

対 照 分 析 と 誤 答 分 析

—それぞれの限界と効用—

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A BRIEF SURVEY OF CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND ERROR ANALYSIS

1.1. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Contrastive analysis is based on two main assumptions:

- 1) The native language (NL) interferes with the learning of a target language (TL);
- 2) The greater the difference between a structure in the NL and the TL, the more difficult it is for the learner.

CA advocates (e.g., Fries (1945), Lado (1957), Weinreich (1964), di Pierto (1971), etc.) have claimed that a systematic comparison of the native language and the target language at all levels of structure will generate predictions about the areas of learning difficulty in the target language for speakers of the native language.

Furthermore, they have maintained that the best teaching materials will emphasize those features of the native language.

Fries (1945) stated that “the most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the language of the learner.”

It was Lado, however, who conceived the first methodological procedures for CA in *Linguistics Across Cultures* published in 1957. He says that “we assume that the student who comes in contact with

a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native tongue will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult”.

In the 1960's especially in the U.S.A., Contrastive Analysis was overwhelmingly accepted as a more sophisticated and reliable method than Error Analysis for predicting and explaining learning difficulties.

1.1.1. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS (SHORTCOMINGS)

In recent years, however, Contrastive Analysis has faced mounting criticisms regarding both its theoretical foundations and its methodological practices.

Trai-Then-Che (1975) states that criticisms on Contrastive Analysis are usually centred around the following points:

- 1) Focusing mainly on language differences, CA ignores many other factors which affect the second language learner's performance, such as his own learning strategies, the training procedures, overgeneralizations of target language rules, and so on.
- 2) Learning strategy is approached statistically as an instantaneous imprinting, so that the role of storage from a prior stage is ignored. Consequently, CA can not predict, for instance, the types of error caused by interference from target language materials previously learned.
- 3) Some “universal” learning strategies are observed to have taken place in both child and adult language learning: for example, the phenomenon described by Slama-Cazacu as “contamination”—more commonly referred to by other authors as “overgeneralization”—which is the application of a target language rule to a new situation where the rule is not applicable.

Another “universal” learning strategy is “regularization” of language, which leads to analogy errors; deviant forms such as “go-ed” and “spend-ed” are formed in the speech both of children

and of second language learners. Errors such as these are overlooked by CA, which, by virtue of its working premises, can only predict errors that derive from structural differences between NL and TL.

- 4) The fundamental psychological concept on which CA is based, that of transfer, is considered as a “controversial concept” in modern handbooks of psychology. The stereotyped application, by specialists in other fields of old concepts of psychology is often dangerous. Psychological science has evolved, some of its concepts have been modified or have disappeared, or, in their old form, no longer fit the system of knowledge—itsself evolving—in other sciences.
- 5) The objectivity of CA methodological procedures is questionable. The contrastivists’ freedom to use his “preferred model of language structure” often leads to different outputs presenting different predictions (Jackson, 1971).

In spite of criticisms against CA, there are still some evidences in favour of CA.

Selinker (1971) points out that:

- 1) There have been a number of conferences held such as the Georgetown Conference (1968), the Cambridge Second International Conference (1971), among others.
- 2) There are a number of Ph. D. dissertations in contrastive linguistics.
- 3) There has been a recent growth of large scale contrastive projects in Europe (such as the German-English Project at Stuttgart, and the Serbo Croatian English Project at Zagreb).

Catford makes the following interesting statement:

“A sophisticated error analysis”, one “which involves both theoretically adequate linguistic categorization of errors and sophisticated statistical treatment”, could reveal the particular difficulties encountered by a specific group of students. Once this information is available, CA can be directed precisely to these areas of difficulty and can provide

information on why the errors occur. Unfortunately a reasonable compromise has not seen many practical applications.

1.2. ERROR ANALYSIS (EA)

EA was firstly developed in the teaching of the mother tongue, and was widely used in the U.S.A. between 1915 and 1933.

Characteristic of this period was a predominant concern with “minimal essentials” in school curricula. List of common errors provided the basis for the selection of essential materials to be incorporated into English syllabuses. Studies of errors in foreign languages were, however, scarce.

It was not until the late 1950's that an increasing number of these studies were reported.

The advent of contrastive linguistics in a way contributed to the revival of EA in foreign languages. EA assumed another role besides its primary diagnostic function. It provided the necessary empirical data to verify and supplement contrastive studies.

EA proponents have challenged the usefulness of CA both on theoretical and practical grounds. Their counterclaim is that “a careful study of a large corpus of errors committed by speakers of the source language attempting to express themselves in the TL provides factual empirical data—rather than theoretical speculation—for developing a syllabus or a model of second language acquisition.”

“EA” views the learner as one who interacts actively with the new language, developing new hypotheses about the structure of the language he is learning as well as modifying and discarding earlier formed ones.

EA has thus become a rallying point for those who reject a behaviouristic view of language learning.

1.2.1. WEAKNESSES IN EA RESEARCH

J. Schachter and M. Celce-Murcia (1977) point out the six potential weaknesses of EA as follows:

1) **The Analysis of Errors in Isolation**

The first step in an EA is the extraction of errors from the corpus. To consider what the learner produces in error and to exclude from consideration the learner's non-errors is tantamount to describing a code of manners on the basis of the observed breaches of the code.

2) **The Proper Classification of Identified Errors**

Errors are typically described with regard to the target language system. The question is asked: "Is this a deviation from the TL?" As all investigators know it is not always easy to decide. But even when this decision is possible the next question is really the critical one; "What structure is this an error in?" Numerous questionable decisions are made at this point, which is the critical stage of an EA project. For example, this is a sentence produced by a Japanese learner:

AMERICANS ARE EASY TO GET GUNS.

This sentence can be analyzed in two ways:

(1) An instance of a wrongly applied rule which seem to be derived from a grammatical intermediate structure such as "It is easy for Americans to get guns."

(2) The learner has categorized "easy" as an adjective which allows infinitival complements, like "able" such as "Americans are able to get guns."

3) Statements of Error Frequency

Informed Type of EA Study (absolute statements)

Some EA based projects make very informal statements of error frequency, merely pointing out that certain systematic errors are especially frequent in the writing of non-native speakers of English (e. g., Burt and Kiparsky, 1972)

Newman (1977) also writes as follows:

“other studies have examined more rigorously a specific corpus and have provided extensive numerical totals so that the reader can see how frequently one kind of error occurs vis-à-vis another.

More sophisticated EA studies (relative statements)

In such a study, relative frequency refers to a fraction of those obtained by using as numerator the number of times an error was committed and as denominator the number of times the error type could have occurred. Such relative statements of frequency are more informative than earlier absolute statements from both a pedagogical and a developmental point of view; however, even here only obligatory—and not optional—contents can be studied and quantified with accuracy for any given error type. This is because only the total number of instances are based on where the element of structure actually occurs. No such total can be computed for optional contexts.

4) The Identification of Points of Difficulty in the TL

Although there may be a great deal of overlap between the difficulty of a given element or structure and its error frequency, there may also be areas of difficulty that are not revealed by a high frequency of production errors.

There is a possibility that learners avoid producing constructions which they find difficult. This kind of avoidance has been reported by J. Schachter (1974) presenting evidence indicating that Chinese and Japanese learners avoid producing relative clauses in English,

and Kleinmann (1977) presents even more convincing evidence that Arabic speaking learners avoid the English passive construction. It is noteworthy that in neither of these cases would an analysis of errors alone have identified these apparent areas of difficulty for Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic learners of English.

For classroom purposes in particular, it is an important to know what the learner will not do and why, as well as important know what he will do. and why.

5) The Ascription of Causes To Systematic Errors

This is an area of particular concern since finding the cause of an error gives us some insight into the language learning process which can undoubtedly have an impact on classroom methods and materials in the future. What we see happening, however, is just the reverse. There are, for example, large numbers of learner errors that can be identified as being either interlingual or developmental.

Consider the case of the obligatory copula in English. For native speakers of Chinese, Arabic and certain other languages deletion of this form can in part be explained as interference (i.e. interlingual errors) because of structural differences. However, this same error could also be described as essentially developmental since monolingual English learners (i.e., children) and native speakers of languages like Spanish, which exhibits no structural differences with English in this area, also produce this "error" when learning English.

6) The Biased Nature of Sampling Procedures

Researchers using EA data tend to overlook the fact that they may be working with a very limited and biased sampling in any one of the following areas.

- (1) background languages (assuming a hetero-geneous group is being studied)
- (2) subjects

(3) data samples (from any given subject)

Furthermore, the sampling in any of these areas is rarely (if ever) “random” in the statistical sense of the word since the researchers work with available subjects.

Therefore, trying to draw statistically significant findings from small samples *a priori* is a questionable practice.

1.3. DEFINITION OF “ERROR” AND “MISTAKE”

Corder (1967) describes the difference between ‘error’ and ‘mistake’ as follows:

“‘mistakes’ can be made even by native speakers and they are of no significance to the process of language learning and errors are systematic in nature and reflect a learner’s transitional competence.

The problem of determining what is a learner’s mistake and what is learner’s error is one of some difficulty and involves a much more sophisticated study and analysis of errors”.

Errors can be determined by tests of acceptability or non-acceptability by native speakers. However, the scale of ‘acceptability’ or ‘non-acceptability’ varies according to the total context of an utterance, which makes it difficult to determine in definite terms what is right and what is wrong.

Stevens (1969) also points out that the definition of errors is essentially subjective. It is possible for two educated native speakers to differ, in a surprisingly large proportion of cases, as to whether items are acceptable or unacceptable, and hence as to whether they should be counted as errors. Consequently the degree of prescriptiveness of the individual analyst greatly affects the number of errors to be categorized.

Corder’s item “lapses” are mistakes in the production of the code but there are equally mistakes which are due to the inappropriate or

unacceptable choice of code features—to address a policeman as “mate” is not a lapse but it certainly is a mistake of choice of address and one which indicates the assumption of a status relationship which should almost certainly have serious consequences. Such slips, then, may be labelled mistakes. On the other hand, errors, unlike lapses and mistakes, are “breaches of the code” and therefore rather rare in normal adult L_1 users who have mastered the essentials of the code and its social uses by about the age of six but most likely in L_2 users.

Such “breaches” are therefore either random or regular, and, either way, indicators of the imperfect knowledge of the TL possessed by the learner.

Therefore, the surface phenomena generated by his underlying transitional competence and the surest data we have which will give us access to the rule system which governs it.

Corder (1967) continues that errors are significant in three different ways.

- (1) To the teacher—They show how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what remains for him to learn.
- (2) To the researcher—They provide the evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language.
- (3) To the learner (most important aspect)—They are indispensable to the learner, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning.

1.3.1. GRAMMATICALITY AND ACCEPTABILITY

Grammaticality presents far less of a problem of definition than

does acceptability, since it is concerned with the internal structuring of the code itself”…… a sentence is grammatical or not without any reference to the situation of speaking. All that is needed to judge it is within it, in its structure, and in the language under whose rules it is framed” (Gleason 1965).

On the other hand, acceptability requires that “such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest……” (Chomsky 1965) be taken into consideration in the judgement of an utterance as”…… perfectly natural and immediately comprehensible without paper-and-pencil analysis, and in no way bizarre or outlandish” (Chomsky 1965).

Clearly such a set of conditions contains a wide range of features—social appropriateness, comprehensibility, etc.

1.4. CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS

Although there is no established agreement as to the classification of errors, errors may be categorized broadly into the following two types; ‘interlingual’ and ‘intralingual’.

- 1) Interlingual errors are caused by the influence of the learner’s NL on his production of the TL.

There are many factors influencing this type of error: age of the learner being the principle one, the formality of the learning situation and the method of teaching.

- 2) Intralingual errors—originating within the TL.

This type of error occurs when the learner’s knowledge of the TL is limited and he tries to apply rules in different and in appropriate situations.

Intralingual errors have been defined in further detail by different linguists. Some of them are as follows:

- (A) Corder’s concept of idiosyncratic dialects refers to the learner’s personal unstable, developing grammar.
- (B) Corder’s concept of transitional competence refers to one’s un-

derlying knowledge of the language to date.

- (C) Selinker's concept of 'interlanguage' represents intermediate stages between the NL and the TL observable in learner's language (or a different language system from either the NL or the TL).

He defines the causes of errors in terms of (1) language transfer, (2) overgeneralization, (3) fossilization (i.e., when a learner obtained sufficient knowledge of language for his communicative needs, he stops learning thereafter), (4) transfer of training (i.e., the influence of teaching and textbooks) and (5) strategies of learning.

- (D) Nemser's concept of 'approximative system' suggests that deviant linguistic systems vary in character according to the proficiency level.

- (E) Richard's concept of intralingual and developmental errors:

- (1) Intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning which are 1) failure to learn the conditions under which rules apply, 2) incomplete application of rules, 3) overgeneralization, and 4) false concept hypothesized.
- (2) Developmental errors reflect the strategies by which the learner acquires the language. These errors show that the learner—often completely independent of his native language—is making false hypotheses about the target language based on limited exposure to it. These errors are also called errors of redundancy, simplification and overgeneralization.

1.5. WAYS OF CORRECTION

Clark (1975) writes that information about errors need not be used for punishment, but can be regarded as a form of information feedback to the learner, as well as to the teacher.

Allwright (1975) suggests four dimensions for deciding what corrections to make and when to make them. The first suggestion is that we have to know basic information about the error. For exam-

ple, the teacher needs to know what was actually said or done and by whom; what was meant; what should have been said or done; and (possibly) what the native language equivalent would be.

The second dimension is the importance of correction.

(1) Errors affecting intelligibility.

Burt (1975) distinguishes “global” errors, errors affecting the overall sentence organization (e.g., wrong order, missing, wrong or misplaced connectors, etc.), from “local” errors, errors affecting only simple elements in a sentence (e.g., noun and verb inflections, articles, etc.), primarily on the correction of global errors because her research indicates that native speakers of English had more difficulty understanding foreign students utterances possessing global errors than those with local errors.

(2) High frequency errors

(3) Errors at a high level of generality.

Johansson (1973) suggests that errors involving general or broad grammatical rules are more deserving than those dealing with a grammatical exception or a lexical item.

(4) Errors with stigmatizing or irritating effects.

Even if an error does not affect intelligibility or occur very often, it could still be worthy of remediation because of the stigmatizing effects that it has on the listener or reader.

(5) Errors affecting a large percent of the students.

Some sources suggest that only error common to the whole class are deserving of class time for correction (Olsson, 1972)

(6) Errors relevant to the pedagogic focus.

The importance that a teacher attributes to an error may depend on the objectives of a particular lesson: For example, a teacher may let an error of verb tense go uncorrected during a lesson in which he is explicitly teaching appropriate article usage.

The third dimension is the ease of correction.

How easy it is for the teacher to correct the error may depend on the teachers competence (e.g., knowledge of grammatical structure, etc.), the resources available (e.g., audiovisual aids, reference texts, etc.) and time available.

The last dimension to discuss is the characteristics of students. The teacher's treatment of error correction might also be influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by his perception of various student characteristics such as;

- (1) Individual differences, e.g. personality type, first language, culture, intelligence, aptitude, etc.
- (2) Past history, e.g., academic record, errors previously observed, treatment types previously used, etc.
- (3) Current style, e.g., motivation, anxiety level, arousal level, fatigue, etc.

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