CURRENT LINGUISTIC ISSUES: FROM INTERLANGUAGE TO ENGLISH VARIETIES – ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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The Interlanguage – a Remarkably Elaborate Linguistic Abstraction

General Survey upon Language Functions. Instead of a Prefatory View

A social communication system inhering in a structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units, i.e. morphemes, words, sentences and utterances, is called **language**. This system is frequently described as having three major functions:

1. The **descriptive function** of language is to convey factual information.

2. The **expressive function** of language is to supply information about the speaker, his or her feelings, preferences, prejudices and past experiences.

3. The **social function** of language serves to establish and maintain social relationships between people.

Considered by the British linguist M.A. Halliday, the language has three functions that differ from those previously enumerated:

1. the **ideational function** is to organise the speaker's or writer's experience of the real or imaginary world, i.e. language refers to real or imagined persons, things, actions, events, states, etc

2. the **interpersonal function** is to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships between people; it includes forms of address, speech function, modality, etc

3. the **textual function** is to create written or spoken texts which cohere within themselves and which fit the particular situation in which they are used.

These functions are always dependent on the social context of language.

This context can be analysed in terms of three factors:

1. the **field of discourse** refers to what is happening, including what is being talking about .

2. the **tenor of discourse** refers to the participants who are taking part in this exchange of meaning, who they are and what kind of relationship they have to one another.

3. the **mode of discourse** refers to what part the language is playing in this particular situation, for example, in what way the language is organised to convey the meaning, and what channel is used – written or spoken or a combination of the two.

Example of foreign language lesson:

- **field**: language study, a defined area of information about the foreign language, e.g. the use of tenses. Teacher imparting, students acquiring knowledge about tenses and their use.

- **tenor**: participants: teacher – students. Fixed role relationships defined by the educational institution. Teacher in higher role. Temporary role relationships between students, depending on personality.

- **mode**: language used for instruction and discussion. Channel: spoken (e.g. questions eliciting information, answers supplying information, dialogues acted by students) and written (e.g. visual presentation on blackboard, textbooks, additional reading material).

Considering language functions within a social context is an approach ascribed to systemic linguistics. The theory behind this approach is functional rather than formal i.e. it considers language as a resource used in communication and not as a set of rules. In this way, the scope of systemic linguistics is wider than that of many other linguistic theories. Phonology and **lexicogrammar** (words and grammatical structures) are closely related to meaning and cannot be analysed without reference to it. An essential concept of the theory is that each time language is used, no matter in what situation, the user is making constant choices. These choices are essentially choices in meaning but are expressed, for instance by intonation, words and grammatical structures. Developed by Halliday, systemic linguistics is mainly concerned with grammar, one that has been called **systemic grammar**. It is an approach to grammatical analysis based on a series of systems. Each system is a set of options of which one must be chosen at each relevant point in the production of an utterance.[1] The same as Halliday, K.L. Pike is concerned with working out a theory of language – one to be called **tagmemics**. In tagmemic analyses there are three hierarchies or systems: grammatical, phonological and lexical. In each of these systems there are a number of levels. For example, in the grammatical system there are: the morpheme level, the word level, the phrase level, the clause level, the sentence level, the paragraph level. On each level of the grammatical system there are **tagmemes** displaying relationships between grammatical functions and classes of linguistic items which can fill these functions (**fillers).**

From Language Functions to Linguistic Performance. The Interlanguage – a Remarkably Elaborate Linguistic Abstraction

Competence and Performance in Language Learning

The importance of considering language functions becomes evident in second language **acquisition** – a term different from **learning**, the latter being sometimes linked to Behaviourism. Language acquisition is studied by linguists to enable them to understand the processes made use of in learning a language, to help identify stages in the developmental process and to give a better understanding of the nature of language. Techniques in this respect include longitudinal studies of language learners as well as experimental approaches and focus on the study of the development of phonology, grammar, vocabulary and communicative competence. The latter is concerned with the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences, but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom. Communicative competence includes:
1. knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language.
2. Knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g. knowing how to begin and end conversations, knowing what topics may be talked about in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations.
3. Knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks and invitations.
4. Knowing how to use language appropriately.
5. As far as appropriateness is concerned, a speaker needs to know that his or her utterance is grammatical i.e. suitable (appropriate) for the particular situation.
6. Language acquisition is supposed to carefully combine competence and performance.

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[1] For example, in English, the speaker or writer makes choices among the systems of **number**: singular or plural; **tense**: past, present or future; **mood**: declarative, interrogative or imperative (this being different from the instituted classification of moods: indicative, imperative, subjunctive; a specification in here would be that infinitive and gerund are dealt with as verb forms by modern grammar and not as moods).

There is a big difference between a person's knowledge of the language (**competence**) and his or her knowledge in producing and understanding sentences (**performance**). The difference between linguistic competence and linguistic performance can be seen, for example in the production of long and complex sentences. People may have the competence to produce an infinitely long sentence, but when they actually attempt to use this knowledge (i.e. to perform) there are many reasons why they restrict the number of adjectives, adverbs and clauses in any one sentence. To be more specific, one may deal with a **recursive rule**, i.e. a rule that can be applied repeatedly without any definite limit. There have also been written performance grammar studies describing the rules or strategies which people use when they produce and understand sentences together with competence grammar studies focused on describing linguistic knowledge of speakers and hearers.

Language is a vast and changing system and linguistics is a large – scope science studying it. Dealing with the linguistic items above, one could neither exhaust any of them nor approach the whole range of possibilities in their respect. Although the image of concepts has been made self contained as far as possible, cross references have been made use of to show links to other notions, with providing information for a fuller approach of a term or a concept to be achieved.

From Language Learning to Interlanguage

So fashionable a linguistic concept, the **interlanguage** does factually delineate that specific type of commonly – shared parlance produced by second- and foreign-language speakers in full process of learning a new language. In such a process, errors[2] or inaccuracies are originated in certain utterly distinct mechanisms that comprise:
1. assuming patterns from the first language
2. extending patterns from the target language (e.g. by resemblance or analogy)
3. expressing meanings using the words and grammar that are already known

Inasmuch as the language that the learner produces with using these processes is different from both **the first** and the **target language**, it is occasionally labelled as an **interlanguage** i.e. said to derive from the learner's interlanguage (or approximate) system.

The 1st point i.e*. assuming patterns from the first language* is directly connected to the **language transfer**, a concept that stands for the effect of one language on the learning of another. Two types of language transfer may occur. The **negative transfer**, also known as **interference**, is the use of a native-language pattern or rule that leads to **an error** or inappropriate form in the **target language**, while. The **positive transfer** is that which makes learning easier, and may occur when both the native language and the target language have matching words. In error analysis[3] terms, the concept of **negative transfer** is practically based

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[2] A second or foreign language learner` s speech or writing is often characterised by using linguistic items (e.g. words, grammatical elements or utterances) in a way in which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning. Such a use is known to be referred to as an **error**. A distinction is sometimes made between an error, which results from incomplete knowledge and a **mistake** made by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness or some other aspect of performance. Errors may be classified according to vocabulary (lexical error), pronunciation (phonological error), grammar (language cohesion error), misunderstanding of a speaker` s intention or meaning (interpretative error) or to producing a wrong communicative effect, e.g. through the faulty use of a speech act or one of the rules of speaking (pragmatic error).

[3] The study and analysis of errors made by second or foreign language learners is called **error analysis**. Such an analysis may be carried out in order to identify the strategies which learners use in language acquiring, to point out the causes of learner errors, and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid to teaching or to preparing teaching materials.

on that of **interlingual error**[4], the latter obviously resulting from the transfer at issue and from the learner's native language orientation. Different from the interlingual error**,** the **intralingual**[5]one is that resulting from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than from language transfer. Intralingual errors may be caused by the influence of one target-language item upon another. For example a learner may produce the incorrect sentence "She is arrives", based on a blend of the correct English structures "She is arriving" and "She arrives".

The 2nd point i.e. *extending the patterns from the target language* does specifically refer to the linguistic **overgeneralization**, which is also called **over-extension**, **over-regularisation** or **analogy**. This concept refers to a process common in both first- and second-language learning, in which a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule of a linguistic item beyond its accepted uses, generally by making words or structures follow a more regular pattern.

The 3rd point i.e. *expressing meanings using the words and grammar that are already known* is directly connected to another linguistic concept called **communication strategy**. This concept points out a way 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 use of paraphrase and other communication strategies characterise the interlanguage of some language learners. However, there are cases in this respect when a person changes his or her way of speaking to make it sound more like or less like the speech of the addressed person i.e. the recipient. This is called **accommodation**. For example, a teacher may use simpler words and sentence structures when he or she is talking to a class of young children. This type of accommodation is called **convergence**. A person may exaggerate his or her rural accent because of being annoyed by the attitude of some one from a large city. This is called **divergence**. When proceeding to an interlanguage operation, the person making the language transfer is supposed to produce an **interlingual identification**. This concept is used in second or foreign language learning and points out the judgement made by learners about the identity or similarity of structures in two languages. Learners often categorise sounds in terms of the phonemic systems of their first language, making the acquisition of new target language sounds become a very difficult process.

When addressing foreigners who are not proficient[6] in the language, native speakers often use that type of speech called the **foreigner talk**. This speech has several features:

- it is slower and louder than normal speech, often with exaggerated pronunciation
- it uses simpler vocabulary and grammar. For example, articles, function words and inflections may be omitted and complex verb forms are replaced by simpler ones

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[4] Entirely connected to the type of language produced by second or foreign language learners, the **interlingual** error is rooted in the language transfer, i.e. it originates in the learner`s native language and it depends on the effect of the first language upon the learning of the second or foreign language.

[5] **Intralingual** errors were classified as **overgeneralizations** (errors caused by extension of target language rules to inappropriate contexts), **simplifications** (errors resulting from learners' producing simpler linguistic rules than those found in the target language), **developmental errors** (those reflecting natural stages of development), **communication – based errors** (errors resulting from strategies of communication), **induced errors** (those resulting from a transfer of training), **errors of avoidance** (resulting from failure to use certain target language structures because they are thought to be too difficult) or **errors of overproduction** (structures being used too frequently). Attempts to apply such categories have been problematic however, due to the difficulty of determining the cause of errors.

[6] As for the spoken language proficiency of adult foreign language learners, it is best tested using the **Foreign Service Institute Oral Interview**, a technique developed by the United States Foreign Service Institute. It consists of a set of rating scales, which are used to judge pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency during a 30 minute interview between the learner and, usually, two interviewers. The rating scale measures language proficiency of learners, making use of scales that go from worst to best performance in a number of steps.

- Topics are sometimes repeated or moved to the front of sentences (native speakers often feel that this type of speech is easier for foreigners to understand).

So generous a concept, the **foreign** or **non-native language** is much more complex than it might seem. It is common knowledge that a foreign language is usually studied either for communication with foreigners who speak the language or for reading printed materials in the language at issue. What is less known is that in American applied linguistic usage, **foreign language** and **second language** are often used to mean the same in this sense, while in British usage, a distinction is always made between foreign language and second language. A foreign language is a language that is taught as a school subject but which is not used as a medium of instruction in schools nor as a language of communication within a country (e.g. in government, business or industry).[7] However, such regards aim de facto at a larger linguistic chapter, which linguists have been used to calling **English Varieties.** The latter may be considered either diachronically (in chronological i.e. time – oriented or evolutionary terms) or synchronically (in the current or contemporary use of language). The ensuing section of this scientific paper is entirely dedicated to this specific English variance – concerned linguistic chapter.

From RP to Speech Varieties

RP or **RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION** stands for that type of British **STANDARD ENGLISH** pronunciation which has been regarded as the prestige variety and which shows no regional variation. It has often been popularly referred to as **BBC English** because it has been the standard pronunciation used by most British Broadcasting Corporation Newsreaders. RP is definitely related to the **STANDARD VARIETY**, also called **STANDARD LANGUAGE** or **STANDARD DIALECT**, which points out the language variety having the highest status in a community or nation, one usually based on the speech and writing of educated native speakers of the language.

A standard variety is generally:

- used in the news media and in literature
- described in dictionaries and grammars
- taught in schools and taught to non – native speakers when they learn the language as a foreign language

Sometimes it is the educated variety spoken in the political or cultural centre of a country, e.g. the standard variety of French is based on educated Parisian French.

The standard variety of American English is known as **STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH** and the standard variety of British English is **STANDARD BRITISH ENGLISH**. A standard variety may show some variation in pronunciation according to the region where it is spoken, e.g. Standard British English in Scotland, Wales, Southern England. **STANDARD ENGLISH** is sometimes used as a cover term for all national standard varieties of English. These national standard varieties have differences in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and particularly pronunciation, but there is a common core of the language that

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[7] English is a described as a foreign language in France, Japan, China etc. A second language is a language which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication (e.g. in education and government) and which is usually used alongside another language or languages. English is described as a second language in countries such as Fiji, Singapore and Nigeria. In both Britain and North America, the term **second language** would describe a native language in a country as learnt by people living there who have another first language. English in the UK would be called the second language of immigrants and people whose first language is Welsh.

makes it possible for educated native speakers of the various national standard varieties of English to communicate with one another.

Unlike standard language, the **REGIONAL DIALECT** (i.e. the variety of a language spoken in one part of a country) is originated in a **REGIONAL VARIATION**, i.e. a language variation depending on the geographical area the speaker comes from.

The same as dialects or standard language, **SOCIOLECTS** and **PIDGIN** are dealt with in terms of **SPEECH VARIETIES.**

A **SOCIOLECT** is a variety of language used by people belonging to a particular social class. The speakers of a sociolect usually share a similar socioeconomic and educational background. Sociolects may be considered in point of being high or low in status. For example:

He and I were going there. (higher sociolect)

'Im'n me was goin' there. (lower sociolect)

The sociolect with the highest status in a country is often the standard variety. The difference between one sociolect and another can be investigated by analysing the recorded speech of large samples of speakers from various social backgrounds; these differences are referred to as **SOCIOLECTAL** or **SOCIAL DIALECTAL VARIATIONS**.

When two languages or language varieties exist side by side in a community and each one is used for different purposes, the linguist has to deal a phenomenon called **DIGLOSSIA**. Usually, one is a more standard variety called **HIGH – VARIETY** or **H – VARIETY**, which is used in government, the media, education and for religious services. The other one is usually a non – prestige variety called the **LOW – VARIETY** or **L – VARIETY**, which is used in the family, with friends, when shopping, etc. An example of diglossia can be found in the German speaking part of Switzerland, where the **H – VARIETY** is a form of standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) and the **L – VARIETY** is called *Schwyzertűűtsch*, which is a range of regional Swiss dialects.

Although it is common to think of a language as being divided into separate regional dialects or social dialects, there is often no clear division between them but rather a continuum from one another, which linguists are used to calling **SPEECH CONTINUUM**. This name is used particularly when referring to varieties spoken by those with varying levels of proficiency in a second language, e.g. English in Singapore. The sub – variety used by those with high levels of English medium education is frequently called the **ACROLET**. The **BASILECT** is the sub – variety used by those with rather low levels of education and the **MESOLECTS** are the sub – varieties in between. Naturally, there are no clear – cut boundaries between these "lects". Educated speakers of a more established **ESL** (English as a Second Language) variety may use the acrolet or an upper mesolect in more formal situations and something close to the basilect in a more informal context.

The second case to be considered in terms of speech varieties, i.e. the **PIDGIN**, points out a language which develops as a contact language when groups of people who speak different languages try to communicate with one another on a regular basis. For example, this might occur where foreign traders have to communicate with the local population or groups of workers from different language backgrounds on plantations or in factories. A pidgin usually has a limited vocabulary and a reduced grammatical structure which may expand when it is used over a long period of time. Often expanded pidgins will develop into **CREOLE** languages. A Creole is a pidgin language which has become the native language of a group of speakers, being used for all or many of their daily communicative needs. Usually, the sentence structures and vocabulary range of a Creole are far more complex than those of a pidgin language. Creoles are usually classified according to the language from which most of their vocabulary comes, e.g. English – based, French – based, Portuguese – based and Swahili – based Creoles.

The influence of a speaker's original language on the acquisition of another language, whether taught formally or acquired informally (as in the case of pidgin languages) is called **SUBSTRATUM INFLUENCE**. The influence may be on pronunciation, sentence structures, vocabulary or various aspects of communicative competence. For example, it is common in a number of ESL varieties to use the verbs *open* and *close* for turning radios and lights on and off. This can often be seen as a substratum influence.

Such concepts as **SPEECH CONTINUUM** or **SUBSTRATUM INFLUENCE** can only be taken for starting points of an elaborate scientific investigation in this respect. Output of a mere general survey on a first - rate linguistic reality, the information above is not supposed to be dealt with as a range of separate linguistic phenomena, but as a part of an entirety directly connected to the social context of language.

Final Judgement

It is utterly difficult to encompass, within the definite confines of a paper, the whole affluence in significance pertaining to such a debatable and sonorous linguistic marathon. Neither epitomised nor exhaustive, the paper is actually a mere admixture between a synoptic survey upon a whole range of current linguistic issues and an analytical approach of certain very specific and transparent language realities. The scope or limits of this investigation, likewise its own magnitudes, are carefully conceived so as to best capture the overflow of multiform linguistic information considered.

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