion of the errors: those that are the result of first language interference. However, it fails to handle a huge portion of deviations that are the attribution of second language complexity.

The tendency now is to include non-errors with errors such as those that are similar to Black English, committed by learners. It is believed that the failures should not be permitted to make the success of the language learner seem less important. Despite the weakness of *Error Analysis*, it continues to provide hints at the possible relationship between the classroom and the psycholinguistic questions of language learning.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LEARNERS ERRORS IN TENSE

Outline

Introduction

I. The Corpus

    a. Description of the Test

    b. Administration of the test

    c. Procedure

II. Analysis of the result

    a. Reporting the Result

    1. Errors in Tense

    1.1. Form

    1.2.Use

    b. Analyzing the Result

    1. Errors in Present Tense Form

    2. Errors in Present Tense Use

    3. The Misformulation of Negations and Questions

    4. The modal Verbs: CAN, MUST and WILL (WOULD)

Conclusion

Introduction

Since a huge number of students face the problem of errors, especially the misuse of the simple present tense and more precisely the /s/ of third person singular, an empirical study is made, in which a test is constructed and given to first year students. This test has a number of features which confirm the hypothesis and serve the aim of the study which is the foundation of the real cause behind either the omission of the /s/ of third person singular or the overuse of it.

Throughout this chapter, the corpus of the test, its description, administration and the procedure are dealt with. Then, it is dealt with the second step which is the analysis of the result. At the beginning, the results are reported where there is a focus on the form and the use of the simple present tense, and it is dealt with others such as: the Misformulation of negations and questions in the simple present and the misuse of the modal verbs. The final step is to analyze the collected or reported data through a quantitative and qualitative treatment.

I. The Corpus

This study is based on the corpus which is taken from the written productions of 40 first year students of English at Constantine University; in response to a test constructed by the researcher (Appendix1). In order to avoid slips attributed to inattention, distraction or other factors that affect the learners' performance, the spoken medium in the study will not be used.

a. Description of the Test

The test includes the following characteristics:

- The productions of the learners are not spontaneous and not related to their free choice of topics. Obligatory contexts are used where suggested situations seem to permit the production of a variety of verb-forms wanted for the study.

- The vocabulary items are very simple, so not to overload the linguistic resources of the examiners because they are not advanced learners, and to isolate only the tense problems.

- The test is not an official examination. Formal ones are thought to make room for memorization, concern and fear…etc. These factors affect the real competence of the learner.

The test consists of only one writing task in which a question is asked; and that question is concerning the students' current situation of studying.

b. Administration of the Test

A day before the fixed day, the students were informed that they would perform a work that had to do with the written expression module. The test was delivered and the students were not limited by time. It lasted about two hours. A number of steps were followed:

Step one: An introductory note informed the students about the purpose of the test; however they were not informed that errors were the focus of the investigation.

Step two: The question of the task was read to the students, and the difficulties were explained.

Step three: Concerning the way that should be followed, clarifications were made.

Man efforts were done to make a relaxing environment which was not like that of formal examination. This pushed the students to be very motivated to participate.

c. Procedures

The procedure of identifying, describing and explaining the deviations presented in the first chapter is used to analyze the errors in the corpus, which were about the /s/ of third person singular in the simple present tense, and other errors that had a relation with that tense. It is noted that all errors are true and real ones; since enough time was given to the participants to write, read, revise and reedit their writings. At the description stage, we made comparison between the detected erroneous forms and the right form in the target language. The errors are classified according to their simple present tense, whether there is omission, selection or addition. This procedure provides a systematic reporting of all the observed deviations of the verb. Errors at other levels are not our concern. At the final stage, the classified errors are due to the lack of awareness from the part of the students.

II.   Analysis of the Result

a. Reporting the Result

The identification and description stages in the analysis showed **85** produced errors in the simple present tense. These errors were arranged according to their type of deviation from the norm of the target verb. A distinction between errors in the form of the verb and errors in the use of it was made.

1. Errors in Tense

Concerning the recorded errors in tense, the deviations in the form and the use of the simple present are included.

1.1. Form

Error Type	Number of Errors
Omission ⟶ third person singular 'S'	56
Selection ⟶ 'is' for 'are'	03
⟶ 'are' for 'is'	02
⟶ 'is' for 'has'	02
⟶ 'does' for 'do'	02
Addition ⟶ 'S' of singular for plural	01
Wrong form ⟶ 'is/are'+ verb for 'is/are'+ verb+ ing	02
TOTAL	68

Table 1: Errors in Present Tense Form

1.2. Use

Error Type	Number of Errors
Selection ⟶ simple past for simple present passive voice	03
⟶ Infinitive for simple present	02
⟶ Simple past for simple present	01
⟶ Simple future for simple present	01
TOTAL	07

Table 2: Errors in Present Tense Use

The following table summarizes all the observed errors in the simple present tense:

Tense	Form Errors	Use Errors	Total

Simple present	68	07	75

Table 3: Errors in Simple Present Tense

This is the classification of errors that have a direct relation to the form and use of the present simple tense. There are other errors that have relation to the structure and other aspects.

b. Analyzing the Result

1. Errors in Present Tense Form

The results show that the area which poses difficulties and in which most of the errors are recorded is the type of errors where there are omissions of the /s/ of third person singular in the simple present, and it is the main concern of this study. From the reported results, there are **56** cases of omitting the /s/. This means that the students have a problem with the /s/, that's why they committed errors. Many questions would be asked. Among them, why the student forgot the /s/ of third person singular in the simple present since he knows the rule, and knows how to apply it? Therefore, the problem is not that he does not know the rule, ignores it or misapplies it, it is only a matter of awareness. This means that the student does not pay his attentions to the /s/ of third person when he writes essays. Because there is no other excuse to his grave errors. It is a must that the student pays attention when it comes to the writing process. This could be achieved only by being aware first of the steps of writing and of the right tenses to be used. From the first reading of the question of the test, the student normally knows the supposed tense to use, then he starts writing on his draft paper for the sake of revising it, and finally he writes on the test's paper. However in the current situation, almost all of them started writing on the test's paper, which means that they did not make draft papers, then read and revise them , after that write the clean essay on the test's paper. From that, we notice that they forgot about the steps of writing , and certainly they won't pay attention to the used tense; and that

made them unaware of the /s/ of third person singular. Out of **40** students only one student did follow and was aware of the steps of writing. This process made him aware of his errors and omissions of the /s/, and corrected them to get an essay cleaned from errors concerning the /s/ of third person singular in the present tense.

In addition to that, selection, addition and wrong form seem to be less problematic in comparison to omission, in the sense that there are **nine** errors in selection, **one** in addition and **two** in wrong form. These errors were produced just for the same reason as the case of omission. Since the student did not pay attention to the /s/ of third person singular certainly he would give '*is*' for '*are*' or '*are*' for '*is*' and '*does*' for '*do*' or '*do*' for '*does*.'

From this analysis, we notice that the lack of awareness of the student plays a great role in the production of a correct verb in the simple present tense, especially in the presence of the /s/ of third person singular where it is necessary.

2. Errors in Present Tense Use

The question of the test pushes the students to write essays in which the verbs must be conjugated in the simple present tense. However, in the reported results there is a number of the misuse of the simple present. This is not really very problematic issue since there are: **four** errors where the students used the simple past instead of using the simple present, **two** errors where the infinitive is used for the simple present, and **one** simple future for simple present. This result indicates that the students were not aware of the importance of the tense that the test's question obliged them to use.

After the analysis of the results which were the main concern of this study, we will deal with the analysis of further errors which have a relation to the simple present tense.

3. The Misformulation of Negations and Questions

The structure of the English sentence is the core of the language, the affirmative form, the negative one or the question. Students of English face many problems with negations and asking *'yes and no'* questions. This may come back to a number of reasons; among them, we find overgeneralization, ignorance of rule and incomplete application of rules…etc. In this study, we may find that such a problem comes back to the fact that the student does not pay his attention and does not give the needed care to the sentence structure. Since he knows the rule, why does he apply it wrongly? The proposed answer to that question is only the lack of awareness.

In the analysis of the errors committed by students, we found **04** errors which were about the formulation of negation and **02** about question. Let's start with the question: The student asked the questions as follows:

"It is a successful system or not?"

"Does it produces good students or not? "

In the target language such questions are asked as follows:

"Is it a successful system or not?"

"Does it produce good students or not?"

In English, the question is started by *'is'* whereas the student started by the subject *'it'*. He did so, not because he did not know the rule or did not know how to apply it; he made that error because he did not pay his attention. In the second question, the student started correctly by the auxiliary *does*, but he added a /s/ to the second verb. He made such an error because teachers always talk and insist on the students not to forget the /s/ of third person singular. That what makes some students overuse it. In other words, whenever the

student finds singular and the present tense, he puts a /s/. This is also another problem which students suffer from in addition to the omission of the /s/.

Moving to the formulation of negation, we have said that we had **04** cases, and they are as follows:

- The advantage is *to not repeats…*
- They *do not…* how to apply it…
- In order *to doesn't* be confused…
- We *do hasn't* the choice…

The corresponding correct ones of these erroneous sentences in the target language are as follows:

- The advantage is not to repeat…
- They do not know how to apply it…
- In order not to be confused…
- We do not have the choice…

Making a comparison between the students' utterances and those in the target language, it is found that the correct form of a negative sentence is to put: do/ does + not+ the verb in the infinitive, or: is/ are+ not + the infinitive. This is the rule of negation. However, the student in the first example misapplied the rule since the structure is wrong, and added an /s/ to the verb which must be in the infinitive. Here the student over generalized the rule of the simple present tense in the singular, and added a /s/. in the second example, he did not put the verb at all. Concerning the third example, it is just like the first one, i.e. misapplication of the rule and overgeneralization. In the last example, the student disordered the parts of the verb and added a /s/ to the second verb. This is a completely wrong structure of the negative form.

When it is looked at these examples, it is found that the learner knows the rule, and when it comes to applying it, he makes errors, as well as the overgeneralization of the use of the /s/ of third person singular. The main reason for that is the truth that the learner does not pay his attention during the writing process; that's why he produces such errors.

4. The Modal Verbs: Can, Must and Will (Would)

Among the students' committed errors in the sample, the error in which there is a misuse of the modal verbs: can, must and would are found. It is a rule that after a modal verb the student puts the stem; i.e. the verb without *'to '*. Almost all students know that rule; however they did make errors in that field. In analyzing the result, it is found **two** wrong forms about ' *must'*, **one** about '*can'* and **one** about ' *would';* and they are as follows:

Must:

- You *must gets…*
- You *must studies …*

Can:

- This system *cannot succeeded…*

Would:

- I *would returns…*

The corresponding correct forms in the target language are as follows:

- You must get…
- You must study…
- This system cannot succeed…
- I would return…

When a comparison between the target language and the learner language is made, it is found that the students, after the modal verb, putted the verb and added an /s/ and not only the stem, which means that they over generalized the rule of third person singular in the simple present. They did so because they did not realize the outcomes of their errors. In other words, they were not aware or did not pay more attention when they wrote about any topic. It is also noticed that the student putted the verb which was after the modal ' can' in the simple past. Here, the student was thinking of the verb 'to be'; but he did not write it. In other words, the sentence in his mind was: "this system cannot be succeeded…"; that's why he wrote the verb in the past.

Conclusion

The present findings suggest that the first year learners of English do meet difficulties in the system of simple present tense, and more precisely, they have problems with the /s/ of third person singular. This issue led them to produce erroneous constructions at the verb phrase level. The chief source of such deviant forms is the lack of awareness of the student. So the hypothesis that the errors made by first year students of English in the simple present tense "omission of the /s/ of third person singular" are due to their awareness in writing essays is confirmed. At this stage of learning, learners seem to draw on the target language itself, while the mother tongue seems to have no effect on their production and use of English verb phrases.

Undoubtedly, successful remediation of these inconsistencies should take the underlying engendering errors as a starting point to assist the learner in refining his English language and in getting native-like competence in it.

General Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating the area of the simple present tense, more precisely the/s/ of third person singular, in the English grammatical system. The purpose was to find out whether the errors that first year students of English produce in verb-form along the above category stem largely the awareness of the student. An Error Analysis was undertaken: learners' errors in writing were identified, described and explained. Through this analysis, it was possible to identify the cause behind the committed errors.

The results f the analysis show that the first year students' errors are stemming from the idea of the awareness of the student. This implies that when the English language teacher sets to restore the learners external factors such as the influence of the mother tongue; instead, the teacher should draw on the awareness idea engendering the errors to locate exactly where the complexities of the verb's category lie.

It was suggested that errors in the grammatical categories (the simple present tense) may be remedied if the teaching methodology regards error, in general, as a desirable part of the learning process; and f the learners' deviant utterances are restored through further explicit grammatical explanation on the part of the teacher.

It is believed that such an investigation might add possible insights on the process of second language acquisition. It might also assist in the preparation of remedial courses or the reconsideration of the existing grammar curses. But it should be stressed that the results are not all conclusive because other variables might be into play.

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APPENDICES

OUTLINE

Appendix 01: The students Test

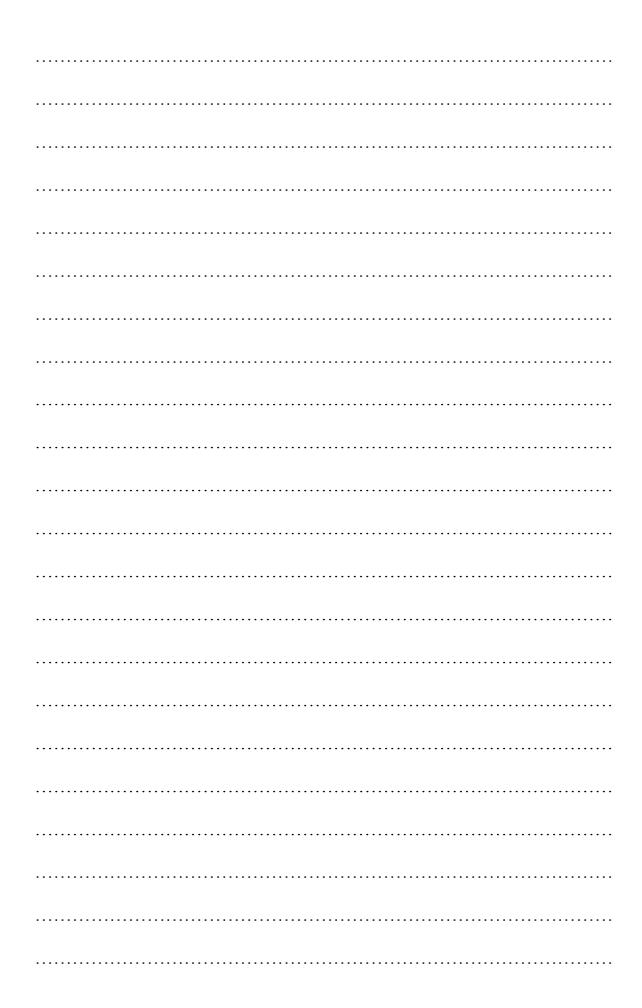Appendix 02: Samples of Learners' Errors

APPENDIX 01

STUDENTS' TEST

FIRST YEAR LMD SYSTEM

THE QUESTION

Write an essay of three paragraphs about the LMD system; its advantages and disadvantages. What do you think, is it a successful system or not?

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APPENDIX 02

SAMPLES OF LEARNERS' ERRORS

1. **Present Tense Form**

a. **Omission**

- This system have disadvantages.

- The student study three years.

- He get the master.

- We have TD mark which help us to improve our final mark.

- A new system appear in 2004.

- It use a smart method.

- France apply it before.

- This system need genius students.

- The student pass to the next year.

- The student who work.

b. **Selection**

- There are the credit.

- The advantages of the LMD system is the students…..

- The students doesn't repeat the year.

- They doesn't succeed.

c. **Addition**

- They makes a lot of changes.

d. **Wrong Form**

- They are study for many years.

2. Present Tense Use

a. Selection

- It introduced in Algeria .

- It used as first time.

- The student t continue.

3. The Misformulation of Negations and Questions

a. Questions

- It is a successful system or not?

- Does it produces good students or not?

b. Negations

- The advantage is to not repeats.

- In order to doesn't be confused.

- We do hasn't the choice.

4. The Modal Verbs

a. Must

- You must gets…

- You must studies …

b. Can

- This system cannot succeeded …

c. Would

- I would returns…

ملخـــــــــــــص

تهدف هده الدراسة إلى تحليل أخطاء طلبة السنة الأولى انجليزية بجامعة قسنطينة المرتكبة في الأنماط النحوية الفعلية للمضارع.و دلك لتحديد السبب الحقيقي لهده الانحرافات الناتجة من تعلم اللغة الأجنبية . أي تحديد مدى ما يشكله هدا المجال النحوي في اللغة الانجليزية من تعقيدات بالنسبة للمتعلمين

لفحص الفرضية المطروحة في هده الدراسة, تم بناء اختبار يعتمد أساسا على استعمال سؤال للحصول على عينات كتابية. ومن خلال معالجة كمية وكيفية للأخطاء الملاحظة في هده العينات, تمكنا من عزل الأخطاء و تصنيفها.

وتظهر نتائج هده الدراسة أن اغلب الأخطاء الملاحظة في الأنماط النحوية المذكورة ترجع إلى طبيعة اللامبالاة لدى المتعلمين