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°*PAR ERRUER:* ERROR ANALYSIS AND THE EARLY STAGES OF ADOLESCENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

ROGER PEDDIE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, University of Auckland, 1982.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No thesis is truly a solo effort. Professor M.M. Clay and Professor K.J. Hollyman deserve my heartfelt thanks for having questioned, prodded, cajoled and challenged me through the writing of this one. Their differing strengths and different approaches to the supervisory role were of great value to me during the study.

My thanks also go to the Principal, the class teacher and the eight pupils of 'City High School'. Their ready co-operation and their acceptance of me in their school made the task of data collection a simple and pleasant one.

A number of colleagues and friends asked awkward questions at just the right time, while others supported me with comments and discussion. I should like to mention especially Dr G.D. Kennedy, Dr J.D. Marshall, and the late Dr G.D. Arvidson. Particular thanks are due to Mr R. Fulton and to other consultants in the University of Auckland Computer Centre for their help during the analysis of data.

The typing skills of Miss Paula Nicholson relieved me of many worries in the preparation of the manuscript for binding. My family relieved me of almost everything else at home. Thanks to Jenny, Linda, Kirsten, Sally-Ann and baby Jonathan for their support and good humour, even when I did not deserve it. Their confidence in me was at times all-important.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge the financial assistance given to me on two occasions by the University of Auckland Research Committee (Grants 141 Education 21, and 141 Education 31).

ABSTRACT

Error Analysis has been widely used in studies of second language learning. At the same time, foreign language learning (as opposed to teaching), has largely been ignored as an object of research. The research had three major aims: to examine the potential of Error Analysis in foreign language learning by the development and trialling of a complex new coding schedule for analysing learner errors in French; to provide some descriptive data on the written errors and performance of foreign language pupils over a complete scholastic year; and to explore the nature of foreign language learning strategies used by the pupils studied.

The thesis opens with a statement of purpose and method. This is followed by a short discussion of theories, topics and techniques in second and foreign language learning. The development of two forms of the coding schedule used to analyse errors is described and discussed. Recode checks and the development of 'Coding Confidence Levels' are presented.

Procedures used in a longitudinal study of errors are then described. This study acted as an important trial for the coding schedules, known as Foreign Language Error Analysis: French (FLEAF). All written French produced by eight pupils in the same school class was collected over the 1978 New Zealand school year (February to December). The group were in their second year of high school French and had an average age of 14 years 5 months midway through the study. Background information is given about the subjects, including results of selected IEA French (Population II) tests administered during the year.

Some description of the year's work is given, followed by general and case study analyses of errors. Selected results from both the longer (FLEAF-L) and shorter (FLEAF-S) coding schedules are then tabulated and discussed. Particular attention is paid to variables coding possible explanations for errors.

Detailed analyses of errors in word order, negation and gender are offered, along with a review of correct performances for selected aspects. These analyses lead to two preliminary hypotheses which could in part explain the occurrence of errors. One hypothesis relates to the frequency with which pupils had been required to focus through drills on the point at issue, the other to the number of choices available to the pupil at the time of error.

Discussion of Error Analysis and pupil strategies is then presented. It is concluded that Error Analysis has a valid role in developing hypotheses for a theory of foreign language learning. Five such hypotheses, suggested by the longitudinal study, are presented. It is argued that these five could all be classified on one of a proposed five levels of 'Operating Procedures' (McLaughlin, 1978a). Selection of a unique cluster of operating procedures would constitute the learning/performance 'strategy' of a particular pupil. These notions are incorporated into a tentative framework for a theory of foreign language learning. A modified 'Principle of Least Effort' (Zipf, 1965), is suggested as a key factor in the early stages of learning a foreign language, and ideas for subsequent research are proposed.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS AND VARIABLES

Symbols

* a morphological or structural error is in the French which follows (there may be other errors as well)

° an error of spelling in French

\+ an incorrect or inappropriate word has been used in French

[ ] square brackets are used to indicate the correct or appropriate French required by the task

/ / (a) used in examples to indicate the pupil who wrote the French and the code number(s) of the error(s)

(b) used (in Chapter Eight) to signal phonemic representations of the sounds of word endings

Abbreviations

1L first or native language

1LL first language learning

2L second language (spoken in the community)

2LL second language learning

FL foreign language (not spoken in the community)

FLL foreign language learning

EA Error Analysis

CA Contrastive Analysis

FLEAF 'Foreign Language Error Analysis: French'. The coding system used in the longitudinal study.

FLEAF-L The 'Long Coding' version of FLEAF. This is the detailed, full-length version.

FLEAF-S The 'Short Coding' version of FLEAF. This is the limited-variable, limited-category version.

FLEAF-C 'FLEAF-Combination'. The suggested name for a version of FLEAF which combines short and long versions of each variable (giving the researcher the choice for a particular project).

Variables (Long Coding (L); Short Coding (S))*

ACCENT (L) - Accents: correct, missing, incorrect...
COMSTR (L/S) - Communication Strategy: message adjusted, abandoned...
CONDNS (L) - Conditions of work: formal/informal; homework/school etc.
CONTXT (L) - Context, or type of work: composition, essay, dictation...
DATE (L/S) - Date in figures: day, month and year
ENDING (L/S) - Ending: (incorporates STEM in FLEAF-S)
ERRNUM (L/S) - Error Number
EXTNSN (S) - Extension error: overgeneralisation of 2L rule...
GDCREA (L/S) - Guided or Creative: what sort of task?
GENCOM (L/S) - General Comment: coding problems; no comment necessary...
GENIS (L/S) - Gender Is: masculine, feminine, no gender...
GENSHD (L) - Gender Should be: masculine...
GENNAT (L/S) - General Nature of the error: omission, addition, correct word...
GRUPID (L) - Group Identification: school, centre or group
HYPHSP (L) - Hyphen (spelling error): hyphenated noun etc.
HYPHGR (L) - Hyphen (grammatical) and elision: correct, incorrect...
INTFNC (L/S) - Interference and transfer from 1L: lexical mismatch...
LANGUE (L) - Language used: French, English...
LEXCLX (L) - Lexical Extension: confusion with another 2L word...
LEXMNG (L) - Lexical Meaning and register: correct, ambiguous, wrong...
LINKNG (L) - Linking and complex errors: relations with other words...
LNGSTG (L) - Stage of Learning: not yet met, in current unit...
MAJMIN (L) - Major or Minor point being tested, or not appropriate
MARKNG (L) - Marking: corrected, unmarked, marked but not corrected...
MLTOCC (L/S) - Multiple Occurrence of flaw, in the same piece of work
MORPHX (L) - Morphological Extension: from similar word, ungrammatical...
NUMIS (L/S) - Number Is: singular, plural...
NUMSHD (L) - Number Should be: singular, plural...
OBSEXP (L/S) - Observable Explanation: ((L) has three slots, much detail); faulty correction, end of period, misunderstanding...
PERSID (L/S) - Personal Identification, of individual student/pupil/subject
PERIS (L/S) - Person Is: first, second, none...
PERSHD (L) - Person Should be: third, none...
SKILLS (L) - Skill interaction: listening-writing, reading-writing...
SOURCE (L) - Source or stimulus: teacher, text, workbook, exam...
SPELNG (L/S) - Spelling: correct, incorrect (incorporates ACCENT, HYPHSP, HYPHGR in FLEAF-S)
STEM (L) - Stem: correct, inappropriate...
STRUCX (L) - Structural Extension: confusion, overgeneralisation...
TMV (S) - Tense, Mood, Voice: correct, n.a....
TMVIS (L) - Tense, Mood, Voice is: present, perfect...
TMVSHD (L) - Tense, Mood, Voice should be: present, subjunctive,perfect...
WRDIS (L/S) - Word Is: noun, verb, adjective, English word...
WRDSHD (L/S) - Word Should be: noun, verb, adjective...
WRDORD (L/S) - Word Order: correct, misordered...
WGRIS (L) - Word Group Is: adjective-noun, verb-pronoun object...
WGRSHD (L) - Word Group Should be: weather expression, negative group...

*These variables are described and discussed in Chapters Four and Five.