

A LOOK AT CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS WITH REFERENCE TO ENGLISH AND MALAY

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Because a foreign language is a foreign language we cannot teach it as a native language would be taught. The native speaker hears his language being spoken around him right from birth. Therefore, he has no problem about the right pattern in which to fit his words to make an intelligible sentence. When he is learning a second language, in this case English, he does not hear it spoken around him very often and he gets confused as to how to arrange words in correct patterns so that they make sense.

In order to help himself out of this confusion, he turns to his native language of which he has a much better command. He begins to draw a parallel between his language and the second language. He tends to draw up a set of his own rules based on an analogy between the two languages. This analogy is, more often than not, a misleading one as English is a language which is full of exceptions. It cannot be denied that second language learners are under this type of interference from their native language.

A Malay pupil can be greatly assisted in his learning of English if his English teacher makes him understand the fundamental grammatical differences between the English language and the Malay language. To do this the teacher should set out to work on a simple contrastive analysis himself or he should try to get access to material which has been compiled by people who are proficient in both languages. If the teacher takes the trouble to do either of these he will find that he will be able to understand as well as to deal efficiently with those parts of the language structure that may prove difficult to the learner.

It goes without saying that grammatical rules of any two languages very often differ. In the course of teaching, the teacher should make good use of opportunities he may have to make the learner aware of the distinctive characteristics of English as compared to those of the Malay language. This, hopefully, will reduce the amount of first language interference a student may experience as he tries to learn English. Of course, mere grammatical explanation alone will not be of much help. The teacher must give copious examples in both languages to illustrate their uses. Plenty of practice in the particular structure(s) in English must be given. It must be stressed that this method is not to be resorted to in every English lesson as it would most certainly dampen the enthusiasm of any second language learner.

Some teachers may feel that contrastive analysis will make the learner over-conscious of the differences between English and Malay and this will ultimately hinder his learning of the second language. In reality, a contrastive analysis reveals both similarities and differences, although the emphasis may be on the latter. Too great an emphasis on the differences between the two languages may affect the student's fluency in the second language. This can arise when the student is over-eager to analogise every structure of English with its corresponding one in Malay, or vice versa. But this, at the same time, strengthens the foundation and helps him to understand and retain what he learns. Therefore, when he begins to advance to more difficult structures he will do so with a strong foundation. Thus his chances of mastery of the second language are greater.

If the teacher does not know the areas of difficulty or areas where the grammatical rules of English and Malay differ, he will not be able to offer his pupils good explanations if they make mistakes. He will leave his students groping for clarification. This groping on the part of the students may give rise to native language interference as the students make their own analogies between English and Malay.

Every learner is eager to compare his native language with the second language that he has to learn. I did the same when I was learning Malay for the first time. This tendency to compare the two languages should be exploited by the teacher. He should turn this tendency to his advantage by encouraging students to make a simple, purposeful study wherever feasible.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that a teacher should know in advance those parts of the language structure that the student may find difficult. He should attempt a simple contrastive analysis when difficult features have to be presented to the class.

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