

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Second Language Learning

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This article aims to provide an overview of some of the issues related to contrastive analysis hypothesis in second language learning. Contrastive hypothesis is one of the branches of applied linguistics which concerns with the study of two systems of languages between first language and target language. Contrastive hypothesis has fairly played an important role in language studies. Thus, in recent years, contrastive analysis has been used in language teaching contexts, syllabus design, and language classrooms by language teachers over the world. Many research works have been done by many language researchers in different aspects of contrastive hypothesis and also error analysis in the world. Language teachers always see contrastive analysis as a pedagogical imperative in target language and they use it as a functional approach in language classroom. However, contrastive hypothesis follows the errors of language learners in second language education.

Key Words: contrastive approach, error approach, interlanguage, second language acquisition, second language learning

Artikel ini menyajikan gambaran terhadap isu-isu yang berhubungan dengan hipotesa 'contrastive analysis' pada pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Hipotesa contrastive merupakan salah satu linguistic terapan yang fokus pada studi dua system bahasa: bahasa pertama dan bahasa sasaran. Hipotesa contrastive telah memainkan peran penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Saat ini, analisa contrastive telah digunakan dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa dan desain silabus. Banyak penelitian dalam bidang ini

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yang telah dilakukan. Pengajar bahasa selalu memandang analisa contrastive sebagai keniscayaan yang digunakan sebagai 'functional approach' dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Namun, hipotesa contrastive mengikuti kesalahan-kesalahan pembelajar bahasa dalam pendidikan bahasa kedua.

INTRODUCTION

This article is concerned with what has been called place of contrastive approach in second and foreign language. For the past decades, contrastive approach has attracted the attention of second or foreign language researchers, curriculum developers, educationalists, language teachers, and language learners over the world. James (1980) mentions that contrastive analysis is a hybrid drawing on the sciences of linguistics and psychology. He adds that contrastive analysis needs a psychological component and it is concerned with second language learning. In the discussion of language learning and contrastive analysis, we try to focus on the two subjects: stimulus and response.

Before discussing the two items, we come back to the history of contrastive analysis as a branch of applied linguistics sciences in twentieth century. Two famous linguists, Fries and Lado, initiated the study of contrastive approach in 1945 based on the comparison of two systems of mother language and foreign language in order to learn a foreign language. Khansir (2012) argues that "contrastive analysis gained much important to investigate learner errors in the field of second language acquisition, in which two languages were systematically compared during the 40's and 50's" (p. 1028). Ghadessy (1980) argues that "contrastive analysis gained much importance during the 40's and 50's when the dominant belief was that a statement of the similarities and differences between various languages was enough to deal with the problem of teaching these languages" (p. 93). He adds that the focus of attention of contrastive analysis has been to point out the similarities and differences rather than how a person learns a second language. Lado introduced the contrastive approach in his book "Linguistics across Cultures" in 1957.

Khansir (2010) mentions that contrastive analysis approach focuses on interference errors but neglects many types of learners' errors in learning target language. Contrastive analysis is developed and practised as an application of structural linguistics to language teaching. Duskova (1969) mentions the assumption of structural linguistics that contrastive analysis predicts the areas of linguistic difficulties encountered by learners of a second language. He goes on to say that "it has been noted by teachers that many of the common errors can hardly be ascribed to interference from the mother tongue" (p. 11). The fact that for many years, it has been said that the only major source of language errors in adult second and foreign language performance is the performer's first language, and many language materials in learning second or foreign language are prepared based on this assumption.

Now we consider stimulus–response theory coined by B. F. Skinner. Khansir (2013) examines the basic schools of language teaching and focuses on the role of behaviourism as one of the schools in language teaching related to psychology of learning. He states that the term behaviour is interpreted in terms of stimulus and response. Richards et al. (1992) indicate that learning is the formation of associations between responses. Richards et al. (1992) argue that "a stimulus is that which produces a change or reaction in an individual or organism. A response is the behaviour which is produced as a reaction to a stimulus" (p. 354).

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS HYPOTHESIS

There are two kinds of linguistic approaches to the study of language learners' errors: contrastive analysis approach and error analysis approach. In the middle of the twentieth century, one of the most important approaches of language learning appeared as one of the applied linguistics branches studied the system of two languages in contrast. It is known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. As mentioned, contrastive analysis has also been found to relate to learners' errors in second and foreign language inside or outside the classroom. In this case, however, contrastive analysis has also been shown to be necessary for language learning in target language. This approach still affects actual behaviour of language teacher in the language classroom. The study of language learners' errors has been particularly fruitful for understanding the different view of the results involved in second and foreign language acquisition.

The history of contrastive analysis hypothesis studies in language acquisition began with the American linguist Fries's study in 1945. Mishra (2005) argues that contrastive analysis mainly works through the procedures of (1) description (=formal description of two languages), (2) selection (=sets of items selected for comparison), (3) comparison (= identification of areas of difference and similarity) and (4) prediction (=identification of areas likely to cause errors due to language difference and learning difficulty). Several great linguists such as Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965) and Prator (1967) require that the contrastive analysis method should arrange the linguistic differences in a hierarchy of difficulty for better effects and more efficient ways of its use to help overcome potential error-areas in the learner's expressions. It is important to note that there are two types of errors: 1) Intralingual errors caused by interference of mother tongue; 2) Interlingual errors caused by the learner's processing of the second or foreign language in its own terms. The two types of errors can be used together in order to account for the learners' problem in learning target language. The value of these error studies is considerable. They also show the language problems when language learners are using linguistic items in second and foreign language acquisition.

It must be mentioned that there are three versions of contrastive analysis: the strong & weak forms and moderate version. Lee (1968, p. 186) reported the assumption of the strong version of the contrastive analysis as follows:

1. That the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learners' native language;
2. That the difficulties are chiefly, or wholly, due to the differences between the two languages;
3. That the greater these differences are, the more acute the learning difficulties will be;
4. That the results of a comparison between the two languages are needed to predict the difficulties and errors which will occur in learning the foreign language;
5. That what there is to teach can best be found by comparing the two languages and then subtracting what is common to them, so that what the student has to learn equals the sum of the differences established by the contrastive analysis.

The second version of the contrastive analysis is the weak version. Wardhaugh (1970) argues that the weak version requires the linguist to use the best knowledge available to him in order to account for observed difficulties in second language learning. However, the comparison between the native language and second language of the learners may help to explain them. It is important to say that the strong and weak forms are rejected in favour of moderate version which predicts the results of a spelling error analysis on the dictation section of the UCLA placement examination in English as a second language. These results support a more moderate CAH which predicts that spelling errors are based on interference of similar patterns due to false generalisation (Oller and Ziahosseiny, 1970).

We turn now to the other linguistic approach but related to our topic, error analysis, that has also been considered as the reaction to contrastive analysis in learning second language. A number of arguments are presented by several great scholars to refute the assumption that contrastive analysis is not the source of all language errors in language learning. One of the most compelling is voiced by Corder (1967) who claims that language learners' errors are significant and systematic. Pathak (1988) reports that researchers in various parts of the world have now become fully aware of the significance of the learners' errors. Dulay and Burt (1974) argue that errors are not only inevitable but also necessary. However, error analysis has faced criticism in second language learning. Ellis (2008) mentions that the criticisms of error analysis fall into three main categories: 1) weakness in methodological procedures, 2) theoretical problems, and (3) limitations in scope. We turn now to another item related to the study of errors in second language learning which is known as interlanguage. The term interlanguage was coined by the American linguist, Larry Selinker in 1972, in recognition of the fact that second language learners construct a linguistic system that draws, in part, on the learner's first language but differ from first and target language (Ellis, 2003).

Contrastive Analysis and Behaviourist Language Learning

We begin a brief discussion of language acquisition. Ellis (2003) argues that second language can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue which may happen inside or outside classroom. Nunan (2001) states that the psychological and social processes underlie the development of proficiency in a second language. Gass and Selinker (2008) comment that second language acquisition refers to the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned. Second language acquisition can be used for learning a third or fourth language. Thus, there is difference between foreign language learning and second language acquisition. Foreign language is a language which is taught as a school subject in school and it is not used as medium of instruction, for example, in many countries such as Iran.

Second language is a language which is used as a medium of instruction in education system, but it is not native language in the country, for example, in many countries such as India. In this paragraph, we point out briefly what is distinction between learning and acquisition. Based on the theory of language learning of the Monitor Model of Krashen, acquisition (1982) in this theory occurs not consciously, and it does not occur in formal situations or through formal grammatical rules of language. The process of language

acquisition is the same as the process of acquisition of the first language, whereas, learning is conscious process and it is used in the formal situations by teachers (Khansir, 2014).

Let us move to behaviourist learning theory. Ellis (2003) mentions that the dominant psychology theory of the 1950s and 1960s is behaviourist learning theory. Ellis and Shintani (2014) state that second language learning is the same as any other kind of learning, including first language which involves habit information. Birjandi et al. (2006) indicates that B.F Skinner in 1957 based his idea on experimentation indicating that learning is a matter of establishing connections between a stimulus and a response. Based on behaviourist learning theory, learning takes place when a learner finds the opportunity to practice making the correct response to a given stimulus. Birjandi et al. (2006) also indicate that Skinner made differentiate between reinforcement and reinforcer. In fact, reinforcer is a thing or a stimulus, and reinforcement is the effect of this stimulus. Ellis (2003) mentions that "learners imitated models of correct language (for example, stimuli) and received positive reinforcement if they were correct and negative reinforcement if they were incorrect" (p. 31). This learning theory was rejected by Chomsky (1959). Chomsky states that first language acquisition is distinct from other kinds of learning and cannot be explained in terms of habit-information. He believes that learning can be a mental process through what he then called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Later McNeill (1966) explains LAD is based on the following innate linguistic properties:

- 1) The ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment.
- 2) The ability to recognise linguistic data into various classes that can later be refined.
- 3) The ability to determine the appropriacy of linguistic system.
- 4) The ability to engage in constant evaluation of the developing linguistic system so as to construct the simplest possible system out of the available linguistic input.

What is important to remember is that several behaviourists follow audio-lingual principles of teaching in learning language. Ellis (1991) notes that audiolingualism is a method of teaching that grows out of the structural approach developed by a number of American linguists such as Fries. This method is used to train army personnel during the Second World War.

Applied linguists serve contrastive descriptions of the learners' first language and the target language. However, the structural approach is used as the basis for the foreign language in the United States, and many books and teaching and learning foreign language materials are written by several great linguists such as Fries, Lado, and Brooks. In the American education, McLaughlin (1985) mentions that more than one million children studied in the Elementary School Programmers in the sixties. Wilkins (1972) mentions that Behaviourism school has an important role in foreign language teaching since the Second World War. In addition, in this theory, the linguists believe that error of language learners like 'sin,' and then the error must be avoided. Thus, Ellis (1991) reports that the avoidance of error is one of the central precepts of audiolingualism. In a sense, James (1980, p. 20) notes that "the psychological basis of Contrastive Analysis, then, is Transfer Theory, elaborated and formulated within a stimulus –response (Behaviourist) theory of psychology". To summarise

this point, Johnson and Johnson (1999) report that in the 20 century, thus, the role of linguistics on language teaching is pre-eminent (cited in Khansir and Pakdel, 2016).

Contrastive Analysis and Transfer Theory

In this part of this study, let us consider transfer theory as one of the ways of contrastive analysis in learning second and foreign language, Crystal (1992) argues that transfer is "the influence of linguistic features of one language upon another, in such contexts as bilingualism and language learning; also called transference" (p. 393). There are two kinds of transfer: positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer makes learning easier, because forms from the native language work correctly in the foreign language. Negative transfer takes place when the use of a native form produces an error in the foreign language (Crystal, 1992). James (1980) reports that transfer is the psychological cornerstone of CA, while Ellis (1991) states that the theory of transfer is closely tied to the belief that foreign language learning consists of habit-formation. Our aim of this part of paper focuses more on negative or interference of mother tongue as the most important cause of errors in second language. Lado (1957) is one of the great linguists who wants the language teacher to compare the students' first language with the second language and know the problems in order to be better able to teach the second language.

Mishra (2005) states that in learning second language, a learner already learns the habit in learning first language, and he adds that there would be interference from first language in second language learning. This interference could be positive and aid second language learning. It could be negative and hinder second language learning. In fact, differences between first language and second language create learning difficulty and result in errors. According to Lee (1968), the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error on foreign language learning is interference coming from learner's mother tongue. Marton (1981) supports the interference of mother tongue, and he reports that "taking a psychological point of view, we can say that there is never peaceful coexistence between two language systems in the learner, but rather constant warfare, and that warfare is not limited to the moment of cognition, but continues during the period of storing newly learnt ideas in memory" (p. 150). Bhatia (1975) argues that interference of the first language with the teaching of the second language often leads to errors in the second language. Interference implies the transfer of long acquired first language habits into the learning of the second language. It is called a negative kind of transfer.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from this article that the use of contrastive analysis in second language learning is still very useful for language teachers to understand the problems of their language learners. Native language interference is only one of the sources of errors in second language learning. Contrastive analysis along with error analysis as the linguistic approaches to the study of errors can also be valuable approaches in helping syllabus designers for the preparation of teaching materials and helping the language teachers for the use of the fruitful learning strategies to teach language learners in second language learning.

In 1993 Khur mentions that language transfer is the process by which the learner, inadvertently takes recourse to the appropriate parts of the mother tongue, constructs a

sentence (or parts of a sentence) in the target language in the same way as he expresses the same meaning in his native language. However, the goal of contrastive analysis is developing the foreign language learning and language learners' errors are the results of first language interference which can be avoided or corrected if the errors occur. In this approach, the learners are not allowed to consider and even correct their own errors. According to this assumption, Wardhaugh (1970) argues that all second language errors could be predicted by identifying the differences between the target language and the learner's first language.

It has been popularly assumed that learning second language in behaviourist learning theory is based on habits. The use of this psychological theory has the effect of learning second language in language classroom. As reported by Ellis (2003), it is clear that behaviourist account of second language acquisition emphasises only what can be directly observed and ignores what goes on in the black box of the learner's mind. Based on this theory, Chomsky (1980) states that a child learns the mother tongue before the child receives linguistic input from the environment.

One of the most interesting approaches to the study of learner's errors in the second language learning is that error analysis deals with the learner's errors. A great deal of error analysis confirms that learner's errors are an integral part of language learning which is used in teaching second and foreign language. Finally, Ellis (2003) mentions that the concept of interlanguage can be viewed as a metaphor of how second language acquisition takes place.

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