

“Error Detection” as a Device towards the Investigation and Elaboration of Interlanguage

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ABSTRACT

One way of investigating the L2 learners' interlanguage is uncovering the notion of “difficulty” and “error” learners have in their linguistic input by implementing the grammaticality judgment test (GJT). The test may reveal the relationship that is felt between error “recognition” and “production”. To this purpose, the subjects in this study were required to underline errors in different sentences, having been produced more often by the Persian English learners (PELs). Their response to the errors revealed some part of their interlanguage (IL). It is hypothesized that certain types of errors are not tangible enough to recognize as they represent the items which are more “difficult” to master in the course of language learning. In other words, the study tried to shed light on the assumption that failure to recognize some errors by some learners corresponded closely with difficulty of the same items to master on production level. The statistical value, 6.58 at 2 df. at 5% level indicated that the relationship between the two variables, response and sources, was meaningful. It is furthermore discussed that resorting to the traditional inter- and intra- classification of error sources suffers from some respects and a new dimension in the area, i.e. bi-source errors, was introduced.

Keywords: 1. Interlanguage 2. Error 3. Grammaticality 4. Interlingual 5. Intralanguage.

1. Introduction

Interpreting and elaborating the learner interlanguage have, hitherto, been partially undertaken by investigating and interpreting the errors produced more often by the L2 learner. By weighing the committed errors, guesses are made about the sources as well as the hows and whys of these errors. However, the procedure has proved to be insufficient for a number of reasons. First, avoidance hypothesis intervenes actively and there is a strong tendency among learners to hide some aspect of their linguistic output. It has been proved that one important reason of disfavoring production tasks as a scale to judge L2 learners' linguistic input is frequent and intentional resort to avoidance hypothesis (Brown, 1994; Ellis, 1994; Odlin, 1989; Corder, 1986; Schachter, 1974). This normally decreases the frequency of some sorts of errors, and the notion of difficulty and the learner's perception from errors are naturally influenced and underestimated, to a great extent, by this phenomenon. The second important reason is that by resorting to production tests as a scale of judgment, it is hardly possible to reveal the learners' performance on the desired items. In other words, the tester cannot impose on the learners to produce the items which are under consideration.

The third important reason is that labeling errors as inter- or intra-lingual has been a controversial issue. This sharp classification suffers from a few respects, one of which is that most errors cannot be categorized under this classification. (See Els et al, 1984;

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Ellis, 1994; Richards, 1974; Lennon, 1991). Ellis (1994) suggesting that an error can be applied to both these two phenomena, i.e. inter and intra, proposes a doubtful account of the difference between the concept of transfer as it is and intralingual “where one researcher identifies the source of an error as transfer, another researcher identifies the source of the same error as intralingual” (62).

For all these deficiencies, it is legitimate to introduce the GJT to substitute tests of production. The level of success to identify incorrect forms from correct ones can be regarded as an indication of the feasibility of the linguistic item(s) they are working with. In other words, if an error can not be realized as an error, this failure on recognition level may be transferred to production level, and it is highly plausible to have been applied repeatedly in various tasks the learners are exposed to. The device is considered to be an extremely advantageous tool of evaluation as the learner will have little chance of hiding their knowledge as well as escaping from their weaknesses on recognition level (Schachter et al, 1976; Ellis, 1994).

1.1. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Contrastive studies can be traced back to fifties and even sixties when most published studies were considered from a theoretical view point. In 1953, Weinreich discussed the idea of bilingualism in terms of the notion that the greater the difference between the two system, i.e. the more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater is the learning problem and the potential area of influence. (For more information see Ziahosseini, 1994; Krzeszowski, 1990; Rusiecki, 1976.)

Pedagogical contrastive researches may be studied to date from 1945, the year of publication of Charles Fries (cited in Anthony and Norris, 1972) “*Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*”. He, as a strong proponent of audiolingualism, subscribed to the behaviorist analysis of linguistic competence as a series of habits. To him, native language influence was thus influenced by old habits while some of them potentially helpful and some others harmful. He states that language is primarily oral and a system of contrasting structural patterns.

It was not until 1960s that the impact of transfer in language teaching was revealed. The assumption, having been initially implemented by Charles Fries and Robert Lado, focused primarily on the idea that the existence of cross-linguistic differences made second language acquisition extremely difficult. They postulated that it was extremely important to develop materials specifically designed for different groups of learners belonging to different linguistic backgrounds. They believed that a language teacher has to benefit from the findings of cross-linguistic differences. (For more information see Brook, 1960; Sridhar 1981; Spolsky, 1989; and Ziahosseiny, 1994). As, for example, the problems of the Persian student are very different from those of the Arab speaker, it is quite plausible that the sequencing and the emphasis on each item differ.

Meanwhile, it was later on discussed that contrastive analysis (CA) suffered from some serious pitfalls both theoretically and pedagogically. The first problem is that the basis of CA is on the structuralist and the behavioristic view point of the language. As these schools became unpopular and drastic shift happened both in linguistic and psychology, disfavor against CA began to appear. Gass and Selinker (1994) make the assumption that the claim strongly made by structuralists that L1 rules are the same as a set of habits basically learned by imitation was to be criticized. Pedagogically, CA did not prove to be successful at helping the learners to improve their linguistic output.

Because of the discussions in the areas of Universal Grammar (Spolsky, 1989; Odlin, 1989), The Simplification Hypothesis, (Dulay and Burt, 1974; and Richards, 1975), and The Ignorance Hypothesis (James, 1980), CA lost its validity and subsequently was supplemented by Error Analysis Hypothesis.

1.2. Error Analysis Hypothesis

In the 1970s, because of the drawbacks of CA, error analysis (EA) was introduced as a more valid source of handling the errors of the learners. Errors help the teacher to understand how close he is to the goals and what has to be emphasized; they provide the required data to the researcher to understand how language is learned, and finally they bear helpful indications to the learner himself (Richards, 1974). However, it was not until 1970s that EA became a substantial part of applied linguistics, a development that owed much to the work of S. Pit Corder (1986) who presenting a different notion of 'error', states that an error is based on the substantial similarities between the strategies employed by the infant learning his native language, and those of the second language learner.

One of the most important applications of EA is using its results in language teaching. The position of EA in pedagogy is justified by stating that the study of errors is a basic part of applied linguistics. Wilkins (1968), quoting the results of some studies, has argued that there is no necessity for a prior comparison of grammar as it is performed in CA and that an error-based analysis is satisfactory enough, more fruitful, and less time consuming. It is added that bilingual comparison is based on the theory that it is the difference between the mother tongue and the second language which the learner is to learn. Contrastive studies are undertaken in order to discover or describe the differences while EA confirms or falsifies the predictions of the theory behind bilingual comparison.

Meanwhile, one important endeavor posed by EA was categorizing the committed errors according to the sources and under certain, and sometimes sharp, classes of inter and intra. In fact these errors are traditionally labeled as mono-source.

1.2.1. Mono-source Errors: Mono-source errors are attributed to the deviant forms, the source of which is pertained either to the learners' L1 or L2. For instance, the English Deviant (ED) below, incorrect preposition insertion, demonstrates an example of the inter-lingual error as the source can be stemmed back to Persian or we can say that the rule from the learners' L1 has been transferred into the L2:

ED1: Most Iranian students do not enjoy from their study.

The ED2 is an example of intra-lingual error as the form is over-generalizing the L2 rule. In other words, the learner has over-generalized the L2 rule into another similar context incorrectly.

ED2: The most important factor to select a job is interesting

Both ED1 and ED2 are regarded to be the instances of mono-source errors as the source of the error is attributed either to the learners' L1 or L2.

However, the categorization has so far proved to be extremely controversial and has been suffering from a few aspects. Dulay and Burt (1974) in a study proved that most errors, contrary to what behaviorists believed that errors were viewed as the result of the negative transfer of L1 habits, were intralingual. They gathered five hundred and thirteen unambiguous errors of Spanish children having been occurred in six syntactic structures which differed in English and Spanish. The errors were classified as intralingual (developmental), interlingual (interference), and 'unique'. In each case, the intralingual errors outweighed the interference ones. A similar study was carried out by Tran-Thi-Chau (1975) who proved that most errors committed by learners were inter-not-intra with the proportion of 51 to 29 percent. This claim is also supported by Richards and Sampson (1974) when he asserts that one-third of the deviant sentences could be attributed to transfer.

The study performed by Dommergues and Lane (1976) tried to trace the sources of inter- and intralingual errors. They conclude that "Relatively errors decrease

monotonically with increasing mastery of the second language whereas analogy [intra-] errors first increase and then decrease” (122). They finally suggest that morphosyntactic errors are highly predictable when the involvement of both interference and analogy are taken into account.

Besides, it has been supported throughout the literature that in early stages, analogy contributes little to errors while interference is more active, while in later stages, i.e., intermediate and advanced, intra- or analogy is more active. In the same manner, Ellis (1994, p. 62) quotes Taylor (1975) whose idea is in proportion with what was stated above.

As it can be observed, there are enough controversies among the literature regarding the sources of errors and the error types having been analyzed by error analysts. Furthermore, the next problem of this kind of classification is the fact that the inter-intra- classification cannot be accounted for all and every deviation. A major bulk of errors are called and identified as ambiguous since the source is either unknown or there are so many factors involved in the process of error production that make it a doubtful and hard task to determine a definite source for their production.

1.2.2. Ambiguous (Unique) Errors: A part of errors committed by L2 learners are attributed to those error types, the sources of which cannot be identified sharply. They are named mistakes or unique errors which have no regular pattern or systematicity (Stenson, 1974; Dulay and Burt, 1974; Richards, 1974; Fisiak, 1981). These are the cases when learners, for various reasons, internalize faulty rules. The ED3 and ED4 are examples of ambiguous errors. The point here is that it is neither possible to locate the source of some of the frequent errors in these sentences, nor to guess the causes of producing them.

ED3: We would have been many problem.

ED4: If be properties very much, we are living better.

Both ED3 and ED4 demonstrate obvious deviation from the norms of the target language; however, the point here is that first they do not occur frequently and second they do not follow a regular pattern in their system. They are sometimes called induced errors (Ellis, 1994). Richards (1974) has introduced instruction or training as the sources of these errors or it may be proposed that they occur when learners are led to make errors by the nature of instruction which learners receive. It can be expected too that the errors for which we can introduce no source either in L1 or L2 build up the *approximative* system of the learner. In other words, this is the system which is a combination of L1 and L2's unique errors that are capable of constructing a distinct system, something like the *approximative* system (Nemser, 1974). These errors are not systematic and therefore do not reflect competence. These are cases when learners internalize faulty rules derived from instruction and in such cases the resulting error will reflect their competence. However, instruction may constitute one source of what Dulay and Burt call “unique errors” while Fisiak (1981) has called them “pedagogical errors”.

1.2.3. Bi-source Errors: Besides, there exist some controversies around some error types which are attributed to both sources of L1 and L2. There has been a tendency to identify them as ambiguous. However, the study here has tried to shed light on these types of errors by calling them bi-source errors. As an instance, the preposition insertion in the ED5 below can be an example of an ambiguous (bi-source) error as both sources of L1 and L2 are involved :

ED5: I helped to my mother to clean the room. .

Because in Persian, the equivalent verb for “help” is always followed by the preposition “be” which is assumed to be an equivalent for “to” in English, the source can be traced back to Persian. Or we can claim here that it is plausible for the L2 learner

to have transferred an L1 rule into the L2 he is currently studying. In the same manner, in English, “help” when used as a noun, is followed by the preposition “to” which can normally be misinterpreted or misunderstood as a verb by novice L2 learner. (See the English (E) sentences below). In other words, when a learner is exposed to similar language forms, it can influence his linguistic output in different manners, one of which is over-generalization.

E: Your help to them was satisfying.

Besides all these cases, the infinitive “to” may easily be confused with the prepositional form in the instances below:

E: Your help to push the car was great.

E: I helped him to push the car.

In both examples, this is plausible for some of the learners to confuse different functions of “to” and therefore over-generalizing the rule is likely to happen. In situations like this, to make valid and reliable predictions about the sources of errors is not logical to make. Thus, one plausible prediction is attributing the source of the errors like the one mentioned here is to both L1 and L2.

1.3. The Theory of Interlanguage

The term “interlanguage” having been coined by Selinker (1974) which fairly corresponds with Corder’s idiosyncrasy, introduces the language employed by the learner which is something between his L1 and the target language.

Systematicity as one explicit characteristic of interlanguage is investigated on the ground that the learners’ interlanguage, the same as first language, is systematic in nature. Labov and Dickerson (cited in Tarone 1988) in defining variability and systematicity of IL, following a sociolinguistic method, have discussed that any form which can be predicted by rule can be viewed as systematic, whether it predicts 90 percent or 20 percent accuracy. In the same way, an attempt to develop TL systematicity was made by Hakuta (cited in Tarone 1988) when the second language of a five-year-old Japanese girl was being studied. This research proposed that the process of second-language acquisition, here English

is a dynamic, fluid process in which the system of the learner is constantly shifting; shifting in a slow and gradual manner either toward the maintenance of an internal consistency within the structures which the learner possessed, or in the direction of an external consistency, where the learner attempts to fit the internal system into what is heard in the input (p. 11).

Corder (1971) proposes that learner language can be considered as an idiosyncratic dialect and is systematic because certain rules can be drawn out of it and that as the nature of any idiosyncrasy, the rules are systematic but unstable and creative. In other words, these rules may take variations of their own and change over time and are not necessarily borrowed from the native language; rather they might be unique in themselves. In other words, it is possible to draw some sort of rules out of the errors which are produced by L2 learners. To support this view point, Spolsky (1989) postulates that variability in IL can be the same as other natural languages. In other words, it is possible to observe systematic rules in ILs. Dulay and Burt (1974: 109) in their study, believing that learner language is systematic, came to the conclusion that learning L1 and L2 is nearly the same and children in leaning their L1 employ the same strategy as target language.

1.4. Grammaticality Judgment Test

Ellis (1994: 705) defines GJT as one way of obtaining data on what learners know about the L2 and this can be done by asking them to judge whether sentences are grammatically correct or not. He adds that this method is favoured by some researchers

because they believe it provides information about learners' institutions and thus caters for an internalized approach. Schachter (1976) claims that when attempting to describe the linguistic knowledge of native speakers of a language, linguists make use of two kinds of data: performance data, based on the actual linguistic production by the speaker and intuitional data based on speaker reaction to already produced sentences, such as judgments of grammaticality and ungrammaticality, paraphrase, synonym, ambiguity, etc. and now this standard tool is also applied as a scale for the measurement of non-natives' judgment power.

Likewise, the data on language transfer can provide significant applications for researchers, language teachers, textbook designers, etc. Since the teacher of English has to be convinced that it is inevitable for L2 learners to produce errors of different types at different levels of competencies and as these learners develop their learning strategies, they build up their own interlanguage (IL) system which is of significance to the researchers (For more information see, for example, Selinker, 1974; Kellerman, 1992; Ellis, 1994; and Nickel, 1998). The most important thing is using a suitable device as a scale to reveal the learner's interlanguage. One possible and applicable suggestion here is to implement a GJT as a convenient device for this purpose.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this research is identifying the degree the subjects are successful at detecting the errors having been committed more often by Persian EFL learners on recognition level. This then may bring some indications about the learners' interlanguage and the hypothesis learners formulate about linguistic rules and the notion of difficulty they feel in the course of language learning.

2.1. Subjects

The subjects were 103 ESL sophomore students of B.A., studying in Kerman Azad University. All of the subjects who participated in the study had started their university education in 1380. The reason for selecting this particular group of students was based on the assumption that they had already received an average of five years of instruction in English up to high school level. At the university, they had also received instruction for two semesters which was confined only to sentence level grammar. In the second year, they were introduced to paragraph level composition practice. The semester normally lasts for four months, but the study was held after two months of instruction because the allotted time and instruction were considered enough for the learners to produce simple sentences.

2.2. Instrumentation

To tap the learners' interlanguage, a GJT (Appendix One) was implemented. The test was made up of 40 items, containing errors belonging to different sources. They were natural errors which were selected from the learners' writings already committed by them. The test contained 11 sentences pertaining to interlingual (mono-source) errors, 6 sentences to intralingual, 3 correct ones and the rest of which were the incorrect ones belonging to unknown sources, here labeled as *ambiguous*. In some cases, the frequency of the error production was very high.¹ In other words, the error types here have already been observed in production level. To estimate the test validity, it was examined by ten colleagues. They presented their ideas by interpreting the items as very suitable, suitable, almost suitable and unsuitable. It was finally concluded that the test was valid at 0.89. In the same manner, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by applying the test-retest method. Twenty subjects were requested to respond to the questionnaire items two times, leaving a two-week interval between the two sessions. The test finally proved to benefit from a high reliability of 0.86.

2.3. Procedure

The subjects participating in the experiment were required to read the sentences and identify the errors they contained by underlining them. In this way, the researcher could be certain enough that they had consciously located the incorrect items which had been purposefully selected. The test was held in two sessions for all the candidates. After the test, the candidates' response to the three types of items were analyzed separately; then the required weight was given to the responses regarding the sources of the errors. Finally a comparison was made by implementing the chi-square test, relevant frequencies and percentiles.

2.4. Results

Table 1 demonstrates the subjects' responses to different stimuli containing the items related only to mono-source errors, here interlingual errors. The degree of correct recognition of error insertion in each sentence is almost low. The second column shows the position of the item in the test collection. For example, the deviant form, preposition insertion, in ED1, no.1 in the table, has been correctly located only by 18.4 percent of the subjects while 79.6 percent have failed to identify the deviation. The highest frequency maximizes to 50.5 percent while the lowest exceeds 11.7.

Table 1: The responses to interlingual errors.

No.	Item	1. correct recognition		2. Incorrect recognition.	
		f.	percent	f.	percent
1	1	19	18.4	82	79.6
2	7	16	15.5	87	84.5
3	9	26	25.2	72	69.9
4	15	39	37.9	64	62.1
5	19	32	31.1	71	68.9
6	21	52	50.5	42	40.8
7	22	30	29.1	72	69.9
8	28	14	13.6	89	86.4
9	32	28	27.2	75	72.8
10	33	12	11.7	90	87.4
11	34	13	12.6	90	87.4
sum		281		834	

In the same manner, Table 2 reveals some facts about the candidates responses to the errors pertained to mono-source and here intralingual errors. The results are almost similar to inter-sources. For example, item 1 in the table which corresponds to item 17 in the main test has been recognized correctly by 39.8 percent and 58.3 have failed to identify the deviant form.

ED6: I asked my aunt how did she learn English.

Table 2: The responses to intra-lingual errors.

no.	Item	1. correct recognition		2. Incorrect recognition.	
		f.	%	f.	%
1	17	41	39.8	60	58.3
2	20	36	35	65	63.1
3	25	19	18.4	84	81.6
4	31	19	18.4	84	81.6
5	36	16	15.5	86	83.5
6	39	22	21.4	80	77.7
sum		153		459	

Or as an additional example, in ED7, there are 18.4 percent correct recognition of participle misuse and there have been 81.6 percent of failure to identify the incorrect form:

ED7: The most important factor to select a job is interesting.

Likewise, Table 3 demonstrates PEL's responses to 20 sentences containing errors which are assumed to be belonging to bi-source errors. However, as it can be understood from the presented data, the frequency of correct error recognition is extremely low. It astonishingly varies from 1 percent as the lowest frequency to 31.1 as the highest. In more than 10 cases, the frequency of error recognition is below or around only 10 percent. In the same way, the highest frequency of error recognition does not exceed 30 percent. For example, ED8 is an example of incorrect passive insertion which is the second item in the main test and the first item of the table. As you see, the problem is identified as deviant only by 18.4 percent of the candidates.

ED8: About 40% of car accidents are happened by old cars and careless drivers.

Or as an additional example, consider the following deviant form:

ED9: A university student has to study carefully and respect to others.

The error in ED9 has been correctly located only by 8.7 percent while there have been 91 cases of failure to identify the incorrect preposition insertion of 'to' in it.

Table 3: The response to bi-source or inter-intra lingual errors.

		1. Correct recognition		2. Incorrect recognition.	
no.	Item	f.	%	f.	%
1	2	3	2.9	100	97.1
2	3	2	1.9	101	98.1
3	5	10	9.7	91	88.3
4	6	8	7.8	94	91.3
5	8	15	14.6	87	84.5
6	10	2	1.9	101	98.1
7	11	19	18.4	84	81.6
8	12	9	8.7	93	90.3
9	13	29	28.2	73	70.9
10	16	11	10.7	89	86.4
11	18	15	14.6	86	83.5
12	24	31	31.1	71	68.9
13	26	16	15.5	87	84.5
14	27	27	26.2	75	72.8
15	29	10	9.7	93	90.3
16	30	7	6.8	96	93.2
17	35	6	5.8	97	94.2
18	37	1	1	102	99
19	38	11	10.7	86	83.5
20	40	22	21.4	81	78.6
sum		254		1787	

To quantify the relationship between different types of response, here we make a comparison between the data presented in tables 2, 3, and 4. It has to be considered that the difference between the frequency of correct responses in table 4 and the other two tables, i.e., 2 and 3, can be significant enough to suggest the fact that the subjects have been facing more difficulty to identify bi-source errors than the errors attributed to one source i. e. either inter or intra. The relevant tabulated contingency table together with the square value and its significance can show the result.

In Table 5, we see that the difference between the two types of correct and incorrect responses to inter, intra, and bi source errors are fairly significant at 5% level. The square test has indicated that the tabulated value of 6.58 at 2 degrees of freedom at 5% level is greater than 5.99 and this signifies the idea that the two variables, here the variables “response” and “sources” are not independent. In other words, there is a meaningful relationship between the two variables. All this can support the notion that the recognition of bi-source errors for the subjects has been more difficult than the mono-source errors.

Table 4: Contingency table of response by sources.

	Inter	Intra	Bi	Sum
Correct recognition	25.5	25.5	12.7	63.7
Incorrect recognition	78.8	76.7	89.3	241.6
Sum	101.3	102	102	305.3

Table 5: The total result of table 4.

Square test	Value	df.	Sig.
	6.58	2	.05

3. Discussion

The main objective of the study was interpreting and elaborating the PELs' interlanguage on recognition level by implementing the GJT. It was hypothesized that the subjects normally possess different types of perceptions regarding the deviations they were exposed to in terms of the three sources of inter, intra, or both of them, and therefore, they would respond invariably to the sentences containing errors. The error types selected for learners' recognition were the ones that appeared more frequently in the PELs' writings. By conducting the test and analyzing the test results, the researcher, moreover, tried to shed light on the notion of difficulty of certain linguistic items and its relevance to rule inconsistency and error production.

One great advantage of the present procedure for taking a GJT was discussed to be the point that the learners could not escape from the given linguistic forms. In other words, the role of avoidance in this situation was minimized to the least possible degree. If the test results can be considered as the reflection of these learners' output, then the data and subsequent indications are capable of revealing valuable facts about the notion of difficulty among these subjects, the intervening sources that may block learning, and their contribution to error production. The learners' responses to the test revealed the relationship between the sources and the degree of difficulty.

In table 6, the test items of the GJT belonging to four areas, articles, prepositions, agreement, and misusing adjectives for adverbs are shown. Following each area are the sources and the frequencies. The reason for selecting and discussing these specific items is that first the subjects have revealed a lot of difficulty to identify the errors belonging to these areas, and second it has empirically been proved that a great number of errors ever committed by these specific learners belong to these areas, and also they are the most persistent errors ever observed because they are the difficulties which are more prevailing among intermediate and upper intermediate language learners.

Table 6: The results of GJT belonging to four areas of prepositions, agreement, article, and adjective misuse.

Area of Error	Item no.	Source	Correct Recog. %	Frequency
Preposition Insertion	1	mono	18.4	19
	5	bi	14.6	10
	6	bi	1.9	8
	13	bi	28.2	29
	15	mono	37.9	39
Article deletion	29	bi	9.7	10
	30	bi	6.8	7
	35	bi	5.8	6
Agreement	19	mono	31.1	32
	24	bi	31.1	31
	26	bi	15.5	16
	27	bi	26.2	27
	28	mono	13.6	14
Adj. for adv.	37	bi	1	1
	40	bi	21.4	22

3.1. Errors of Article

The low frequency of recognizing the deviant forms belonging to the area of article signifies that the subjects have been strongly influenced by the two sources of L1 and L2 simultaneously. For instance, EDs 9, 10, and 11 contain errors of article deletion and the learners' response to correctly identify them as errors are 9.7, 6.8, and 5.8 percent respectively.

ED10: The scientists can solve a lot of problems in society.

ED11: Cigarette is a harmful thing for health of human being.

ED12: Smoking has harmful effects on body.

The small frequency of correct recognition of article and determiner deletion from these sentences reveals that the PELs have serious problems in the area of the article system. In fact, to non-native speakers, some definite syntactic items such as articles and prepositions and some inflectional affixes are assumed to be redundant. Richards and Sampson (1974, p. 174) have moreover postulated that simplification and redundancy reduction are the main causes of transfer. The idea can be discussed on the basis of the assumption that both Persian and English rules have intervened to function as rehearsing factors. In Persian, there is no overt item for articles to signal definiteness, and definiteness, in most cases, is indicated contextually and phonologically, not syntactically. On the other hand, the rules that govern the English article usage are extremely inconsistent and are simply influenced as a result of different contextual and non-contextual factors. Taylor (1976, p. 192) states that even native speakers of English show the tendency to drop the definite article. Master (1990, p. 462) believes that the acquisition of English article system is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for non-native speakers to fully master. In other words, it can be confirmed that the rules that elaborate the article system in English suffer from a large number of exceptions and inconsistencies, and all this may bring about confusion and uncertainty in their application.

By referring to the results of the GJT, we can conclude that the subjects have revealed the same tendency as the native speakers to ignore articles usage, but certainly not for the same reason. For them, the source of deviation in article deletion, on the one hand, can be the interference of L1 rules as there is no overt grammatical item in Persian which can correspond closely to English definite article and that since the article

system in Persian and English follow entirely different rules, the transfer of the L1 rules is highly plausible. In other words, definiteness in Persian is indicated almost by phonological or contextual categories while this is syntactic in English. Furthermore, the rules that govern the article usage in English vary as a result of different factors such as the contextual categories, syntactic properties, extralinguistic features and some others which together make it sometimes a hard task to apply the articles properly. On the other hand, the linguistic rules which modify the application of articles in English are presented in a de-contextualized mode, while we know it is not possible to apply the articles correctly unless the discourse categories are accounted for.

3.2. Errors of Preposition

Inaccurate Preposition insertion is another area in which the PELs have revealed their failure. The results in table 6 show that the subjects have revealed little success to locate the errors in EDs 12, 13 and 14:

ED13: A university student has to study carefully and respect to others.

ED14: When you enter a new place, you may face with many problems.

ED15: I help to my mother. .

The degree of correct recognition of these deviations is 14.6, 7.8, and 28.2 percent respectively. The low frequencies indicate that the subjects have serious problems with the recognition of preposition insertion. The sources of these errors and the others like these are both the interference of learners' L1 and the analogy of L2 rules. The prepositions which are incorrectly inserted here are transferred directly from the subjects' L1 because in Persian the preposition "be" which corresponds with "to" in English is highly plausible to be transferred into their L2. Moreover, as far as the L2 source is concerned, "help" and "respect" as nouns are followed by the preposition "to":

E: Your help to the poor satisfied us.

E: Janet's help to me astonished my family.

E: With respect to your degrees, you may be employed.

Likewise, a lot of variations can be observed among the prepositional L2 rules that obscure the rules of preposition usage. A large number of exceptions and uncertainties govern the prepositional system. In the same way, learning prepositions is not as easy as the prepositional meaning is varied and it is difficult to describe the prepositional meanings in terms of certain labels. Swan (1982, p. 483) claims that learning prepositions is difficult because most of them have several functions and there are many verbs, nouns, and adjectives which are used with particular prepositions. In other words, prepositional determinacy and distribution are made known by the nouns, verbs, or adjectives and not necessarily by the context or purpose. In fact, this area suffers from a large number of inconsistencies.

3.3. Errors of Concord

Errors of concord pertain to the misuse of subject-verb agreement as well as deviations in the use of determiner-head noun and pronoun-antecedent. In other words, the difficulty that the PELs have in this area is distributed to all these areas but not proportionally as the most important item of deviation is deleting third person singular -s. The results of GJT reveal some facts about the sources of these errors and the causes of over producing these deviant forms. Only 15 percent of correct recognition of the error in EDs15, 16 and 17 suggests that the problem is really serious :

ED16: When a person need a job, he cannot find it everywhere.

ED17: Unemployment create problems for all people in a country.

ED18: Smoking bring some important problems for the family.

Doskova (1969) claims that most errors of agreement especially deleting the third-person singular -s can be an instance of over-generalization since in English all persons

take the zero verbal ending except the third person singular in the present simple; consequently its omission can be accounted for the heavy pressure of other endingless forms and this endingless form is generalized for all persons. On the other hand, the simple present in Persian is made by prefixing the particle *mi-* to the present stem of the verb followed by the personal inflectional suffixes. In other words, all nouns take their own prefixes and suffixes to indicate singularity, plurality, and even tense, and the change does not occur exclusively and necessarily for the third person singular.

Therefore, based on the great number of errors committed by the subjects as well as the inconsistencies of L1 and L2 rules governing agreement, one is likely to come to the conclusion that the errors of deleting third person singular-s can be attributed to both L1 and L2 or in other words, it can be accepted as a bi-source error.

3.4. Errors of Adverb

Table 6 demonstrates that the subjects have been dealing with some serious difficulties to identify the erroneous forms belonging to the area, where the subjects were required to discriminate the function and the form of adverbs of manner. The seriousness of the problem is made clearer when we observe that only one subject from among 103 has succeeded to locate the incorrect form in ED19:

ED19: The birds in the morning sing very nice.

This is the minimum frequency obtained from the GJT results belonging to an item containing a bi-source error. However, this is not easy to discuss the causes of the learners' failure to locate the errors in this and the deviant forms like this as they are varied and controversial. For example, the transfer of the learners' native language rule can be one plausible interpretation for this deviation as adjectives and adverbs in Persian take the same form.

The other likely prediction is the inconsistency of the L2 rules concerning the rules governing adverbs of manner because some adverbs of manner such as *well, slow, fast, hard, last, high, etc.* do not necessarily end in *-ly*, and moreover that some items such as *lovely, friendly, yearly, only, etc.*, despite ending in *-ly*, do not constitute an adverb of manner. Another interpretation can be based on the assumption that adjectives are normally placed after a class of verbs called linking verbs, and this is against the general rule that governs the location of adverbs of manner.

4. Conclusion

On the whole, the assumptions presented here can be accounted for one of several plausible interpretations for shaping learners' interlanguage. Identifying the sources of errors in the light of the result of GJT bore some interesting indications. Although the errors having been assessed by the subjects of this experiment have been observed at production level, the present study limited itself to the recognition of the deviations.

The study almost clearly proved that the errors pertained to bi-sources have been more difficult to identify than the errors, the source of which is attributed either to inter or intra. The hypothesis is validating the idea that since learners have more difficulty to locate bi-source errors, they will face more difficulty to apply them and in the same manner to eradicate or to prevent the interference of L1 and L2 sources. In this situation and for this purpose, the GJT functioned very well and was almost successful to reveal the learner's interpretation and conception from the errors they have with them.

It, moreover, supports the notion that rule inconsistency in any area may lead to difficulty and this may itself maximize the number and types of certain errors. It can be accepted that the notion of inconsistency and difficulty function as rehearsing factors and may block feasibility of learning certain items. As a result, it is highly essential for language teachers and text-book designers to give the required load to the linguistic

items which may threaten the L2 learners both by *transfer* and *analogy* simultaneously, and the errors of which may be stemmed back to bi-sources. As it was discussed, they can be the linguistic items which may have been subject to inconsistency. In fact, to identify the exact sources of errors has neither been possible, nor has it been the goal of the present study; meanwhile, to investigate these issues demands more research in all intervening fields. The present study has tried to restrict its scope to the most concrete aspect of the situation which is examining the two mono and bi source errors only on recognition level.

On the whole, it can be concluded that applying a recognition test may include some advantages over tests of production. First, the subjects are exposed to the items which are normally avoided by them. In a sense, the role of avoidance is reduced to the desired level. The second advantage is the point that the researcher can insert his desired items in the test to be judged. Any response to the given items reveals some facts about the learners' notion of the linguistic system of the L2 they study and their level of comprehensibility of that system. This may lead to the assumption that investigating and elaborating the L2 learners' interlanguage can assist language teachers and material designers to obtain a more transparent overview from the insufficiencies of the cognitive and linguistic input of the language learners and the strategies they employ to acquire the L2 system.

Notes

1. For an observation of the frequency of the deviant forms, interested readers may refer to the unpublished Ph. D. thesis belonging to the researcher entitled “Syntactic Errors and the Application Rules of Grammar- A Study in Contrastive Syntax of English and Persian”

2. The statement “Richards (1974, 174) has moreover postulated that simplification” in P. 14 has to be changed to “Richards and Sampson (1974, 174) have moreover postulated that simplification ...”

3. The statement “In fact, to non-native speakers, some definite syntactic items such as articles and prepositions and some inflectional affixes are assumed to be redundant (Littlewood, 1978)” in page 14 has to be changed to: “In fact, to non-native speakers, some definite syntactic items such as articles and prepositions and some inflectional affixes are assumed to be redundant”.

Grammaticality Judgment Test

Read the following sentences carefully. Some of them may contain an error of grammar. Try to find these errors and underline the part which you have recognized as *incorrect*. Pay attention that some of the sentences are *correct*.

1. Most Iranian students do not enjoy from their study.
2. About 40% of car accidents are happened by old cars and careless drivers.
3. Fridays are very boring for me; therefore, on Saturdays I'm happy that Friday is finished.
4. Our parents and teachers try to teach us a lot of important things.
5. A university student has to study carefully and respect to others.
6. When you enter a new place, you may face with many problems.
7. There are some jobs which only women can do them although they are hard.
8. People must have enough income until they can live comfortably.
9. A person who her mother works out will have a boring life.
10. There are three reasons that smoking is dangerous for health.
11. By automobiles, the activities do very fast.

12. Only my mother usually goes for buying bread or groceries.
13. I helped to my mother.
14. Watching a film on TV. may be amusing.
15. They used from my ideas to take a suitable decision.
16. Traveling caused that we become familiar with a lot of places.
17. I asked my aunt how did she learn English.
18. Most people don't know a job is good or not.
19. Most people like the person who have much money.
20. The important thing for me is what do you study.
21. We have to know is he a good man or not.
22. At last, the team who was playing better did not win.
23. We must prepare all conditions for a good life.
24. Smoking bring some important problems for the family.
25. The most important factor to select a job is interesting.
26. When a person need a job, he cannot look for it everywhere.
27. Unemployment create problems for all people in a country.
28. The main responsibilities of a university student is reading his lessons and learning how to live.
29. The scientists can solve a lot of problems in society.
30. Cigarette is a harmful thing for health of human being.
31. She selects a husband who is very kindness.
32. We have many time for sports and travel.
33. On Friday, they went to different places such as mountains and another interesting places.
34. Although smoking is harmful but most people smoke every day.
35. Smoking has harmful effects on body.
36. In some parts of India, they burn the died people.
37. The birds in the morning sing very nice.
38. Despite he is middle aged, he looks old.
39. In spring flowers are growing.
40. My sister writes French good, but her handwriting is very bad.

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