# Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language

**Dr. J. Preethi,** M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.

## Phonological Variety and Complexity of Indian Languages

In India, English sounds are pronounced with a lot of influence of mother tongue one speaks. No two languages are the same. Each one is different from the other. The sound system, the structure and the vocabulary of English do not have similarities in any of the various languages of India.

## Backgrounds of Rural Students

The students from rural background have studied up to twelfth standard in Tamil medium schools. For them, English is introduced only from class third onwards. For a child who is accustomed to the sounds of his mother tongue alone, the sounds of English seem strange in the beginning. But, when he starts speaking, certain features of his mother tongue interfere in his English speech. It continues up to his college level.

## Error Analysis

Error analysis is a branch in applied linguistics. Scholars like S.P. Corder (1967:161) advocated the importance of error analysis in language learning process in English language teaching. Error analysis in language acquisition process stimulated major changes in teaching practice. The errors committed by second language learners help the teachers to frame a systematic way of teaching.

## On Defining Error

Error is defined as a mistake or inaccuracy in speech, opinion or action. Kacher (1965:394) states, "it may contain deviations from the varieties of English and those formations which are considered as mistakes or sub-standard formations".

Slips and lapses are distinguished from errors. They are self-correlative. They are otherwise called 'mistakes'. They are unsystematic.

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 211

Ghadessy (1980:96) defines errors as deviations which reveal the learners knowledge of the language. The second language learner may not be able to correct his own errors.

According to J. C. Richards (1972:96-113) the errors are classified into three types: interlingual, intralingual and developmental errors.

- Interlingual errors are caused by the interference of learner's mother tongue.
- Intralingual errors are the errors which originate within the structure of the target language itself.
- Developmental errors are caused due to the learners' limited exposure to the target language.

**The Focus of This Paper**

The main purpose of the present study is to analyse the rural students' errors while learning English as their second language. It deals with the errors committed by rural students at the undergraduate collegiate level of Madurai District in Tamilnadu at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels.

In teaching English language, the teachers should concentrate on the errors committed by the students in order to eradicate their basic problems.

The researcher collected data using various sources such as giving questionnaire and collecting information from the students' test papers, class discussions and interactions.

After analyzing the data the researcher came to understand that the learners' errors are due to the interference of mother tongue and lack of knowledge in the target language.

**Phonological Level**

At the phonological level, the English sounds have the distinction between /s/, /ʃ / and /z/; /k/, /g/ and /h/; /t/ and /d/.  Some of the errors where the students committed are listed below.

| Correct | Incorrect | Word |
|---------|-----------|------|
| /ʃi/ | /si/ | she |
| /seup/ | /ʧop/ | soap |
| /zu:/ | /ʧu:/or /su:/ | zoo |
| /geut/ | /keut/ | goat |
| /kɔ:t/ | /gɔ:t/ | caught |

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 212

|          |          |       |
|----------|----------|-------|
| /teibl/  | /deibl/  | table |
| /bæg/    | /pæk/    | bag   |

## Lack of Distinction between /s/, / ʃ / and /z/

The fricatives which are articulated with a stricture of close approximation in the English words are wrongly pronounced by the rural students. In Tamil, we do not have the sounds such as /s/, / ʃ / and /z/.

| Correct  | Incorrect | Word  |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| /sin/    | /ʧin/     | sin   |
| /diʃ/    | /dis/     | dish  |
| /zi:bra/ | /si:bra/  | zebra |

Most of the students pronounces /s/ for all these three /s/, / ʃ / and /z/sounds. They commit error in pronouncing as well as writing. The problem lies in hearing also. Most of our students are hearing only those sounds that their ears are accustomed to hear and that their minds are accustomed to receive and respond to. They are not aware of foreign sounds.

## Lack of Distinction between Voiced and Voiceless Sounds

The students from rural background lack the distinction between voiced and voiceless sounds. In Tamil, voiced and voiceless sounds are in free variation. So a Tamil speaking student from rural background finds it difficult to hear and pronounce these /k/ and /g/; /t/ and /d/ sounds.

A few students wrongly pronounce and listen to these sounds wrongly. Once the teacher was pronouncing the word 'coat' in the class, the student misunderstood that it was 'goat'. When the student asked clear his doubt, the teacher came to understand that students have problems in listening also.

| Correct | Incorrect | Word |
|---------|-----------|------|
| /kæp/   | /gæp/     | cap  |
| /ten/   | /den/     | ten  |

## Interchange of /p/, /b/ and /f/ Sounds

Since there is no /f/ sound in Tamil, a Tamil student who learns English finds this sound strange and often gets confused of the usage of /f/ sound. So there rises a tendency to interchange /f/ sound with /p/ or /b/ sounds.

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 213

| | |
|---|---|
| /fænts/ | intead of /pænts/ |
| /fisi/ | instead / bizi/ or /pisi/ |
| /peil/ | instead of / feil/ |
| /propessor/ | instead of /prəfesər/ |
| /ɔ:pis/ | instead of /ɔ:fis/ |

Many times the students have the difficulty to pronounce properly without making any distinction between sounds. They are not able to pronounce properly, because they are not able to listen to the distinction between sounds p, b, t, d, etc.

**Consonant Clusters**

The students commit errors in pronouncing consonant clusters. They find it difficult to pronounce because of the influence of mother tongue. In Tamil, non-identical consonant clusters are very few.

| Correct | Incorrect | Word |
|---|---|---|
| /iŋgliʃ/ | /iŋgilis/ | English |
| /sleit/ | /sileittu/ | slate |
| /sku:l/ | /iskool/ | school |

**Diphthongs**

The students get confused in using diphthongs in appropriate places. They won't bother about it much.

| Correct | Incorrect | Word |
|---|---|---|
| /hʌləu/ | /hallo/ | hello |
| /pripɛəriŋ/ | /pripæriŋ/ | preparing |
| /kɔ:s/ | /keis/ | cause |

They do not know the point of articulation. This is due to the mother tongue interference. In Tamil. /əu/ is not found. Instead of /əu/, /o/ is there in Tamil. The minds of the students automatically listen to the sound which is present in their native language and which leads them to pronounce the sounds wrongly.

Up to twelfth standard, most of the students have had received some deficient teaching. So at the collegiate level, they find it hard to understand and to rectify their errors.

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 214

### Morphological Level

At the morphological level, the students get confused with the bound forms. They make errors while trying to create new words by adding prefix, infix, and suffix.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---------|-----------|
| Unnecessary | innecessary |

### Inconsistency of the Target Language

The students commit errors due to the inconsistency of the English language whereas in their mother tongue, they do not find this kind of inconsistency.

| | Correct | Incorrect |
|------|---------|-----------|
| Write | writer | |
| Dance | dancer | |
| Sing | singer | |
| Cook | cook | cooker |

The students often commit errors in adding the suffix '-er' to the verb in order to get the noun form.

### Irregularity in Plural Suffix

The students from rural back ground lack the knowledge in the second language even though they learn English as a second language from third standard onwards.  They are unaware of the irregular forms of plural. They do not practice and/or memorize the rules of the grammar.

For example, they frame sentences like these listed below.

The childrens play in the garden.
The staffs went for a tour.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---------|-----------|
| Children | childrens |
| Sheep | sheeps |
| Oxen | oxes |
| Staff | staffs |

## Irregularity in Tense Markers

The students are unaware of the English language exceptions in morphological rules. This is due to deficient teaching/learning of the second language.

| Correct | | | Incorrect | | |
|---------|------|------|-----------|--------|--------|
| Go | went | gone | * go | went | went |
| Cut | cut | cut | *cut | cutted | cutted |
| Keep | kept | kept | *keep | keeped | keeped |
| Ring | rang | rung | *ring | rang | rang |
| Run | ran | run | *run | runned | runned |

The main cause of morphological errors is due to deficient teaching/learning. Inconsistency of the English language patterns also contributes this condition since the students and teachers do not find such patterns in their mother tongue.

## Syntactic Level

At the syntactic level, the rural students find it difficult to frame even simple sentences. They do not know the basic sentence patterns of English.

According to the data, they lack knowledge in basic grammar.

For example, when a student plans to write a sentence that 'I want to become a Professor', he/she writes, 'I want a Professor'. Their mastery of gerund is not adequate.

| Correct | Incorrect |
|---------|-----------|
| My father's name is Sam | *My **father name** is Sam |
| I am meeting our Principal | *I **am meet** our principal |
| Peter is going to Delhi | * Peter **going** to Delhi |
| Usually my dad drinks tea | *Usually my dad **drinking** tea |
| Amala is preparing for the test | *Amala **has preparing** for the test |

From this, the researcher came to know that the students do not know or have adequate mastery of the rules of the grammar. They do not know that *am, is,* and *was* will be followed by –ing in continuous tense form and without 'be' verbs '-ing' will not occur in a sentence.

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 216

**Suggestions**

By analyzing their errors, the researcher suggests some methods to employ to develop their skills. The methodology of teaching for the rural students should differ from the methodology adopted for the urban students because the level of students' ability is different.

**Dictation**

For the rural students, the college provides a bridge course for them.  For the rural students, the textbook should be given with lots of simple vocabulary. The vocabulary should be classified on the basis of action verbs, body parts, necessary verbs, nouns, adjectives and technical terms, etc. according to their disciplines. Unit-wise, dictation should be given. Proper training should be given to pronounce those vocabulary items because it is found that the students have difficulty even to write common words such as 'library' and 'girl'.

**Pattern Drills**

By using a number of related vocabulary items, unit-wise, make them to frame sentences. Pattern drills will help them.  The drills should be given with all the tenses.

The children laughed.
The children cried.
The children clapped.

After that, make the students to give sentences in a paragraph about some topics. These should be supplemented with additional vocabulary. The vocabulary should cover in a theme like 'My family' or 'At the Theatre,' etc.

My mother's mother is my grandmother. Her name is Meena.
My father's  mother is my grandmother. Her name is Kala.
My mother's father is my grandfather. His name is John.
My brothers and sisters are my siblings.

Making the students to memorize utterances, dialogues, questions and answers, statements which we use often, rhymes, poems and situational conversation materials, help them a lot.

Every week, the students should have a class in reading short stories and reports from the newspapers of the target language.  It helps them to develop their reading skill. They are asked

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 217

to narrate what they have got into their mind. It develops their communicative skill. When they are asked to read newspapers, they should be supplemented with a vocabulary list. The use of words and idioms in appropriate context could be focused upon. Exercises based on analogical creation in word, meaning and concept levels could be introduced.

In order to develop their listening skill, short stories can be visualized in the beginning, rather than watching a full movie. If they understand the story and answer the questions, they could be shown full length English movies. After viewing the movies, they are asked to give a summary of it to improve their writing skill. They should be advised to follow the same tense markers in a summary. If they are encouraged to narrate the story and its theme, they will be developed in speaking skill also simultaneously.

To have correct pronunciation, language lab will help the students. To improve the rural students in learning a foreign language, the class room may not be crowded.

## Conclusion

From the recording, the errors are extracted and separated as phonological errors, morphological errors and syntactic errors. From these errors, I conclude that the students have learnt the second language half way and they are confused with distinct sounds and the inconsistency found in the target language.

In English language teaching, the professor should feel that it is their responsibility to eradicate their errors from their mind first. Then only the students can store the new and correct structural pattern of English in their mind.

Error analysis gives us an insight into the learning strategies employed by the learner. It helps us to produce suitable teaching materials. It makes the professor to devise a special and specific style of teaching that is focused on the students in the class. It helps to measure the students' level and to design the syllabus for short-term courses according to their need. Further it helps to modify and change the methods of teaching, testing and examination.

It also helps to assess the mother tongue interference and to know about the language learning strategies, methods and techniques.
=================================================================

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 218

# Works Cited

Corder, S. P,                  1967    "The significance of learners' errors",
                                        International Review of Applied Linguistics Vol.5
                                        p.p.161-9.

Ellis, R.,                     1994     The Study of Second Language Acquisition,
                                        Oxford University Press.

Gurrey, P.,                    1970    Teaching English as a Foreign Language,
                                       Lowe and Brydone (Printers) Ltd.,
                                       London.

Harold B Allen                 1965    Teaching English as a Second language-
& Russell N Campbell                   A book of Readings,
                                       Mc Graw – Hill Publishing Company Ltd
                                       Bombay – New Delhi

Krishnaswamy, N.               1971    Introduction to Linguistics for Language teachers,
                                       Somaiya Publications,
                                       Bombay.

Lado,R.                        1971    Language Teaching – a Scientific approach,
                                       Tata Mc Graw Hill,
                                       London.

Subhalakshmi.G.K.              2008    Teaching of English,
                                       New Century Book House (P) Ltd.,
                                       Ambattur, Chennai.

Palliwal.A.K.,                 1998    English Language Teaching,
                                       Surabhi Publications,
                                       Jaipur.

=====================================================================

Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Arul Anandar College
Karumathur – 625 514
Madurai District
Tamilnadu
India
sampreethikim@gmail.com

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Dr. J. Preethi, M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil., Ph.D.
Errors Committed by Rural Students at UG Level in Learning English as a Second Language 219