

INTERLANGUAGE PROCESS

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Abstract : *This article describes about the definition of Interlanguage process and interlanguage process. An interlanguage is an emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a learner of a second language (or L2) who has not become fully proficient yet but is only approximating the target language: preserving some features of their first language (or L1) in speaking or writing the target language and creating innovations. Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second- and foreign- language learners who are in the process of learning a language. Interlanguage refers to the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language.*

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Background

An interlanguage is an emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a learner of a second language (or L2) who has not become fully proficient yet but is only approximating the target language: preserving some features of their first language (or L1) in speaking or writing the target language and creating innovations. Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second- and foreign- language learners who are in the process of learning a language. Interlanguage refers to the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language. Interlanguage is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two; it is a system based upon the best attempt of learners to provide order and structure to the linguistic stimuli surrounding them. The assumptions underlying interlanguage theory were stated clearly by Nemser (1971) in Ellis (1985). They were: (1) at any given time the approximative system is distinct from the L1 and L2; (2) the approximate system form an evolving series; and (3) that in a given contact situation, the approximate systems of learners at the same stage of proficiency roughly coincide.

An interlanguage is idiosyncratically based on the learners' experiences with the L2. It can fossilize in any of its developmental stages. Interlanguage is based on the theory that there

is a "psychological structure latent in the brain" which is activated when one attempts to learn a second language. In language learning, learner's errors are caused by several different processes. These include:

1. Borrowing patterns from the mother tongue.
2. Extending patterns from the target language.
3. Expressing meanings using the words and grammar which are already known.

Selinker (1972) proposed the theory of interlanguage, noting that in a given situation the utterances produced by the learner are different from those native speakers would produce had they attempted to convey the same meaning. This comparison reveals a separate linguistic system. This system can be observed when studying the utterances of the learners who attempt to produce a target language norm. To study the psychological processes involved one should compare the interlanguage of the learner with two things:

1. Utterances in the native language to convey the same message made by the learner.
2. Utterances in the target language to convey the same message made by the native speaker of that language.

Interlanguage yields new linguistic variety, as features from a group of speakers' L1 community may be integrated into a dialect of the speaker's L2 community. Interlanguage is in itself the basis for diversification of linguistic forms through an outside linguistic influence. Dialects formed by interlanguage are the product of a need to communicate between speakers with varying linguistic ability, and with increased interaction with a more standard dialect, are often marginalized or eliminated in favor of a standard dialect. In this way, interlanguage may be thought of as a temporary tool in language or dialect acquisition.

An interlanguage is also a language that is used by speakers of different languages in order to be able to mutually communicate. By a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, learners of second language slowly and tediously succeed in establishing closer and closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language.

Interlanguage Process

According to Selinker (1972), there are a number of basic processes - that is, activities that the learners adopts in order to help them acquire the language. The interlanguage consists of: L1 transfer, transfer of training, strategies of L2 learning (e.g.simplification), strategies of L2 communication (e.g. do not think about grammar while talking), and overgeneralization of the target language patterns.

1. **Language transfer** - the learner uses her own L1 as a resource. This used to be looked upon as a mistake, but it is now recognised that all learners fall back on their mother tongues, particularly in the early stages of language acquisition, and that this is a necessary process. In language transfer, some items, rules and structures of L1 can be transferred to production of L2. (e.g. learner can utter: *I at home - not mentioning the tobe as in his L1 subject is indicated that auxiliary verbs or tobe do not exist in L1, therefore it is omitted). Language transfer can be in both postive and negative transfer. The positive transfer means the aspect of linguistics of L2 exist in L1 while the negative one do not exist.
2. **Transfer of training** - when language teaching creates interlanguage rules that are not of the L2 and which result in the way the learners were taught (e.g. when teaching the word “at,”the teacher may hold up a box and say, “I’m looking at the box”. However, the learner may infer that “at” means “under.” If later the learner uses “at”for “under,”this would be an induced error (Richards et al., 1998).
3. **Strategies of L2 learning or Simplification** - which is an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned. It refers to intentional behavior and thoughts that learners make use of in order to help them understand, learn or remember new information. These may include focusing on certain aspects of new information, analyzing and organizing information to deepen comprehension, evaluating learning when it is completed to see if further action is needed. Learning strategies may be applied to simple tasks such as learning a list of new words, or more complex tasks involving language comprehension and production. Strategies of L2 learning in both syntactic and semantic - the learner uses speech that resembles that of very young children or of pidgins. This may be either because they cannot, in fact, as yet produce the target forms, or because they do not feel sure of them. Strategies of second language learning e.g. simplification, when for example the learner uses only one form of a verb.
4. **Strategies of L2 communication** - which is an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers. It often refers to a way used to express a meaning in a second or foreign language, by a learner who has a limited command of the language. In trying to communicate, a learner may have to make up for a lack of knowledge of grammar or vocabulary. The learners will use PARAPHRASE strategies, AVOIDANCE strategies and other communication strategies such as gesture and mime. For instance, the learner may not be able to say “It’s against the law to park here”,so he/she may say “This place, cannot park”.And for “Ilost my way”, a learner could say “I

lost my road". And learner omits grammatically redundant items in an utterance, producing ill-formed sentences (e.g. *I saw beautiful girl omitting an a article).

5. **Overgeneralization of L2 rules** - the learner uses an L2 rule in situations in which a native speaker would not. Overgeneralization of L2 material where the learner tries to use L2 grammatical rules in the way there would not be used by a native speaker (e.g. *What does she doing now).

Overgeneralization can occur at a number of levels:

- at **the phonetic level**, for example, learners of English, after having learnt to master the English 'r', may take to placing it at the end of words, whereas in RP it is not pronounced.
- at **the grammatical level**, a learner in the early stages may use nothing but the present tense. Later, there may be extensive, non-native use of 'be - ing' forms of the verb.
- at **the lexical level** - learners tend to use base terms and to stretch them - thus a 'goose' might be referred to as a 'chicken', or a teaspoon may be a 'little spoon'.
- at **the level of discourse**, lexical items and expressions may be used in inappropriate social contexts.

Problems with this perspective

1. Can we always unambiguously identify which of these processes our observable data is to be attributable to?
2. How can we systematize the notion fossilization so that from the basis of theoretical constructs, we can predict which items in which interlingual situations will be fossilized?
3. How does a second language learning novice become able to produce IL utterances whose surface whose surface constituents are correct, i.e. correct with respect to the L2 whose norm he is attempting to produce?
4. What are the relevant units of this hypothesized latent psychological structure within which interlingual identifications exist?
5. Is there any evidence for the existance of this unit?
6. How can we experiment with these three linguistics systems, creating the same experimental condition for each with one unit which is identified interlingually across these systems?

Fossilization

However, **it is extremely rare for the learner of an L2 to achieve full native-like competence**: Selinker coined the term 'Fossilization' to refer to this phenomenon - non-target forms become fixed in the interlanguage. The example can be found in the classroom, looking at the written production of 80 students, found that **after nine years instruction in learning English, they continued making errors such as the use of simple past instead of simple present** - no amount of grammatical explanation or of error correction had any effect. The causes of fossilization are both internal and external. It can occur both because the learner believes that he does not need to develop his interlanguage any further in order to communicate effectively whatever he wants to, or it can occur because changes in the neural structure of his brain as a result of age restrict the operation hypothesis-testing mechanisms (Ellis, 1985).

Fossilization may simply affect certain structures. Thus Selinker says "*Fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular native language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the target language*".

As this implies, a student may continue to make progress in certain areas, and yet return again and again to the same error. Thus, for example, we find advanced students who communicate with great skill and who make very few errors, but still do not master the perfect aspect of the verb in English.

Pidginization

A pidgin is a mixed language or jargon usually arising out of two languages coming into contact for commercial, political or even social purposes. The vocabulary of at least two languages is incorporated into the pidgin, and simplified forms are used. The learners instinctively attempt to bring two languages – the target and the native – together to form a unique language, an interlanguage, possessing aspects of both languages. It is perhaps only with great persistence that learners overcome this apparently universal pidginization tendency, weed out interlanguage forms, and adopt the L2 exclusively.

Schumann believes that **a process similar to 'pidginization'** - that is, the construction of a basic lingua franca for the limited social purposes that brought learners into contact with L2 speakers. Why was this language 'pidginised' in this way? Schumann rejects both age and cognitive level. Instead, he draws attention to the fact that learner's speech is very close to

classic pidgins in a number of ways. Schumann believed that learner found himself in a situation very similar to that of a speaker of a pidgin. Pidgins are used between groups who are at some social distance from each other. For Schumann, this is a crucial variable in language learning. The relationship between the L1 group and the L2 group, may differ in a number of ways:

1. Dominance :

- a) L2 users may dominate the L1 group - French-speaking colonists in Tunisia.
- b) L2 users may be dominated by the L1 group - Hispanic immigrants to the USA.
- c) L2 users may be on an equal footing - middle-class French speakers in England .

2. Integration :

- a) L2 users may decide to assimilate to the L1 group - **most Bretons now simply regard themselves as French people.**
- b) L2 users may decide to maintain their own culture - many Asian groups in Britain continue to speak their own mother-tongue within the household, and to regard the Indian sub-continent as their real home. The choice of assimilation or non-assimilation is not simply determined by the members of the L2 group, but may be imposed upon them by the **L1 group, who may refuse to accept their efforts at assimilation.**

3. Enclosure :

The L2 group may live separately from the L1 group - high enclosure - or may join in the social activities of the L1 group. For example, among first generation Asian immigrants to the UK, there was a considerable degree of enclosure. It is interesting to note that this was of a higher degree for the women than for the men. *There is some evidence that it is the men who wish to see the women segregated, rather than the women themselves.*

*A learner's pidginization of the English language, then, came about because he felt no **expressive needs** could be met by the language. This is one other indication that the Chomskian approach to language is not sufficient. This affective aspect is also of great importance in the learning of the second language. A learner had no love either **for** or **through** the English language. The same is true of many of our students, and may account for their relatively rapid fossilization.*

Attitudes towards Errors

At present, a good many textbooks used in a majority of schools and universities have not only provided teachers or students with specific teaching methods or learning strategies

but also the systematic classified knowledge. Having the proper learning strategy means that students have the ability and method to analyze and organize any new information, and then they are able to evaluate their learning process and learning outcome appropriately. Clearly, this suggests that students are likely to regard not the taught knowledge but the target language as the evaluation criterion so that they can go through their interlanguage system to make it approach the target language. From this point of view, we should continue the teaching and training of learning strategies throughout classroom teaching.

In most cases, however, students are unconscious of their own interlanguage system. Consequently, strategies making students aware of the existence of their interlanguage system and of how it influences their learning process should also be taught in class. Specifically speaking, after the target language information has been given, teachers may take flexible measures, such as recording students' production, exchanging information with students, and so forth, in order that students may have opportunities for output.

More importantly, with the help of teachers, students can contrast their output (interlanguage) with input (target language) to find out the differences and their causes. This is a process of reflection on their cognition, during which students can develop their ability to learn autonomously and avoid the negative influence which their existing interlanguage system has upon their learning process. According to Brown (1994), the following general classroom implications deserve our attention:

1. Try to distinguish between a student's systematic interlanguage errors (stemming from the native language or target language) and other errors; the former will probably have a logical source that the student can become aware of.
2. Teachers need to tolerate certain interlanguage forms that may arise out of a student's logical developmental process.
3. Do not make a student feel stupid just because of an interlanguage error; quietly point out the logic of the erroneous form.
4. The classroom feedback to students should give them the message that mistakes are not "bad," rather that most mistakes are good indicators that innate language acquisition abilities are alive and well. Mistakes are often indicators of aspects of the new language that are still developing. Some mistakes in the classroom should be treated by teachers, but when teachers choose to treat them, do so with kindness and empathy so that the student will not feel thwarted in future attempts to speak.
5. Try to get students to self-correct selected errors; the ability to self-correct may indicate readiness to regularly use that form correctly.

6. In the feedback on students' linguistic output, make sure that teachers provide ample affective feedback— verbal or nonverbal— in order to encourage them to speak.
7. As teachers make judicious selection of which errors to treat, make sure that the feedback doesn't thwart further student attempts to speak.

It is believed, with the effort that teachers and students make, that students can be spared the pain of severe language anxiety and can experience what it means to succeed in the language classroom. Teachers can give appropriate feedback after checking out learner's interlanguage. Learners need not worry so much about making mistakes. They can assume that making mistakes is a procedure of development from mother tongue to Second Language.

Conclusion

From the analyses above we can find that interlanguage is an independent language system, which has the general features and functions of human language. It has its own rules of phonology, lexicon and grammar, which can be used by the L2 learner to generate sentences he/she has not heard before. In this respect, learning is a process to correct errors continuously so that interlanguage can approach the target language step by step.

Like other languages, can function as a communicative tool. To be aware of these characteristics of interlanguage will be of great importance for English teachers. As we know, in the course of developing students' integrated language competence, there does exist some inappropriate teaching methods and teaching activities that haven't dealt with interlanguage phenomena fairly and properly. Consequently, induced errors are sometimes made.

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