Creating Awareness of Standard English Using Corrective Task

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Abstract
Experience is the best teacher we can get. It is the same case in many fields, and especially in language, specifically in English language learning. If experience is the best teacher, then mistakes and errors may be the best lessons. However, like the lesson, mistakes and errors will do no good without any corrections. No one can deny the importance of corrections in any form of learning .The objective of this research was to describe a study that attempts to use corrective tasks in raising students' awareness of Standard English. The study attempted to answer the following question, 'How can corrective tasks be incorporated in class to raise students' awareness of Standard English?''

Keywords: *Standard English, Awareness, Corrective Tasks.*

Background to the Study

English teachers often have trouble maintaining the right degree of directness and subtleness in making corrections in class. Corrections must be made clear, but at the same time, should not affect learners' confidence or motivation in learning the language. One solution is to use corrective tasks. Corrective tasks allow learners to be aware of the errors thy have made, minus the criticisms and virtually no anxiety on the learners' part. For this study, the corrective activity chosen was authentic and novel as direct comparisons were carried out between L1 (First language or mother tongue) and the English Language. This helped considerably with the description in the lesson. The students found this method helpful as they could relate the lesson to their daily lives.

In the teaching field itself, teachers are generally asked, "What does it take for students to really learn from mistakes?" in every class that exists, there will be a few or even many students that will continuously make the same mistakes or errors despite being corrected repeatedly. There are also negative effects of correction in second language acquisition. The problem is when we apply correction in the lesson, it is not acquisition anymore but rather a learning process (Ellis, 1985). Learning is said to be the least popular route for language learning. It raises the affective filter and can slow down the whole process at the same time. Therefore, scholars of the education field are on a never-ending quest to improve the education experience as a whole and the 'latest and greatest corrective technology'. In other words, potential solutions are continuously tried and tested to ensure the best outcome especially for English learning.

One of the potential solutions is using corrective tasks. Instead of pointing out students' errors or mistakes the whole time, which cause anxiety on their part, corrective tasks allow them to be aware of the errors with virtually no anxiety since it is not their errors or mistakes which are being criticized.

Carter (2003) opines that language awareness refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of, and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language. There is also a need to raise this language awareness as the future use of the students depends in no small part on their ability to use proper forms of language.

An error is produced due to the lack of knowledge of the target language structures, lexis, and phonology. Students will not be able to correct their errors even when their attention is drawn to the incorrect items, but it is not so for mistakes as students can make corrections.

Mistakes are not made due to their ignorance. They are produced as a result of oversight or carelessness. A language error may be defined as a systematic and consistent deviation from the standard norms or models of language. The standard norm is often determined by a country's education system. In Nigeria for instance, the school education system stipulates that the teachers teach students standard British English in terms of its grammar and pronunciation. In tertiary institutions however, no official standard has been prescribed. Errors that the students make may be because of many reasons. However, in this study, I would focus only on two common causes of error in Nigerian context that is L1 interference and over generalization.

L1 interference, with regard to the terms cross linguistic and language transfer, refers to the influence of L1 structures on students' performance and development in the target language (TL) (Hashim, 1999). When interlanguage students are using the TL, some of their L1 characteristics show up. Since most Nigerian students are either bilingual or trilingual, they cannot escape from their dominant first language (L1). The L1 exerts a strong influence on students who have yet to sufficiently acquire proficiency in the target language (TL). The influence of the L1 is positive as well as negative. However, it is the negative aspect that is worrying. The negative role includes transferring features of the L1 to TL resulting in erroneous utterances, direct translation, and unacceptable language switch. Various studies of L2 English grammar between 1971 and 2000 indicated that interference accounted for 33% of errors (0nuigbo, 2008,Elis,1985). Jowitt (1991) found that Nigerian students faced problems in L1 lexical interference when writing descriptive essays in English and occurred at two levels. First, a literal word translation was found as in the sentence 'if I do not, the senior will hot and angry.' The word hot which is a literal translation and which means angry was used inappropriately.

This L1 lexical interference was caused by the students' thinking patterns in mother tongue written in English. Hence, the problems of L1 lexical interference in written or spoken English for Nigerian students involved literal word translation. L1 syntactic interference is also inevitably caused by direct translation from vernacular into English.

As for the term overgeneralization, it refers to extending TL rules to areas where they cannot be applied. The strategy that students use false analogy. If the word house can have the plural form houses, horses for horses, then it is correct to assume that the plural for mouse should be mice. However, this is not correct as English has standard rules, and the rules cannot be overgeneralized. Some Researchers consider over-generalization the most effective way to reduce the TL forms to a simpler system. Jain (1974) explains how this works by referring specifically to the 'count-non-count' distinction in nouns. Jain further says that it is possible that L1 may facilitate the categorization of some of the nouns in the category 'count' rather than the other. What is more important is that once they are categorized, their occurrences in the student's English are governed by this generalization. It is not surprising, therefore, to note that instances of over- generalization are to be found in a functional variety of language like colloquial English where economy is one of the prime considerations. Nigerians apply the singular plural distinction to all nouns, regardless of whether they are treated as countable or uncountable in Standard English.

Methodology
The observation was carried out in Tansian University, Oba which is located at Oba, Idemili L.G.A Anambra State. The sample was taken from 10 students made up of 5 boys and 5 girls. All students were of 100level in the English Native language Proficiency. The study was done on one group of students and the observation was done only once. Hence, some other determining factors such as proficiency level, age, area, duration and socio-economic status should be considered if the findings were to be generalized to other situations.

This section discussed the methods used for collecting data. This is important as a proper and guided method will determine the valid outcome of the observation done. Among the components highlighted in this section are, observation sample and observation procedure.

Sample
Background of school Tansian University is a University, about 60 teachers and 1395 students. The University opened in 2007. Even though it is new, this school achieved excellent results and progressing in their performance results as it achieved good passes among the students.

Background of the students
The observation mainly focused on students of 100 level (use of English class) which consisted of 5 boys and 5 girls. They were all of intermediate level proficiency in English. Most of the students were keen to learn English language. They were motivated and some of them were enthusiastic to ask questions.

Observation procedure
The observation was done in a single period class on Thursday 11 March, 2010; from 10.10 am to10.40am. The teacher used proper methodology in her teaching to eliminate code-switching and proper structure of sentences used from the students. Class proceeded as per lesson plan.

In addition, the observer prepared a check list of class events to be observed. She also took down notes of the interactions between the teacher and her students. At the end of the class, the observer asked the teacher to review her notes to ensure the notes were accurate.

Findings and Discussion
One of the important criteria in this profession is punctuality as it gives good example to the students and the teacher practiced this routine. She entered the class with a smile of confidence and greeted her students with "Good morning, students."

The word "students" provides a good rapport between a teacher and her students and builds good relationship. She remembered the names of every student and made sure they submitted their work or else strict punishment will be given. Moreover, disciplining the students is important to control the situation in the classroom. Importantly, she made sure that all students spoke in English and she taught them by using English throughout the lesson without any interference of mother tongue. The class was conducive and she avoided the feeling of tenses among students by constantly praising and occasional patting to the student's shoulders.

Next, the teacher encouraged the students to identify the mistakes in the letter as the students realized that there was a direct translation fromL1 to English Language. Some of the words orphrases were "play wood three", "crocodile land"and "play-play with my liver".

The teacher continued to ask for any mistakes in the letters. Students were able to identify some of the mistakes. However, there were some who thought that some of the words do exist in English. Next, she discussed with the students and identified the further discussions, the teacher asked a few questions related to their previous exercise and the students share their opinions and information with the class. In short, the teacher used an authentic exercise which may be helpful to the students. They realized that all this while they have been using the wrong words.

Awareness towards Standard English
From the linguistic perspective, all varieties of local and regional language are equally complex and worthy of study because each of them reflects the cultural background of the particular group of people. However, recognizing the Standard English and distinguishing the errors in language are vital because localized English or direct translation of language can easily lead to misunderstanding. To avoid these frustrations, teachers take up the responsibility to encourage the use of Standard English in the classroom.

Through the observation, the use of corrective reading task establishes the connection of Standard English and the language awareness. Based on the observation, it is clearly shown that proper use of Standard English is crucial in order to convey the message effectively. The learners had shown great interest and attention towards inappropriate items in the text. They were generally able to identify the unacceptable language forms. This finding was significant because it is believed that their L1 may have some unpredictable impacts on the process of learning in second language. Yet, through a well-plannedlesson, this issue can somehow be used as a tool to increase the student's awareness of Standard English. Therefore, sensible use of L1, to a large extent, can contribute to better learning outcomes and awareness towards L2.

L1 versus L2
The relaxed manner in which the lesson was conducted helped the students to be more ready to learn. This context is clearly shown from the classroom atmosphere in the research. Most of the learners have shown their laughter and inspiration that have extensively reduced the language learning anxiety. However, some learners remain in doubt towards the Colloquial English as they probably could not establish direct connection between the Colloquial English and Standard English.

Previously, the use of L1 in a language classroom is always discouraged. This is obviously understood that the learners may tend to use more L1 rather than L2 that can affect their L2 fluency and accuracy. Yet, Huang (2009) indicates that the existence of L1 in L2 classroom can be accepted because the learners are more likely to depend mainly on their own cognitive intuition and experience through L1. It is indicated that teachers need to engage in research-like activities by recognizing that learners' L1 plays a role in their L2 acquisition to identify common language errors. Hence, increasing awareness of the similarities and differences between a student's L1 and English can better inform the teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, Alsagoff and Ho (1998) find that it is in practice useful to make direct comparisons between L1 and English language which can help considerably with the description in the lesson. They assert that the use of colloquial English in the classroom can

hardly be avoided in many cases and there is no denying the fact that such colloquial English provides a rich set of expressive options that are possibly absent from Standard English. However, there were drawbacks which may become obstacles to students in recognizing the meaning (Carter, 2003).This limitation of using direct translation text in teaching can somehow lead to confusion, especially in a mixed- ability classroom.

Establishing Friendly Rapport
Apart from the linguistics perspective, the use of direct translation, in terms of teaching and classroom management, creates a comfortable learning environment. Davies (2006) explains that EFL learners prefer the teacher to increase learner-centeredness in a language classroom through encouraging student participation and building up rapport. In the observation, the teacher wisely used the word friend and memorizing each student's name to indicate the close relationship between the teacher and learners. This address can be seen as the symbol of harmony in the classroom. Nigerian communication tends to have harmonious, predictable and enjoyable relations with their superiors, associates and subordinates. The students will feel secure if the elders took notice of their presence and treated them fairly. Consequently, some students may not understand fully what the lesson is about, but they are still willing to give their cooperation and pay their attention to what is being taught in the classroom.

Conclusion
It is believe that the wide range of interesting results generated by this study provides confirmation that the approach of corrective task has potential use of teaching L2 in the classroom. In this study, differentiated errors and mistakes were some wrongdoings caused by carelessness or oversight, while errors are due to the lack of knowledge or ignorance.

Errors in L2 learning occur due to many factors. The common ones can be because of LI interference and over generalization. They can be solved raising the Standard English awareness among students. A method suggested is corrective task where instead of pointing out the students errors, we make them point out some fabricated errors designed based on their common errors. Through the observation, the use of corrective reading task establishes the connection between Standard English and the Language awareness. Most of the students agreed that the use of Standard English is crucial in order to convey message effectively. The learners have gently shown their interests and attention towards those inappropriate items and they are generally able to identify those unacceptable language forms.

This study also revealed that LI interference can be used to our advantage in raising language awareness. It is indicated that teachers need to engage in research-like activities by recognizing that learners' LI plays a role in their L2 acquisition to identify common language errors. It is in practice useful to make direct comparisons between L1 and English language which can help considerably with the description in the lesson. It is also found that Colloquial English provides a rich set of expressive options that are possibly absent from Standard English, thus hardly be avoided. Yet, some learners feel that Colloquial English is correct as they probably have not been exposed to the correct version in Standard English.

Apart from Linguistic perspective, the use of direct transaction, in terms of teaching and classroom management, creates a comfortable learning environment. It is believed that these types of errors, when viewed in a humorous way, can decrease anxiety and at the same time, increase language awareness.

Pedagogical Implications
Based on this study, corrective tasks should be practiced more often especially when a teacher detects some common errors made by students. These common errors should be embedded with some other humorous errors that amuse the lecturer and keep them in a receptive state.

There is also potential in using LI interference and Colloquial English for highlighting errors. Although, it might be confusing at time, still a proper explanation and emphasis from the teacher can help to overcome this problem.

Therefore, to overcome the errors, students should totally immerse themselves in English. The Language should be used in all appropriate domains like in education, in interpersonal communication between friends of different racial should not be misconstrued as they are trying the lesson. They should be exposed to real language as spoken by real people so that they will be able to use the language naturally. Teachers should provide more exposure to the language by preparing teaching materials that guide students for communication outside the classroom. They should be familiar with different levels of formality and be exposed to influential international varieties of English which they are likely to benefit from. Students should be proactive and seek out spoken language interactions with speakers of the language that use the language natively and naturally. They have to be maximally exposed to English in order to excel in the language and make fewer errors in their spoken and written mode. Language teachers may be able to overcome errors by identifying the causes of errors. Overgeneralization may be minimized by highlighting exception to the rules. While most plural forms in English end in –s, these are also exceptions. The teacher needs to explain the differences between regular and irregular nouns and verbs and exceptions to the rule and alternative possibilities ought to be mentioned. The quality of teachers and the quality of Language the teachers provide cannot be underestimated. Teachers of ESL/EFL should expose themselves to standard native models and authentic language and raise students' consciousness and awareness of errors. They need to provide both error awareness and conscious raising (CR) exercises and activities. They have to devise ways and means to improve students' competence and performance.

According to James (1998:256-257), "… Practice is for improving performance… while CR is for inculcating cognitive structure or competence. Practice is supposed… to enhance implicit knowledge, while CR is supposed to improve explicit knowledge of the L2." Another insight gained from this study is relationship building with the students. As they should be kept in a receptive state, educators should always provide comfort and positivity so that learning may take place easier. Even though this research is mainly on corrective tasks, the bigger picture is corrections, like advice, should take place in a non-hostile way. More importantly, it is up to the teacher to use any relevant method which is suitable according to students' level of performance either elementary, intermediate or advanced levels. Finally, teachers need to

provide constructive feedback with regard to students' erroneous language items. They should promote inductive as it encourages students to discover the correct use of language. Explicit instructing the L1 of the students and the L2 can be very helpful to highlight the differences between the two so that there will be no or minimal interference of the NL.

Suggestions
The study of corrective tasks can be done indifferent situations and with different samples and students of different proficiency levels. It can be used in different field such as Science, Arts, Sociology, and so on. Normally, the use of corrective tasks is limited only to non-science fields. It will be interesting to observe how well learners learn through pointing out others mistakes.

The problems enunciated in the foregoing paragraphs have pedagogical implications for the twenty- first century of teachers of English in Nigeria. The teachers must not only be aware of the problems, they must be seen to be consciously and vigorously addressing them in their everyday teaching performance in order to facilitate the learning and appropriate use of the language in both local and international relations especially in the present era of globalization.

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