

Errors Made in L1 and L2 by Bilingual Students Living in an L2 Environment

Julia Falla-Wood

Burman University/ School of Education

Abstract

This descriptive research aims to understand bilingual students' second language (L2) errors and their mother tongue (L1). The sample available to the researchers involves 36 high school bilingual students, 18 males, and 18 females, born in Canada, studying in a private English school in Quebec. The research instruments used in this study consist of two compositions on the same topic, one in English and one in French, a personal questionnaire, and a strategy questionnaire. The influence or non-influence of L1 in learning L2 has been vastly studied. Empirical evidence collected through errors in written compositions reveals that the impact of L1 prevails at high levels of competency (Köhlmyr, 2003; Miliander, 2003; Ye, 2004, Rosén, 2006; Zhang, 2010; Pavlenko, 2011; Carrió-Pastor, 2012, 2014; Mourssi, 2013). Falla-Wood (2019, 2021) states that Mental Translation (MT), as a cognitive strategy in the learning process (O'Malley, 1990), is used to compare both languages and create a *translational Zone* where the differences and similarities between both languages are stored. This study shows that bilinguals still make errors not only in L2 but also in L1. These errors could result from a continuous mental switch between L1 and L2 and L2 to L1. The MT strategy used in the learning process might still be active in bilingual students.

Keywords: bilingualism; mental translation; mother tongue; second language acquisition; cognitive strategies