INTERLANGUAGE IN ERROR ANALYSIS STUDY

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Abstract

Interlanguage theory is naturally a constantly evolving theory, having changed considerably since its initial formulation. It is, therefore, not an easy task to produce an accurate account of the theory. The aim of this article is basically to provide a brief and composite account of the interlanguage theory. In so doing, some crucial issues are accordingly viewed: (1) error analysis, (2) stages of interlanguage development, (3) interlanguage transfer, (4) fossilization, (5) input hypothesis, (6) and pidginization as well. There is in fact considerable disagreement about how best to characterize the nature of an interlanguage system. Nevertheless, this principle is able to account for insights provided by *form-function analysis*.

Keywords: interlanguage, input hypothesis, fossilization, pidginization

1. INTRODUCTION

The contrastive analysis hypothesis stressed the interfering effects of the first language or second language learning and claimed that second language learning is primarily a process of acquiring whatever items are different from the first language. This is, in fact, a narrow view of interference which ignored the intralingual effects of learning. In recent years researchers have come to understand that second language learning is creative process of constructing a system which learners are consciously testing hypothesis about the target language from a number of possible sources of knowledge, e.g., limited knowledge of the target language itself, knowledge about (1) native language, (2) communicative function of language, (3) life, (4) human beings and universe. The learners, in acting upon their environment, construct what to them is a legitimate system of language in its own right, i.e., the structured set of rules which provide order to the linguistic chaos that confront them (Brown, 1987).

In the past decades, second language learning began to be examined in much the same way that first language learning had been studied for sometime, that is, the learners were looked on not as producers of malformed, imperfect language replete with mistakes but as intelligent, and creative beings proceeding through logical, systematic stages of acquisition, creatively acting upon their linguistic environment as they encounter its form and functions in meaningful contexts. In other words, learners, by gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, slowly and tediously succeed in establishing closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of language. A number of terms have been coined to describe the perspective which stresses the legitimacy of learners second language systems. The best known of these terms is *interlanguage*. Interlanguage refers to the separateness of second language's system that has a structurally intermediate status between the nature and target language (Selinker, 1972).

Corder (1971), on the other hand, used the term *idiosyncratic dialect* to connote the idea that the learner's language is unique to a particular individual, i.e., the rules of learner's language are peculiar to the

language of that individual alone. The interlanguage hypothesis, then led to a significant breakthrough from the contrastive analysis hypothesis. The emphasis here, in terms of second language learners is the form and the function of language. The most obvious approach to analyzing interlanguage, according to Brown, (1987) is to study the speech and writing of learners. This stands to reason for production data is observable and presumably reflective of learner's underlying competence, that is, production competence. Thus, the study of the speech and writing is largely the study of errors of learners. Brown asserts further that correct production yields little information about the actual interlanguage system of learners since only information about the target language system which learners have already acquired. Therefore, focus of this study is on the significance of errors in learners' interlanguge systems, otherwise known as error analysis (Selinker, 1972; Schuman and Stenson, 1974)

2. FRAME OF THEORY

2.1 ERROR ANALYSIS

Naturally, learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes. Mistakes, misjudgements, miscalculations, and erroneous assumption form an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information. Language learning is like any other human learning, i.e., children learning their first language make countless mistakes viewed from the point of view of adult grammatical language. Many of these mistakes are logical in the limited linguistic system within which children operate, but by carefully processing feedback from others, such children slowly but surely learn to produce what is acceptable speech in their native language.

In fact, second language learning is a process and clearly not unlike first language learning in its trial-and error nature. In other words, learners will unavoidably make mistakes in the process of acquisition, and even will impede that process if they do not commit errors and benefit in turn from various forms of feedback on those errors (Brown, 1987). As Corder noted that a learner's errors are significant in providing the instructor or researcher concerning (1) evidence of how language is learned or acquired , (2) what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language.

2.2 MISTAKES AND ERRORS

It is crucial to make distinction between mistakes and error, technically two different phenomena. Brown (1987) assures that a mistake refers to a performance, while error is either a random guess or a slip in that is a failure to utilize a known system of the target language correctly. In fact, all people make mistakes in both native or and second language situations. Therefore, mistakes are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of breakdown or imperfection in the process of productive language skills. These hesitations, slips of tongue, random ungrammaticalities, and other performance lapses in native speaker production also occur in second language learning.

An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner (Selinker, 1972). Nemser (1971) referred to the same general phenomenon and used his own term as *approximative system*. Corder (1971) used the term *idiosyncratic dialect* to connote the idea that the learner's language is unique to a particular individual, that the rules of the learner's language are peculiar to the language of that individual alone. While each of these designations emphasizes a particular notion, they share the concept that the second language learners are forming their own *self-contained linguistic systems*. This 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 (Brown, 1987). So if, for instance, a learner of English asks *"Does John can sing?"*, he probably is reflecting a competence level in which all verbs require a pre-posed *do* auxiliary for question formation. Apparently, he has committed an error, most likely not a mistake, i.e., an error which reveals a portion of his competence in the target language. Nonetheless, we cannot tell the difference between an error and a mistake since in the case of an English learner says *"John cans sing"*, for example, but in one or two occasions says *"John can sing"*. It is difficult actually to determine whether *cans* is a mistake or an error. If, however, further examination of learner's speech reveals such utterances as *"John wills go"*, or *"John mays come"*, and so forth, we might then conclude that the learner has not distinguished modals from other verbs.

The fact that learners do errors and that these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operated within the learner, according to Brown, led to a surge of study of learners' errors, called *error analysis*. Naturally, error analysis became distinguished from contrastive analysis by its examination of errors attributal to all possible sources, not just these which result from negative transfer of the native language. Errors, as a matter of fact, arise from several possible sources: interlingual errors of interference, from the native language, interlingual errors within the target language, the sociolinguistic context of communication, psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies, and countless affective variables (Dulay, et al. 1982, Brown, 1987).

2.3 IDENTIFYING AND DESCRIBING ERRORS

Broadly, the diminishing of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of of communicative fluency in the target language. Language is speaking and listening, writing and reading. The comprehension of language is as important as production. It so happens that production is lends itself to analysis and thus becomes the prey of researchers; but comprehension data is equally important in developing an understanding of the process of second language acquisition (Brown, 1987).

Schatcher (1974) and Kleinmann, 1977) find out that error analysis can keep us too closely focused on specific languages rather than universal aspects of language. Therefore, Gass (1984) recommended that researchers pay more attention to linguistic elements that common to all languages. This fundamentally leads our attention to the interlanguage systems of learners which may have elements that reflect neither the target language nor the native language but rather a universal feature of some kind. Henceforth, in the analysis of learner's interlanguage errors, we engage in performance analysis or more simply called interlanguage analysis. Certainly, this is less restrictive concept that places a healthy investigation of errors within the larger perspectives of the learner's total interlanguage performance (Murcia and Hawkin, 1985). Thus, we need nevertheless remember that production errors are only a subset of the overall performance of the learner.

One of the common difficulties in understanding the linguistic systems of both first and second language learners, according to (Brown, 1987), is the fact that such systems cannot be directly observed. They must be inferred by means of analyzing production and comprehension data. The problem is, however, is instability of learners' systems. Therefore, in undertaking the task of performance analysis the teacher and researcher are called upon to infer order in logic in this instable and variable system. To that end, the first step in process of analysis is the identification and description of errors.

Corder (1971) provides a model for identifying erroneous or idiosyncratic utterances in a second language. A major distinction is made at outset between *overt* and *covert* errors. Overtly erroneous utterances are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level. While covertly erroneous errors are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication. Therefore, according to Corder's model, any sentence uttered by the learner and subsequently transcribed can be analyzed for idiosyncrasies. Covert errors, on the other hand, are not really covert at all if attend to surrounding discourse (before and after utterances), e.g., *"I am fine thank you"* is grammatically correct at the sentence level, but if used as a response to *"Who are you?"* it is very obviously an error.

Brown (1987) point outs that on a rather global level, errors can be described as errors of *addition, omission, substitution,* and *ordering.* In English a *do auxiliary,* for example, might be added, e.g., *Does can he sing?,* a definite omitted, e.g., *I went to movie, an item* substituted, e.g., *I lost my road,* or a word order confused, e.g., *I to the movie went.* Likewise, a word with a faulty pronunciation might hide a syntactic or lexical error. An Indonesian learner who says, *May I sit?,* if the word *sit* pronounced as *shit* is lexically global error.

2.4 STAGES OF INTERLANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Corder (1973) distinguished three different stages, based on observation, what the learner does in terms of errors alone. **The first** is a stage of random errors called *presystematic* in which the learner is only vaguely aware that there is some systematic order to a particular class of items. Inconsistencies like *John cans sing* and *John can singing* said by learner within a short period of time, might indicate a stage of experimentation and in accurate guessing.

The second, or *emergent,* stage of interlanguage finds the learner growing in consistency in linguistic production. The learner has begun to internalize certain rules. This stage is characterized by same *backsliding* in which the learner is unable to correct errors when they are pointed by someone else. Avoidance of structure and topics is typical, e.g., A: *"I go to New York."* B: *"When?"* A: *"in 1972"*. B: *"Oh, you went to New York in 1972."* A: "Yes, I go 1972."

A third stage is *a truly systematic stage* in which the learner is able to manifest more consistent in producing the target language. While those rules inside the head of the learner are still not all well formed, i.e., they are more closely approximating the target language system. That is at this stage the learners are able to correct their errors when they are pointed out even very subtly to them, e.g., A: *Many fish are in the lake. These fish are serving in the restaurants near the lake.* B (Native Speaker) : *The fish are serving?* A: *Oh, no, the fish are served in the restaurant.*

A final stage is called the *stabilization* stage in the development of interlanguage systems (Brown, 1987). To Corder (1973), it is called *post systematic stage*. Here the learner has relatively few errors and has mastered to the point that fluency and intended meanings are not problematic. Thus, the fourth stage is characterized by the learner's ability to self-correct. The system is complete enough that attention can be paid to those few errors that occur and correction made without waiting from feedback from someone else.

It should be made clear, however, that these stages of systematicity do not describe a learner's total second language system. This is because it would be hard to assert, for example, that a learner is in an emergent stage, globally, for all of the linguistic subsystems of language. One might be in a second stage with respect to, say, the *perfect* tense system, and in the third or fourth stage when it comes to

simple present and *past tenses*. Nor these stages, which are based on error analysis, adequately account for sociolinguistic, functional, or nonverbal strategies, all of which are important in assessing the total competence of the second language learner. Finally, it needs to remember that production errors alone are inadequate measures of overall competence. They happen to salient features of second language learners' interlanguage and present us with gist for error-analysis mills, but correct utterances deserve our attention, and especially in the teaching-learning process, deserve positive reinforcement.

2.5 SOURCES OF ERROR

Basically, procedures of error analysis is used to identify errors in the target language learner production data and the final step in the analysis of learner work is that of determining the source of error. The analysis itself is somewhat speculative in that sources must be inferred from available data which lies the ultimate value of interlanguage analysis in general. By so doing, we can begin to understand of how thisleamer's cognitive and affective self relates to the linguistic system and to formulate an integrated understanding of the process of the target language acquisition. This idea leads us to view the so called *interlanguage transfer* (Brown, 1987)

2.6 INTERLANGUAGE TRANSFER

The beginning stages of learning a foreign language are characterized by a good deal of interlanguage transfer from the native language or interference. This is because before the system of the target language is familiar, the native language is the only linguistic system the learner can draw. We have heard, for example, English learner say *"sheep"* for *"ship"* or *"book of Jack"* instead of *"Jack's book"* for *"Bukunya Jack"* in Indonesian native tongue. All of these errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. It is true that it is not always clear that an error is the result of transfer from the native language, however, many such errors are detectable in learner speech. Henceforth, fluent knowledge of a learner's native language of course aids the teacher in detecting and analyzing such errors; however, according to Brown, even familiarity with the language can be of help in pinpointing this common source.

One of the major contributions of error analysis was its recognition of sources of errors that extend beyond just interlanguage in learning the target language. It is obvious that intralingual transfer (within the target language itself) is the major factor in learning the foreign language. Taylor (1983) has also found that early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interference (interlanguage transfer). But, according to Brown (1987) , once learners have begun to acquire parts of new system, more intralingual transfer – generalization within the target language – is manifested. As the learners progress in the second language, their previous experience and their existing subsumers begin to include structures within the target language itself.

Negative transfer, or overgeneralization, occurred in such utterances as *"Does John can sing?"*, *"He goed"* instead *"He went"*, or *"I don't know what time is it"*. In fact, the analysis of intralingual errors in a corpus of production data can become quite complex. Taylor found out that the class of errors in producing the main verb following an auxiliary made by second language learners yielded nine different types of error (1) past tense of verb following a modal, (2) present tense *–s* on a verb following a modal, (3) *ing* on a verb following a modal, (4) *are* (for *be*) following *will* (5) pas tense form of verb following *do*, (6) present tense *–s* following *do*, (7) *–ing* on a verb following *do*, (8) past tense form of a verb following *be* (inserted to replace a modal or *do*), (9) present tense *–s* on a verb following *be* (inserted to replace a modal or *do*).

Similarly, Richards (1974) provided a list of typical English intralingual errors in the use

of articles made by disparate native language backgrounds in learning English, they are **(1) omission** of *the*, such as (a) before unique nouns, e.g., *Sun is very hot.* (b) before noun of nationality, e.g., *Spaniards and Arabs are .....*, (c) before nouns made particular in context, e.g., *at the conclusion of article, She goes to bazaar every day, She is mother of that boy,* (d) before a noun modified by a participle, e.g., *Solution is given in this article,* (e) before superlative, e.g., *Richest person,* (f) before a noun modified by an *of-phrase*, e.g., *Institute of Nuclear Power,* **(2) addition** of *the*, such as, (a) before proper names, e.g., *The Shakesperae, the Sunday,* (b) before abstract nouns, e.g., *The friendship, the nature, the science,* (c) before nouns behaving like abstract nouns, e.g., *After the school, after the breakfast,* (d) before plural nouns, e.g., *The complex structures are still developing,* (e) before *some*, e.g., *The some knowledge,* **(3) A used instead of the**, such as, (a) before superlative, e.g., *a worst, a best boy in the class,* (b) before unique nouns, e.g., *a sun becomes red,* **(4) addition of a**, such as, (a) before a plural noun qualified by an adjective, e.g., (a) *a holy places, a human beings, a bad news,* (b) before uncountables, e.g., *a gold, a work,* (c) before an adjective, e.g., *.....taken as a definite,* **(5) omission of a**, such as, before class nouns defined by adjectives, e.g., *he was good boy, he was brave man.*

2.7 CONTEXT OF LEARNING

A third major source of errors, as Brown (1987) point outs, is the context of learning. Context refers, for example, to the classroom with its teacher and its materials in the case of school learning, or social situation in the case of untutored second language learning. In a classroom context the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to make faulty hyphoteses about the language, what Richards called *false concept* and what Stenson (1974) termed *induced errors.* Thus, students often make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook, or even because of a pattern that was rotely memorized in a drill but not properly contextualized. Or a teacher may out of some ignorance provide incorrect information – not an uncommon occurrence – by way of misleading definition, word, or grammatical generalization. Another manifestation of language learned in classroom context is the occasional tendency on the part of learners to give uncontracted and inappropriately formal forms of language. It is said that we have all experienced foreign language learners whose *bookish* language gives him them away as classroom language learners.

The social context of language acquisition will produce other types of errors. The sociolinguistic context of natural, untutored language acquisition which may itself be a source of error (Brown, 1987). Corder's term *idiosyncratic dialect* applies well here. To Ellis (1990) the theory that motivated and fed off the empirical research is known as interlanguage theory, after the term coined by Selinker (1972). It is basically a constantly evolving theory, having changed considerably since its initial formulation. It is, therefore, according to Ellis (1990), not an easy task to produce an accurate account of theory. This idea leads to view three major issues in interlanguage analysis that has fascinated researchers for many years called **fossilization, input hypothesis, and pidginization.**

2.8 FOSSILATION

It is a common experience to in a learner's language various erroneous features. This phenomenon is ordinarily manifested phonologically in *foreign accents* in the speech of many of those who have learned a second language after adolescence. We also commonly observe syntactic and lexical errors persisting in the speech of those who have otherwise learned the language quite well. These incorrect linguistic forms of a person's second language competence have been referred to as *fossilization* (Brown, 1987).

How do items become fossilized? Until recently there was little attempt to grapple with the cognitive or affective dimensions of fossilization Nevertheless, Vigil and Oller (1976) provided a formal account of fossilization as a factor of positive and negative affective and cognitive feedback. To them there are two kinds of information transmitted between sources (learners) and audiences (native speakers): information about the *affective* relation between source and audience, and *cognitive* information – facts, suppositions, beliefs. Affective information is primarily encoded in terms of kinesic mechanism – gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions – while cognitive information is usually conveyed by means of linguistic devices – sounds, phrases, structures, discourse. Basically, the feedback learners get from their audience can be either positive, negative, or neutral. The following is illustration of different feed back given by Vigil and Oller.

AFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Positive : "I like it" (more of the same)
Neutral : "Waiting...." (reaction undecided)
Negative : "I don't like it" (try something else)

COGNITIVE FEEDBACK

Positive : "I understand" (message and direction are clear)
Neutral : " Still processing ...." (undecided)
Negative : "I don't understand" (message or direction are not clear)

Various combinations of the major types of feedback are possible. For example, an audience can indicate positive affective feedback ("I affirm you and value what you are trying to communicate") but give neutral or even negative cognitive feedback to indicate that message itself is unclear. It is said that negative affective feedback will likely result in the abortion of future attempts to communicate. This is, of course, consistent with the overriding affective nature of human interaction.since if people are not at least affirmed and their communication valued, then, there is little reason for communication. So, one of the first requirements for meaningful communication is actually an affective affirmation of the other person (Brown, 1987)..

Thus, Vigil and Oller's model holds that a positive affective response is imperative to the learner's desire to continue attempts to communicate. Cognitive feedback in this case determines the degree of internalization. Negative or neutral feedback will naturally encourage learners to "*try again,* " to restate, to reformulate, or to draw a different hypothesis about a rule. Apparently, positive feedback in the cognitive dimension will result in reinforcement of the forms used and a conclusion on the part of learners that their speech is well formed. Fossilized items, then, are those *ungrammatical* or *incorrect* items in the speech of a learner which gain first positive affective feedback ("*I like it*") then positive cognitive feedback ("*I understand*"), reinforcing an incorrect form of language. Thus, learners with fossilized items have acquired them through the same positive feedback and reinforcement with which they acquired correct items.

Selinker and Lamendella (1979) noted that the model described above relies on the notion of *intrinsic* feedback, and certainly there are other factors internal to the learner which affect fossilization since we are not merely product of our environment. In other words, internal motivating factors, the need for interaction with other people, and innate and universal factors could all account for various instances of fossilization (Brown, 1987).

2.9 INPUT HYPOTHESIS

One of the most widely debated issues of the last decade about second language learning has been Krashen's hypothesis which have had a number of different names. In the earlier years the **Monitor Model** and the **Acquisition–Learning Hypothesis** were more popular terms; in recent years the **Input**

Hypothesis has been a common term to refer to what are really a set of interrelated hypotheses.

In describing the Monitor model, Krashen (1985) claimed that adult second language learners have two means for internalizing the target language. The first is *acquisition*, a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to *pick up* a language. The second means is *a conscious learning process* in which learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own process. Hence, the monitor is an aspect of this second process; it is a *device* for **watchdogging** one's input, for editing and making alterations as they are consciously perceived. Krashen (1981) claimed that *fluency in second language performance is due to what learner has acquired, not what he has learned.* Adult shpuld, therefore, do as much acquiring as possible in order to achieve communicative fluency; otherwise they will get bogged down in rule learning and too much conscious attention to the forms of language and to watching their own progress. According to Krashen, the Monitor should have only a minor role in the process of gaining communicative competence since our goal is *optimal* Monitor use; using conscious knowledge of language to increase formal accuracy when it does not interfere with communication.

The input hypothesis claims that an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer *understand* (via hearing or reading) in put language that contains structure a bit beyond his current level of competence. In other words, the language which learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence that they can understand most of it but still be challenged to make progress. An important part of the Input Hypothesis is Krashen's recommendation that speaking not to be taught directly in the language classroom since speech will emerge once the acquirer has built up enough comprehensible input. Krashen claims that the best acquisition will occur in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent, or where the *affective filter* is low (Brown, 1987).

Furthermore, Krashen describes two ways in which comprehension of input containing new linguistic material is achieved: the utilization of context by the learner and the provision of simplified input by the teacher. The learner makes use of context to infer the meaning of an utterance when existing linguistic resources are insufficient for immediate decoding. In fact, three kinds of contextual information are available: *extra-linguistic information, the learner's knowledge of the world,* and *the learner's previously acquired linguistic competence.* Krashen, in this case, refers to a number of studies demonstrating the dramatic effects that contextual information can have on the comprehension of written text; a study by Adams (1982), for example, was able to show a sixfold improvement in the comprehension of new lexical material when background information was made available ((Ellis, 1990).

2.10 PIDGINIZATION

Another body of research supports the notion of that second language acquisition has much in common with the *pidginization* of language. A pidgin is a mixed language or jargon usually arising out of two languages coming into context for commercial, political, or even social purposes. Naturally, the vocabulary of at least two languages is incorporated into the pidgin, and simplified grammatical forms are used (Brown, 1987). Broadly, others such as Bickerton (1981), Andersen (1979), have studied the hypothesis that the interlanguage of many second language speakers is akin to pidginized forms of language. The implication is that what happens over perhaps several hundred years in pidginization is reproduced to some degree in short duration of one learner's acquisition of a second language. In short, the learner

instinctively attempts to bring two languages – the target and the native – together to form a unique language, an interlanguage, possessing aspects of both languages. Ultimately, it is with great persistence that learners overcome this apparently universal pidginization tendency, weed out interlanguage forms, and adopt the second language exclusively (Brown, !987).

3. CONCLUSION

It is, now obvious that interlanguage theory, as a matter of fact, has the central premises The central premises (e.g., Ellis, 1990) of interlanguage theory are:

(1) The learner constructs a system of abstract linguistic rules which underlies comprehension and production. The learner draws on these rules in much the same way as the native speaker draws on linguistic competence. The rules enable the learner to produce novel sentences. They also responsible for the systematicity evident in L2 learner language. An interlanguage is a linguistic system in its own right. As such it is a natural language and is *entirely functional.*

(2) The learner's grammar is permeable. The grammar that the learner builds is incomplete and unstable. It is amenable to penetration by new linguistic forms and rules, which may be derived internally, i.e., by means of transfer from the L1 or overgeneralization of an interlanguage rule) or externally, i.e., through exposure to target language input.

(3) The learner's competence is variable. At any stage of development the language produced by learners will display systematic variability. This variability reflects the particular form-function correlations which comprise the rules of the learner's grammar at that stage of development. The learner's competence must be viewed as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous.

(4) Interlanguage development reflects the operation of cognitive learning strategies. The process by which interlanguages are constructed identifies a number of cognitive learning process such as L1 transfer, overgeneralization and simplification. It is said that the similarity between L1 ands L2 acquisition lies in the process of hypothesis-formation and testing. Hypothetical rules, formulated on the basis of learning strategies, are tested out in comprehension and production and amended if understanding is defective or if the utterances fail to communicate.

(5) Interlanguage use can also reflect the operation of communication strategies. When learners are faced with having to communicate messagesfor which the necessary linguistic resources are not available, they resort to a variety of communication strategies. These enable them to compensate for their lack of knowledge.

(6). Interlanguage systems may fossilize. This term is used to refer to the tendency of many learners to stop developing their interlanguage grammar in the direction of the target language. Instead they reach a plateau beyond which they do not progress. This may be because there is no communication need for further development. Alternatively it may be because full competence in a L2 is neurolinguistically impossible for most learners. Thus, fossilization is a unique feature of interlanguage systems.

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