An Error Analysis of Undergraduate Learners' Sindhi-English Translation

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out L1 (Sindhi) interference in the English language use by undergraduate Sindhi students having Sindhi as their mother tongue. The study exploits a modified model of error analysis propounded by Rod Ellis (1994) that contains four stages: identification, description, explanation and evaluation of the errors. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed, containing ten sentences in Sindhi language which were taken from a Sindhi daily "Sindh Express". These sentences were about everyday issues like sports, showbiz, politics and social issues. Twenty undergraduate students having Sindhi as their mother tongue were selected through purposive sampling strategy in order to ensure that the students in question had basic proficiency level in English language as the researcher knew them personally. Participants were accessed through email communication and were requested to fill in questionnaires. Out of the received responses, 25 items were selected having 35 errors. Out of those 35 errors, a few were found repeated several times by different participants. These responses were identified, described, explained and evaluated. It was found that whether they were caused by mother tongue interference or not. Errors were divided into three categories: semantic, morphological and syntactic. The results of the study showed that out of 35 errors, 21 were semantic, 12 were morphological and 2 were syntactic in nature. 16 (45%) errors were caused due to interference from the mother tongue. Hence, the study revealed that L1 interference is not the only cause of learners' difficulties in learning English language. Learners' assumptions, knowledge of grammar and personal experiences also become responsible for their English language use errors.

Introduction

Second language differs from foreign language in a sense that the former is used in various facets of social, educational, political and administrative life of the users, later, on the other hand, is used only in situations where the communication is needed for international or global purposes (Kachru, 2007). English in Pakistan enjoys the status of second language and fulfills Kachru's definition. But it is not the mother tongue of any ethnic community residing in Pakistan. This case study is based in the context of Sindhi as mother tongue of undergraduate students learning English as a second language. Twenty students were selected for this purpose; all of them had Sindhi as their mother language. Similar study was carried out by Kafipour and Khojasteh (2011) i.e. "The Study of Morphological, Syntactic, and Semantic Errors Made by Native Speakers of Persian and English Children Learning English"

Lardiere (2009) observes that every language is generally formed of three basic lexical features: phonological, formal and semantic, and that languages differ from one another due to these features. Lado (1957 cited in Wong and Dras, 2009) proposes that second language acquisition difficulties occur, hypothetically, due to differences between the old language and the new language being learnt. Contrastive analysis was also taken over by what is called error analysis (Corder, 1967, cited in ibid). This view is also endorsed by

Lennon (2008) who asserts that the prior view that difficulties occur in the learning of a new language due to L1 interferences but it has been observed lately that students from different L1 backgrounds show the same kind of difficulties. This view suggests that errors occur due to some intrinsic sub-system elements rather than interference from the first language. But here our focus will remain on the contrastive analysis of the two languages rather than the error analysis as the research in error analysis does not totally negate the importance of contrastive analysis.

Literature Review

Rustipa (2011) defines contrastive analysis as a 'systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying structural differences and similarities', this field emerged in sixth and seventh decades of twentieth century with a view to ascertain why there were various areas of some second/foreign language that were very difficult to learn and the others that were easy and simple. It was found that differences and similarities in errors could occur due to interferences from the mother tongue of the learners.

Contrastive analysis is a vast field of research due to presence of thousands of languages in the world and more important than that there are frequently interactions between different languages. Second language learning or foreign language learning are not the only areas where contrastive analysis takes place, for example, Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013) have studied the methods and common theories applied in translating the subtitles in movies, the translation being done from English into Lithuanian and Russian languages. Using contrastive analysis, they found that most of the times literal translation was performed from English to Lithuanian and Russian languages in movies. Němečková (2011) studied the journalistic styles of Czech and English languages through contrastive analysis.

However, the context of present study is not non-academic. The focus of present study is the second language learning of English and its contrastive analysis to Sindhi language which happens to be the mother tongue of the students under this case study.

Whitman (1970 cited in Yang, 1992) describes the procedure of contrastive analysis in four steps: (1) The first language and the other language to be contrasted with (often a second or a foreign language) are chosen, (2) Some forms are selected for the description in written, (3) Forms are contrasted, and (4) Through them the difficulty is predicted. Yang (1992) further divides Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis in three sub-categories: strong, moderate and weak. Wardhaugh (1970 cited in ibid) strong version considers that first language interferes the learning of second language and that these difficulties can be predicted using systematic procedures of contrastive analysis and that greater the differences between languages, the harder it will be for learners to learn the second language. In this view, this study falls in the category of strong version of contrastive analysis because it takes into account the written forms of both the languages and then compares them systematically to judge the level of difficulty and the differences.

Noguchi (2014) in her study on the contrastive analysis between Japanese and American English sound systems, using AS general perspective, has given some examples of contrastive analysis. In her examples, she shows that Japanese speakers and English speakers use different articulators to produce vowel sounds. And studying their rhythms, the English teacher might be encouraged to teach Japanese students to have more control over their English pronunciation by training their muscles and organs in a proper way to produce English sounds.

Zawahreh (2013) studied the context translation of Arabic adjectives into English by Jordanian students. The results of the study showed that the translation of the Arabic

adjectives into English was often misleading among the students, because they would do it out of context. In order to find the appropriate replacement in English for the Arabic adjectives, students should pay attention to context, parts of speech and collocations.

Acheoah (2013) analyzed the morphology of English and Afenmai (a Nigerian language) and found that processes of prefixing, compounding, derivation of one word-class from another and reduplication were common in those two languages.

Contrastive Analysis in Pakistani Context

There has been significant amount of research on contrastive analysis in Pakistan yet a lot more needs to be done, looking at the number of languages being spoken in Pakistan and other South Asian countries at both places and the number of people trying to learn English as a second language. All these various mother languages and English may interact in different ways and for that, this particular aspect of research needs to be expanded as it would help many learners and practitioners to make the learning process easier through practical implications of the research and preceding theorization in the same.

Akhtar and Rizwan (2015) studied the taxonomy of syntactic-morphological errors in Urdu-English translation in a quantitative way. They found out that there were frequent errors in tenses and plural morphemes. Their study, however, did not take in account the semantic aspect of the contrastive analysis. This study has taken this third aspect as well in order to ascertain closer insights into L1 interferences.

Qasim et al. (2015) analyzed the generic features of business correspondence used by native and non-native employees to see the common differences in their written communication. The findings of the study showed that native employees wrote more detailed and clearer drafts than non-native employees. But this study was conducted in corporate sector, it might bear differences with academic settings.

Sarfaraz (2011) analyzed the written English essays of undergraduate students based on error analysis. Her study revealed that there were two types of errors i.e. interlanguage errors and mother tongue interference errors. The results showed that interlanguage errors were higher than those caused by mother tongue interferences.

Research Methodology

- **Instrument**

  In order to analyze the transitional errors between the two languages i.e. English and Sindhi in terms of syntactic, morphological and semantic levels, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire (attached in Appendix – I) contained ten sentences from Sindhi language which were taken from a Sindhi daily "Sindh Express" on the issue very common to everyday knowledge of the participants i.e. politics, showbiz and sports.

- **Participants**

  Twenty undergraduate students were selected using purposive sampling. All the participants were enrolled at different universities of Pakistan. Purposive sampling was used to make sure that students had a considerable amount of proficiency over English language as they were researchers' acquaintances. Most of the students were from Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh. So it can be safely said that they had sufficient proficiency in English language. Moreover, as the study was a contrastive one, and one of the languages being Sindhi, all the participants had Sindhi as their mother tongue. Questionnaires were administered using email as the medium.

- **Analysis**

  Rod Ellis's (1994) model of error analysis procedure was used to analyze the errors. After the collection of data, the responses were sorted out and categorized. Then the errors were identified. Those errors were then described in the section 'description'. Next, those errors were explained. Finally, the same were evaluated using contrastive analysis approach. This method had also been used by Sarfaraz, S. (2011) in her research. It was found suitable for this study, hence it was exploited for the same.

Data Analysis

| No.	Error	Description (Error type)	Explanation	Error Caused by L1 Interference
1	*Traditional* programs	Semantic	Culture has been written as traditional. It is common in Sindh for people to misinterpret culture with tradition.	Yes
2	*Save* language	Semantic	Languages are preserved. Save takes the connotation of physical protection.	Yes
3	Eid *Celebrations*	Semantic	Eid is a happy festival. So, semantically celebrations are attached as a connotation of happiness.	Yes
4	*afghani*	Morphological	There are no capital and small letters in Sindhi, sometimes this results into learners forgetting the English grammar rules as an effect of their mother tongue.	Yes
5	Old man [*laborer*] is selling toys *to feed himself.*	Semantic	At first there is omission: oldness has been presumed as being poor and laborer. Next, addition has been done as selling is extended to feeding oneself. Student's personal observations are at work here.	No
6	Before retirement [*I*] want to play a test match in my country.	Semantic	In Sindhi sentence, the first person 'I' was not present, a player's name was preceding. But in English translation, it had to be included but due to inference from L1 student omitted it.	Yes
7	Pakistan *white washed* the Srilanka	Semantic	White wash has been used instead of taught lesson. There was no mentioning of Pakistan defeating Sri Lanka by an all over series win. Student's personal experience is at play here.	No

8	Women issues will not be solved by *capturing* selfies	Semantic	Addition has been made here. Selfies are 'captured' so student translated the sense.	No
9	American forces killed ten *afghani* soldiers in a *blast* in Afghanistan	1. Morphological 2. Semantic	Error one has already been discussed. Error two is semantic as it takes the connotation of bombing and the word has been replaced with blast.	1. Yes 2. No
10	An old laborer is selling the *playing* toys	Semantic	Addition has been done here. Toys are always meant for playing.	No
11	Flood *resulted* heavy destruction in *chitral*	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	Error one is caused by lack of knowledge in vocabulary of English. Second error is caused by L1 inference as already mentioned.	1. No 2. Yes
12	Karachi's operation is against *to* criminals	Semantic	Additional infinitive has been used due to student's lack of competence in tenses.	No
13	The *Stakeholders* are looting Sindh in the name of democracy	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	Elected members of government have been misinterpreted with stakeholders. Error two has already been discussed.	1. No 2. Yes
14	*Women problem* will not be *solve* by selfie	Morphological	Error occurs due to lack of competence in grammar, specifically in vocabulary and tenses.	No
15	American army has killed ten Afghani *solders* by *blast* in Afghanistan	1. Morphological 2. Semantic	Error one is caused by spelling mistake the sound /dz/ as in 'education' has been used here as a result of assumed uniformity of structures and spellings by the student. Error two is discussed already.	1. No 2. No
16	*In order to save language cultural programs are necessary*	Syntactic	Word by word translation has been done here.	Yes
17	Rulers are *snitching/* looting to Sindh *with* name of democracy	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	Snatching takes physical connotation, and the word has been misspelled too. Errors are caused by lack of competence on student's part.	1. No 2. No
18	Women's problems will not *resolve* through selfie	Morphological	Be resolved is the right form. Error is caused by lack of competence on student's part.	No

19	In Chitral flood has *made* devastation	Semantic	'Made' has been used instead of 'caused'. Error is caused by lack of competence on student's part.	No
20	In Afghanistan USA Army killed 10 *Taliban* by *Air* attack	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	Student has presumed that there is nothing as Afghan Army, and there are just Taliban there and it has been presumed that if anyone is to be bombed by US in Afghanistan, it has to be Taliban. Error two has already been explained.	1. No 2. Yes
21	Old *farmer* is selling toys	Semantic	In Sindhi context, laborer and farmer are always confused with each other.	Yes
22	Before retirement [*I*] *wants* to play test match in my country.	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	Error one has already been explained. Error two occurs due to third person singular 's' in present simple tense, it has been caused by student's lack of competence in tenses.	1. Yes 2. No
23	*Crime operations* in Karachi are against *defaulters*	Semantic	Literal translation has been done. Culprits are named as defaulters.	Yes
24	*We* need *culture programmes* for *protecting a* language	1. Semantic 2. Morphological	'We' has been added as the student herself is a Sindhi native. Other errors have been explained already. Morphological error is caused by student's lack of competence in spellings.	1. Yes 2. No
25	The ruler's *mentioned* democracy *for plundering to sindh provnc*	1. Semantic 2. Syntactic 3. Morphological	Literal translation has been done. Sindh and province words have been misspelled due to modern trend of texting through shortened words.	1. Yes 2. Yes 3. No

Results

Following are the results of this study:

Total No. of Errors	Morphological Errors	Semantic Errors	Syntactic Errors	Errors caused by L1 Inference
35	12	21	02	16

Total Errors 35

Division of Errors
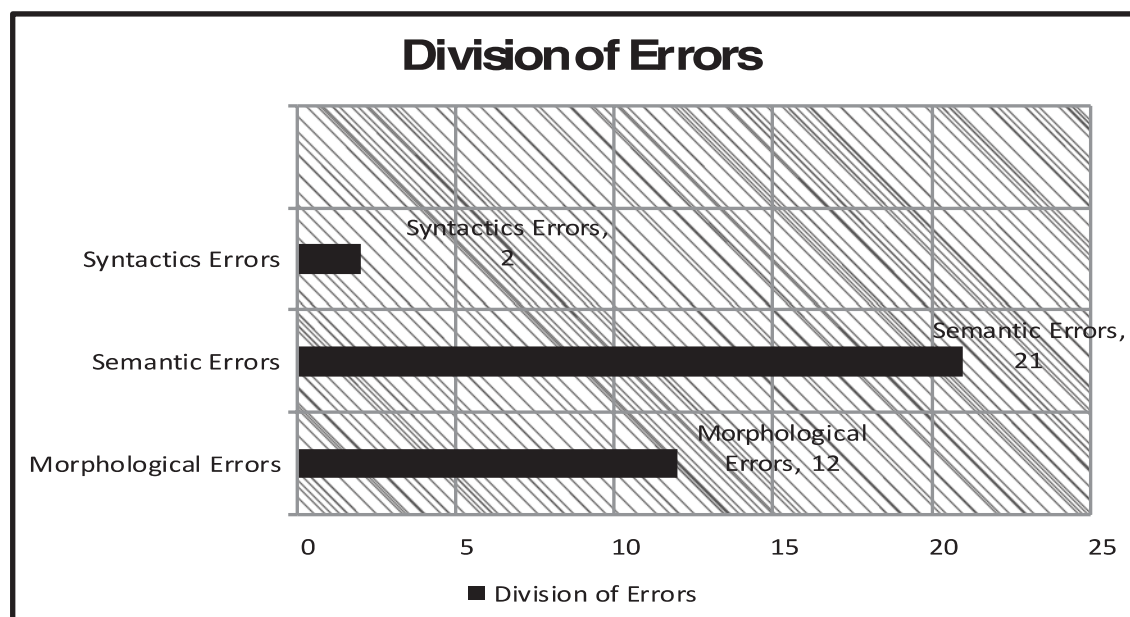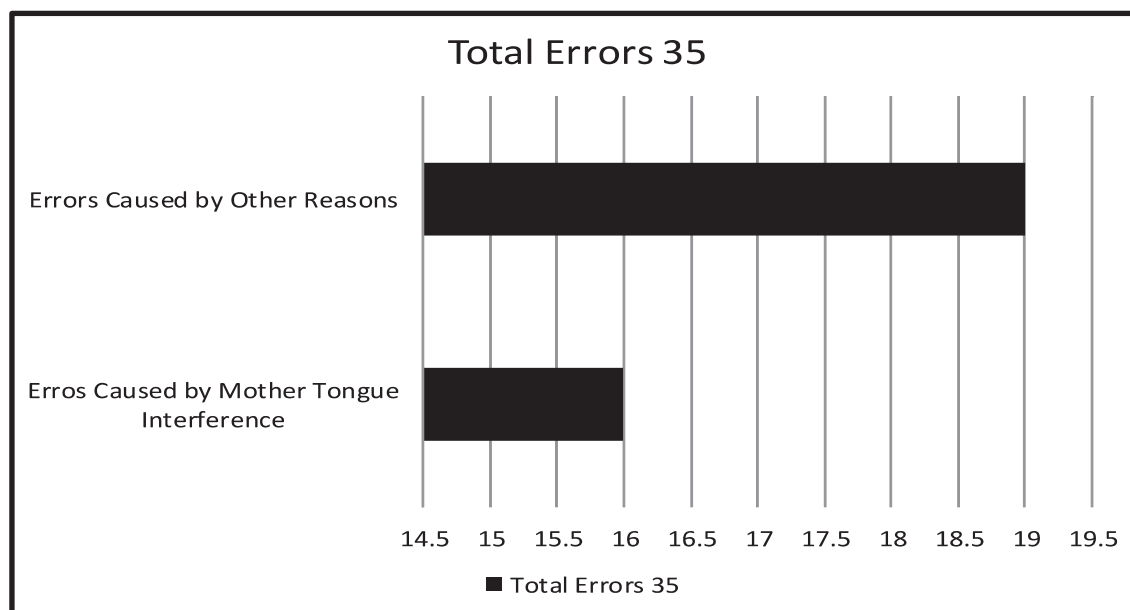
Discussion

The results of the study revealed that most of the errors identified were semantic in nature. Whereas, the morphological errors were next in number and syntactic errors were only two in number. As this study aimed at analyzing the errors in the specific context of contrastive analysis between English and Sindhi, hence it was found that only 45% of the mistakes were caused due to interference from the L1 of the participants. It was learnt that the major cause of the target students' errors was not the interference of their L1/mother tongue, rather it was their linguistic incompetence in English. A few other factors like learners' assumptions and poor knowledge in grammar were also found to be responsible for learners' errors in the given context. It may, however, be noticed that even in the context of semantic errors, majority of errors were not made as a result of interference from the L1 rather than they were caused by the personal experiences, observations, assumptions and incompetence of the students. Morphological errors in the case of spellings and capital letters, however, resulted

from the L1 interference, where absence of capital and small letter system in L1 created confusion for students to decide where to use a capital letter and where not. The study results also indicated that learners' mother tongue interference was responsible for all their (100 percent errors) morphological errors as students translated the sentences literally or trying to replicate the syntactic structure of their mother tongue.

Conclusion
The study found that not all the errors were caused by L1 interference. There were other reasons related such as assumptions, experiences, learning gaps, also responsible for learners' errors in the given context. This was a very limited study involving small number of students in a specific setting, therefore results cannot be generalizability. If this study is executed on a larger scale, it can be helpful for ELT practitioners and students.

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APPENDIX – I

Hello there! We are conducting a research survey through this questionnaire for our research paper named "An Error Analysis of Undergraduate Learners' Sindhi-English Translation". You are requested to translate following ten sentences from Sindhi to English according to your competence. It will be highly appreciated that you do this translation without asking anyone else for help. If you need any help, you may ask us freely. You need to fill following information for data collection process. Your privacy will be kept confidential. We thank you in anticipation.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Class: _____

Gender: _____

University: _____

.1   كراچي ۾ آپريشن ڏوهارين خلاف آهي.

•

.2   ٻولي بچائڻ لاءِ ثقافتي پروگرام ضروري آهي.

•

.3   حڪمران جمهوريت جي نالي ۾ سنڌ ڳي لٽي رهيا آهن.

•

.4   ڪراچي ۾ شهرين عيد لاءِ خريداري ڪئي.

•

.5   پاڪستان سريلنڪا کي سبق سيکاري ڇڏيو.

•

.6   عورتن جا مسئلا سيلفي سان حل نه ٿيندا.

•

.7   چترال ۾ ٻوڏ تباهي مچائي ڇڏي آهي.

•

.8   افغانستان ۾ آمريڪي فوج بمباري ڪري 10 افغاني فوجي ماري ڇڏيا.

•

.9   پوڙهو پورهيت رانديڪا وڪڻي رهيو آهي.

•

.10   رٽائرمينٽ کان اڳ ۾ پنهنجي ملڪ ۾ ٽيسٽ مئچ ڪيڏڻ چاهيان ٿو.

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Thank you very much for your time and effort.