Language Transfer in The Use of Pilipino

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Introduction

While it is true that language can be acquired, how an individual acquires a second or additional language(s) is still largely unknown. What he selects, what he absorbs and how he absorbs the limited data available to him is still the subject of intensive investigation by applied linguists and teachers.

Let me share with you a story to explain my point. In a language class, the teacher showed an apple to the pupils and asked them to say 'It's an apple' as part of their pronunciation drill After the drill, the teacher put the apple on top of her table but it rolled down and fell. A pupil upon noticing it shouted, 'Ma'm your *it's an apple was pall down.'*

If we analyse the pupil's statement, it would raise some questions, such as: why did he say 'it's an apple'? Why did he pronounce *fall* as *pall?* Why did he use the verb *was?* Going deeper into this will lead us to more serious questions like: How much does the pupil know about the target language? What is his understanding about the nature of the language he was trying to learn? What strategy of learning was he using?

Studies on Language Acquisition

At present we see the mushrooming of studies on the phenomenon of language acquisition such as those dealing with first language (L1) and second language (L2) and the factors affecting it.

Age factor in learning

The notion that the optimal age of learning occurred in the range of 11-13 years of age had been discounted by Krashen (1975, 1981) who said that the lateralization of the brain occurs by the age of 5. Another study showed that while children rely on their memory, adult learners capitalise on their ability to rationalise in order to internalise the rules of the target language (Ervin Tripp, 1969). The study conducted by D'Anglejan and Tucker revealed that the beginners tend to rely more on semantic information than on the syntactic data available while the advanced subjects tend to use a combination of syntactic and semantic information. Fathman's study (1975) involving 200 children showed that older children scored higher in morphology and syntax while the younger ones got higher ratings in phonology

Socio-cultural and personal factors in language learning

Investigations on the influence of cultural, social, personal and economic factors on the motivation and attitude of L2 learners have shown some interesting results. Take the case of some Japanese women married to Americans. These women because of their interest in the American culture learned English faster than the other Japanese wives who confined themselves to their own culture (Bernstein 1971). The cultural factor in language acquisition was also maintained by Christian and Christian (1971) in their study on the language

used in predominantly Spanish-speaking southwest United States. In some cases, the learners may be more interested to learn about other people's way of life and the culture aspect of their language (Tucker and Lambert, 1973).

As to the personal style of learning, Wolfe (1967) said that once the student grasps the idea that the new language differs from his own, he makes up a form which is different from either his native language (NL) or his target language (TL) in his attempt to create a novel utterance on the basis of previous contact with the new language. Persistent grammatical errors in TL production were also observed.

Interlanguage in L2 Acquisition

The studies cited in this paper reveal that the L2 learner has his own understanding about the nature of the language he is learning; that he has his own reasons for learning, and that he is using a system although it is not yet the right system (Corder, 1974). Selinker refers to this system as *interlanguage* (IL) which he believes is based on the output resulting from the learner's attempted production of the TL. Simply stated, interlanguage is the language of the learner learning the language (Corder, 1981). In Interlanguage the learner is using a definite system of language as he understands it and his errors in his attempted use of the target language are the evidence of this system.

Interference in interlanguage

In the process of learning a new language, the older set of language habits interferes (Fries, 1955) and the learner tends to transfer the form, meaning, distribution and culture of his NL into the form, meaning, distribution and culture of the TL (Lado, 1955). According to Corder (1971), language transfer is the carry-over of the habits of the mother tongue into the L2.

Selinker attributed transfer to the fossilization of items, rules and subsystem of the NL which the speaker keeps in his interlanguage

Generalization of rules of the TL as a form of interference

In the generalisation of rules of the TL in the interlanguage, the learner refers to his knowledge and/or understanding of the TL when using the TL. Though he mayor may not intentionally refer to his NL, his NL interferes in overt and covert ways.

Problems in the Categorization of Errors

Categorizing errors seems difficult because firstly, there is no clear way of separating errors attributed to the NL interference and those that are caused by other factors, secondly, there is some difficulty in determining the actual strategy or system used by the learner in trying to use the TL; and thirdly, it is still unknown how much transfer is involved from NL into TL, how much of the TL rules influence the production of the IL and how much interference from NL occurs. In some cases, some learners avoid using linguistic forms which they are not sure of. As such, error analysis cannot operate because there is nothing to analyse except to say that the learner is trying to avoid certain forms.

The Nature of this Study

The objective of this study is to identify the errors in the use of Pilipino by some Malaysian students and to find out the cause of the errors.

The three types of errors as identified by Jain (1974) are as follows.

Systematic error	Asystematic error	Unsystematic error
The learner follows a definite generalization	The learner follows his own grammar	The learner's error is by chance circumstance

In this paper, the compositions written by eight students in Pilipino at the University of Malaya were analysed and the asystematic errors were picked out. These are errors committed by the learner based on the hypothesis formulated using his own internal grammar These errors were then categorized as follows: omission, confusion, literal translation and wrong choice of words as in Duskova (1969) and Wong and Lim (1982).

As regards the problem in making reliable interpretation, the students themselves were asked to explain the meaning of their statements since they were the people in the best position to interpret what they had said. In instances where the learners were not available, their statements were interpreted on the basis of their particular situational use and the sociocultural context of the linguistic forms

To make the categorization.of errors more specific, the reconstruction of the correct sentence in the TL and the reconstruction in Malay (and English in some cases) were shown together with the actual error committed by the learner to get a better picture of the cause of the error

Errors in the Use of Pilipino

Here are some of the findings on the errors in the use of Pilipino by some students of the language.

In the presentation of data, the items appear in this order unless stated otherwise:

(a) erroneous statement,
(b) equivalent in Bahasa Malaysia (BM) or in English (E);
(c) correct statement in the target language

(i) Omission of the *ang*-form marker in the subject of the sentence
    1 (a) Pasir Mas ay maliit na bayan.
       (b) Pasir Mas adalah sebuah pekan yang kecil.
       (c) Ang Pasir Mas ay isang maliit na bayan

Unlike BM, the noun subject in Pilipino requires a determiner, i.e. *ang* for a common noun and the name of a place, and *si* and *sina* for the name of person - singular and plural respectively In making his sentence in Pilipino,the student did not use the determiner *ang* which is an absent category in BM

2   (a) Ahmad ay kaibigan ko.
   (b) Ahmad adalah kawan saya.
   (c) Si Ahmad ay kaibigan ko.

The determiner *si* in the subject *Ahmad* was not used. Normally, in BM no determiner is used for personal name as subject. Although the determiner *si* is also found in BM, it has limited use

(ii) Confusion in the use of the nominal

   (a) Fatimah ang pangalan ng nanay *ako*.
   (b) Fatimah ialah nama ibu saya/aku.
   (c) Fatimah ang pangalan ng nanay ko.

In BM, the forms *saya, aku,* and *ku* can all be used as possessive pronoun in the same distribution. However, in Pilipino, *ako* is used as subject or definite predicate in an equational sentence while *ko* is limited to the possessive form. To illustrate:

Pilipino	*Bahasa Malaysia*
Ako si Lina	Saya Lina
	Aku Lina
Guro ako	Saya seorang guru
	Aku seorang guru
guro ko	guru ku
	guru saya
	guru aku

In the light of this information, one could assume that the student without realizing that it is not possible to do so in Pilipino used the Pilipino pronoun *ako* as possessive because the same form is used as possessive in BM

(iii) Omission of the marker *ay* for the inverse order sentence

  1. (a) Si Ali kaibigan ko.
     (b) Ali (ialah) kawan saya.
     (c) Si Ali ay kaibigan ko.

  2. (a) Kami pumunta sa Kelantan.
     (b) Kami pergi ke Kelantan.
     (c) Kami ay pumunta sa Kelantan.

There are two things quite noticeable here. First, the tendency to use the NL normal sentence order, i.e. Subject + Predicate (S + P) and second, the tendency to omit he *ay* when using the S + P form.

As to why the particle *ay* is omitted, the most logical explanation for this was Lado's *blind spot theory* wherein the absent category in the NL is omitted in the TL, in this case the *ay* particle. A second reason that could be offered is that the learner may have thought that the two sentences were in 'normal order' because 'that's how it is done 'in his NL. While the predicate-subject order is the normal order in the TL, the inverse order which requires the use of the particle *ay* is also used. The failure to appreciate this results in the particle *ay* being omitted. However, it cannot be discounted that the resulting confusion over what rule to use may have influenced the learner to simplify his grammar 'to lessen his grammar

burden' (Richards, 1975).

(iv) Confusion in the Use of *ng* and *sa* Nominal Forms

    1   (a) Bumalik ako sa bayan akin.
          (b) Saya balik ke kampung saya.
          (c) Bumalik ako sa bayan namin.

The pronoun *akin* (my, mine) belongs to the *sa* possessive form which, as a rule, should be placed before the thing possessed *(bayan)* and not after.

The reasons why the learner did this was because she knew that *sa bayan* (to hometown) is a directional nominal which belongs to the *sa* nominal form. Having that in mind, she used the *sa*-form possessive pronoun without realising that the rule for the possessive
the rule on the use of the directional nominal.

As regards the metalinguistic aspect of the language, the use of the singular possessive pronoun *akin* or *ko* is wrong because in the Pilipino language things that are normally shared by many, such as public places, houses, offices or even items such as cars or telephones require the plural possessive forms. To use the singular possessive form would mean that the posession only belongs to the person mentioned. Thus a Pilipino would say *bayan namin* (our town) instead of *bayan ko* or *aking bayan* (my town).

    2   (a) Saan sa pupunta?
          (b) Hendak ke mana?
          (c) Saan ka pupunta?

It is evident in this case that the learner tried to avoid using the Pilipino singular pronoun *ka* which looks like the BM question marker *kah* and directional marker *ke* which were in his mind while trying to make the statement in the TL. As a result, he decided to use the directional marker *sa* which is similar to the function of *ke*. In this way the learners avoided making use of the pronoun *ka*

In comparison, a Filipino native speaker tends to avoid using the question marker *kah* when using Bahasa Malaysia thinking that it is similar to the Pilipino pronoun *ka*

It would also be interesting to find out how a Japanese tackles the problem of using the Pilipino pronoun *ka* which is similar in form to the Japanese question marker *ka*.

(v) Omission of the Yes-No Question Marker *ba*

    1.   (a) Pupunta ka sa palengke?
          (b) Awak hendak pergi ke pasar?
          (c) Pupunta ka ba sa palengke?

It is possible that the student used the form *ka* as the equivalent of the BM question marker *kah* instead of using the Pilipino question marker *ba*.

This problem can be analysed like this: In dialogues in Pilipino, the second person is addressed as *ka* (you). It is possible
notice of the Pilipino *ka* and tried to compare it with the BM *kah* when listening and/or reading questions in the dialogue addressed to the se-

cond person. Having this in mind, the form *ka* was used as a question marker because it is commonly used when addressing the second person and that the form *ba* was omitted/avoided because it has limited use as compared with the BM *kah*, or it may have been forgotten or confused with *ka*.

(vi) Wrong Use of Verb Focus

One of the major problems in learning Pilipino is the problem of knowing and understanding the complex syntactical and semantical relation between the verb and the nominals because a change in the verb affix necessitates a change or changes in the form of nominals in a particular sentence. This is particularly true in the case of Malaysians. Bahasa Malaysia does not require much change in the nominal form vis-a-vis the verb affix used and has fewer verbs in the passive form as compared with Pilipino.

Here are some examples of Pilipino sentences. The BM equivalent is given first in each case. Note that the italicized word/phrase is the subject or focus of the verb.

Verb	Actor	Object	Locative	Benefactive
'beli'	'Ida'	'beg'	'di emporium'	'untuk Liza'
Bumili	*si Ida*	ng bag	sa emporium	para kay Liza
Binili	ni Ida	*ang bag*	sa emporium	para kay Liza
Binilhan	ni Ida	ng bag	*ang emporium*	para kay Liza
Ibinili	ni Ida	ng bag	sa emporium	*si Liza*

These examples clearly show that when an active verb affix is used, the nominal actor complement becomes the subject but when a particular passive verb affix is used, a corresponding non-actor nominal, i.e. object, directional, location, benefactive or causative, functions as the subject of the verbal sentence.

Here are some of the sentences extracted from the students' compositions.

1.   (a) Tumulungan ang pamilya ko.
     (b) Saya menolong keluarga saya.
     (c) Tumulong ako sa pamilya ko (active) or
        Tinulungan ko ang pamilya ko, (passive, directional subject)

In this corpus, both the active verb affix *um* and the passive verb affix *an* were used in one word which is definitely wrong. When the student concerned was asked, he explained that he intended to use the directional nominal *pamilya ko* as the subject so he decided to use the directional focus verb affix *-an* but because he thought of the sentence originally in BM as 'Saya menolong keluarga saya' he decided to add the active verb affix *um* since the logical subject *saya* is the actor

2.   (a) Tumulong ako ng nanay ko.
     (b) Saya menolong emak saya.
     (c) Tumulong ako sa nanay ko.

In this sentence, the student was confused as to what noun determiner he should use for *nanay ko* since noun determiner is an absent category in the BM equivalent (#2b)

3   (a) Itatago siya ang pera.
     (b) Dia akan menyimpan wang (BM).
         He will keep the money (E).
     (c) Itatago niya ang pera.

Actually, the passive verb *itatago* requires a non-actor subject but the IL sentence used an actor subject form. When asked, the student explained that she intended to use the passive verb *itatago* but she thought of the idea in English as 'He will keep the money' Consequently, she unknowingly used *siya* because it is the subject in the English equivalent and also the *logical subject* while the *ang pera* is her designated *grammatical subject* of the passive verb *itatago* giving rise to a sentence with double subjects.

Interference from the NL, BM and a possible third language is likely to occur when the form and the concept of a linguistic item is basically different from the TL. This is especially true in Pilipino where it was mentioned that there are passive form sentences where the subject can be object, the locative, the benefactive and the causative, without an exact counterpart in BM and in English. For example:

E — He called his father (active)
BM — Dia memanggil ayahnya (active)
P — Tinawag niya ang tatay niya (passive only)

E — Ida is looking for her pen (active)
BM — Ida mencari pennya (active)
P — Hinahanap ni Ida ang pen niya (passive only)

E — I am waiting for my friend (active)
BM — Saya menunggu kawan saya (active)
P — Hinihintay

     but

E — I am waiting for a friend (active)
BM — Saya menunggu *suatu* kawan saya (active)
P — Naghihintay ako sa *isang* kaibigan ko (active)
     Hinihintay ko ang isang kaibigan ko (passive when *kaibigan* is emphasized)

(vii) Wrong Choice of Word

I limited this category to errors in the use of lexical items arising from literal translation, naive relexification, semantic approximation, cross association and other strategies of learning which result in the wrong choice of words.

Smith (1979) describes naive relexification as making use of NL items/routines to form the TL equivalent. In semantic approximation (Richards, 1978), the learner uses one single word to cover different functions, e.g. 'cooked food', 'cooked fish' and 'cooked bread' instead of

'baked bread' In cross association (Carl James, 1974), the learner chooses one from two or more words in the TL which has one equivalent expression in the NL or vice versa. For example, a Filipino has a tendency to mix up 'come' and 'go' for which there is only 'punta' in Pilipino; or 'good night' and 'good evening' for which there is only 'magandang gabi' In like manner, a Filipino may mix up 'ramai' with 'banyak' because both words can be expressed in Pilipino using the word *dami* (or *rami*).

Here are some of the data gathered.-

1 (a) Bumabasa ako ng aralin. 'I read the lesson'
   (b) Saya membaca pelajaran. 'I read/study the lesson'
   (c) Nag-aaral ako ng aralin. 'I study the lesson'

In BM, the word 'membaca' means 'read' and 'study', so the student used its equivalent in Pilipino which is *bumabasa* without realising that the word *nag-aaral* (study) is the appropriate term.

2 (a) Nag-aaral ako tuwing araw
   (b) Saya belajar tiap-tiap hari
   (c) Nag-aaral ako araw-araw

The BM time expression 'tiap-tiap' can be expressed in Pilipino in two ways like these:

Bahasa Malaysia	*Pilipino*
tiap-tiap malam	tuwing gabi
	gabi-gabi
tiap-tiap hari	araw-araw

The student may have generalized that if 'tiap-tiap malam' means *tuwing gabi* then 'tiap-tiap hari' should mean *tuwing araw*

3 (a) Kumakain ako ng gamot. (I eat medicine)
   (b) Saya makan ubat. (I eat/take medicine)
   (c) Umiinom ako ng gamot (I drink/take medicine)

This is a clear example of direct translation of the concept in NL into the TL where it is inappropriate.

4 (a) Hindi mayroong pera ako.
   (b) Saya tidak ada wang.
   (c) Wala akong pera.

Taken separately, the negative *hindi* is equivalent to 'tidak' or 'bukan' in BM while the existential *mayroon* means 'ada' In BM, the concept 'none', 'nothing' or 'non-existence' is expressed using the combination of 'tidak' and 'ada' Thinking that the same process applies in Pilipino, the student combined *hindi* with *mayroon* when the appropriate word is *wala*.

5. (a) Nakita ko ang lola ko sa hospital. (I accidentally saw my grand-mother in the hospital)
    (b) I saw/visited my grandmother in the hospital.
    (c) Dinalaw ko ang lola ko sa hospital.

In this sentence, the English word *saw* was equated with the word *nakita*

(accidentally saw) when what was actually meant by *saw* was *visited*. Just because of the use of *nakita*, the meaning of the sentence became entirely different from what was originally intended. The correct word should be *dinalaw*

6   (a) Bumangon ako oras 5:30.
     (b) Saya bangun pukul 5:30.
     (c) Bumangon ako ng alas 5·30.

The word 'pukul' in BM has two equivalents in Pilipino-*oras* for asking time, and *alas* for telling time. Thus,

Bahasa Malaysia	Pilipino	English
Pukul berapa -	Anong *oras* na -	What time is it?
Pukul 5.30	*Alas* 5.30	It's 5·30

What happened was that the student used *oras* instead of *alas* when telling time.

No wonder that a Filipino learning English finds it difficult to learn the auxiliary verbs and main verbs in different tenses, voices and moods because these are expressed in Pilipino using different verb forms.

Examples.

Kakanta siya   —She will sing.
Kumanta siya   —She sang/She did sing/She had sung.
Kumakanta siya —She is singing/She was singing/She has been singing/She sings.

7   (a) Nagluto ako ng pagkain*an*.
     (b) Saya memasak makan*an*.
     (c) Nagluto ako ng pagkain.

The student decided to use the work pagkain*an* because 'food' is 'makan*an*' in BM Another source of cross association was the word 'kain*an*' in Pilipino which means 'jamuan makan' in BM

        Bahasa Malaysia   Pilipino

        makan*an* ⟷ pagkainan ⟷ pagka in
        jamuan makan   kain*an*
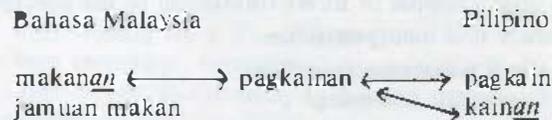
Implications for Language Teaching

Many applied linguists and teachers believe that the L2 learner has his own hypothesis about the nature of the language he is learning, that his errors in the use of the TL are due to interference from his NL and wrong generalization of the TL rules, that he decides what to learn, when to learn and how to learn, and that he acquires the language in overt and covert ways.

This being the case, learning a second language or a foreign language could be more effective if the language teacher would.

(i) Find out the needs, abilities, and interests of the learners and model the lessons/language activities according to these.

(ii) Provide the learners with more opportunities to use the target language by using communication situations that are relevant to everyday life thus making language learning more meaningful and more practical. In this respect, grammar which is an important aspect of the language, should be taught as an integral part of a communication situation and not in isolation.

(ji) Vary the language activities because (i) the learners have different styles of learning; and (ii) there is no one best method in teaching a language.

Studies have shown that a major cause of errors is that there is too much reference to the NL by way of translation of forms, meanings and culture. Learners often do not realize that each language has its unique but systematic classification, dissection, organization, and contextualisation of realities. If ever the learners are given translation activities such as giving the equivalent of the sentence or paragraph fron NL into TL or vice versa, they should be made aware of the differences and/or similarities in the syntactical and semantical features of both languages involved. In addition, the activity should be limited to what they have already learned about the language. To do otherwise would compel the students to use the NL system in their translation. Error analysis with some limitations is valuable to the language teacher in assessing the learner's progress and in determining the problem areas in language learning.

Finally, to a teacher whose temper flares up when the students commit errors, error analysis could mean *terror* analysis. On the contrary, when a teacher is frightened or becomes discouraged by learners' errors, error analysis turns into *horror* analysis. But to a teacher who sees the errors of the students as evidence of learning or trying to learn, and that discovering their errors is an interesting, challenging and enjoyable experience, error analysis becomes *humour* analysis.

We could say then that 'to err is language learning and to correct is language teaching'

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