Errors, features of new varieties of Englishes and corrective feedback

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Aims

• Developing an understanding of L2 errors from an evolutionary perspective
• Problematising errors, error identification and correction
• Reflecting on our roles as gatekeepers of linguistic “accuracy” and linguistic creativity
Presentation material


Why errors?

• Understanding the process of language learning
• Helping students in their learning journey by providing feedback
• Understanding language, language use and communication
Dominant views of errors

Many error analyses treat the errors like botanical specimens. They are plucked and preserved, counted, classified, and then described and displayed for classroom instruction. (Taylor, 1986, p. 151)
Short Biography

Jack Friedham was born to New York in October 25, 1965. He began school at the age of six and continued until he was 18 years. He then went to New York University to learn Medicine. He decided on Medicine because he liked biology when he was at school. While he was at University he met his wife Cindy. Cindy was a beautiful woman with hair long black. They went along for years before they decided getting married. Jack began to work like a doctor as soon as he graduated to Medical School. They had two children named Jackie and Peter, and have lived in Queens since the past two years. Jack is very interested painting and likes to paint portraits of his sun Peter.
A different example

Children who are brought up in families that do not have large amounts of money are better prepared to deal with many problems in life than children brought up by wealthy parents.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Some people are rich and some people are poor. Children are born in both poor and rich families. They grow up to be adult. They have challenges. Parents should do their best to help their children so they grow up well. They need to have education. I have two brothers and three sisters. All of us have good education in life.
Another example

An editorial

The year 2014 is almost end and 2015 is knocking the door with new hopes. We may did something wrong during this year or still making mistakes, that’s mean we are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing ourselves, changing ourselves, changing our world. We’re doing things that we never done before, and more importantly, we are Doing Something.
Questions

• What is an error?
• How are errors identified?
• What is the role of interpretation, if any, in error identification?
• How correctly can we interpret intentions?
• How correctly can we reconstruct intentions?
• Can we take error identification for granted?
Investigation


**Writing task**: Introducing Bangladesh to foreigners
15 problematic sentences identified from 10 students’ writings

- Authoritative reconstructions (by students)
- Plausible reconstructions (by teachers)

11 = Bangla-Background English Teachers
5 = English-Background English Teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erroneous sentences</th>
<th>Authoritative reconstructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Then family make a enjoyable moment that time.</td>
<td>Then there is a moment of joy in the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Because our village are very beautiful to the natural scenery.</td>
<td>Our villages are very beautiful in terms of natural scenery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our rules is right.</td>
<td>Our policy is unquestionable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. But in one side, though we are rich in numbers, but it is the major problem of our country, that is population.</td>
<td>Though we are rich in one sense, that is population, population is actually one of our main problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are many mouth to eat but there is not enough rice to feed.</td>
<td>We don’t have sufficient food for all our people because food is not equally distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. You will know in the future that our capital city is a nice, not very nice, but nicest city in our country.</td>
<td>In the future you will see that our capital city is very nice, not just nice, the nicest city in the whole country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plausible reconstructions

E = Our rules is right
AR = Our policy is unquestionable
PR = Our system of government is good.

E = Nature of this country look like a paint.
AR = The nature of this country looks like a painting
PR = The natural beauty of this country can look like a painting

E = There are many mouth to eat but there is not enough rice to feed
A = We don’t have sufficient food for all our people because food is not equally distributed.
PR = There is not enough rice to feed the many mouths
Categorizing reconstructions

Total reconstructions = 247

RIM (Reconstruction with Intended Meaning) = 37%
RMM (Reconstruction with Minimal Modification) = 23%
RCD (Reconstruction with Considerable Deviation) = 12%
RMD (Reconstruction with Maximal Deviation) = 28%
Findings and implications

• A significantly large number of teacher reconstructions of learner sentences deviated from original intentions
• There does not seem to be much difference between the reconstructions by local and non-local teachers

• Teachers’ ability to reconstruct errors (or intentions) may not be taken for granted
• Teacher feedback has the potential to impose their own intentions on learner intentions
Follow-up


• explore L2 teachers’ ability to interpret students’ meanings intended in erroneous constructions; and

• shed light on factors that teachers perceive to facilitate the process of plausible reconstructions.
Participants

VBET (Vietnamese-Background English Teachers) = 30
EBET (English-Background English Teachers) = 06
ESLT (English as a Second Language teachers) = 13
EFLT (English as a Foreign Language Teachers) = 13
Total = 62
Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RMD</th>
<th>RCD</th>
<th>RMM</th>
<th>RIM</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RIM = 56%

Findings and implications in Hamid (2007) are validated
A new challenge to the already problematic task of error identification
Errors and varieties

• Errors are judged against norms
• Something is incorrect because we know the correct form
• What if we accept that there are multiple correct forms? Which one to apply?
• What happens to errors when we talk about world Englishes?
An example

“Various researches have been conducted to establish the importance of grasping the proficiency of the language of the host society”.

= Various research studies have been conducted to establish the importance of grasping the proficiency of the language of the host society.

• Moreover, several researches show that even one rater can give different results in different contexts..(Vietnam)
• Recently I also read a lot of researches on investigating the use of collaborative activities… (China)
• Moreover, previous researches on technology implementation and language learning…(Saudi Arabia)
Questions

- Is “researches” an error?
- Is it a feature of a new variety of English?
- How do teachers judge acceptability?
- What implications do teacher judgments have for teaching and assessment?

Errors and varieties

Research questions:

1. What kinds of judgments do English teachers have on features of L2 English in terms of acceptability?
2. How do they categorise those features of L2 English in terms of standards, varieties and learner English?
3. What insights can be derived from a comparison of their judgment and categorisation of L2 Englishes?
Participants and methods

• 25 teachers of English working in the tertiary setting in Bangladesh
• 16 examples of local usage of English in a locally published volume

Examples:

– …42-day delivery leave.
– This war of choice between…
– Mobile phone-holding teenagers…
Tasks for participants

Task 1: To what extent are the items acceptable?

1. Fully acceptable
2. Looks ok
3. Not sure
4. Looks unacceptable
5. Totally unacceptable

Task 2: Describe each item using the following categories

a) Standard English
b) Bangladeshi English with global intelligibility
c) Bangladesh English with local intelligibility
d) Errors/other
Findings

• Variations in teacher judgments and lack of teacher consensus
• Educational and socio-cultural implications
Another challenge?

What can we do to achieve teacher consensus in their judgments of new features of English?

• Educate teachers about world Englishes (WE)
• Criteria for distinguishing between errors and varietal features

• Teacher agency and practice-driven criteria
• Collaborative teacher workshops
Teacher agency


• What criteria do teachers use in their judgments?
• What can we do for teacher consensus in our understanding and judgement?
Participants and task

Participants:
TESOL class at UQ

Individual task:
Evaluate the acceptability of L2 items

Group tasks:
1) Develop group criteria to evaluate L2 items
2) Decide on the acceptability of L2 items as a group
Findings and implications

• Teachers were able to articulate criteria
• Group evaluation has the potential to reach consensus overruling individual judgment
Summary and conclusions

- Errors are important theoretical and pedagogical resources
- Teachers’ ability to identify errors may not be taken as a given
- Errors have become more problematic given the growing recognition of new varieties of Englishes
- This is a desirable development as we consider learners as language learning agents and creators of languages
- While developing our knowledge of new developments, we need to deal with errors and varietal features in our own contexts
- We need to correct errors; we also need to nurture linguistic creativity.
THANK YOU