

**ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AUXILIARIES BY THE LEARNERS WITH
MALAYALAM MOTHER TONGUE - PROBLEMS AND
ANALYSIS OF THE ERRORS**

Dr. P.A Mathai
Assistant Professor
Department of English
St. Mary's College
Sulthan Bathery, Kerala

Auxiliary verbs are those verbs which help the main verbs to form tenses, moods voices etc. They go with the main verbs to make syntactic or semantic perfection to the sentences. The auxiliaries are considered to be the minor or secondary verbs used to construct sentences in its different forms and aspects. They are generally used with main or lexical verbs. Bernstein (1977) defines auxiliaries as follows: “ In traditional grammars auxiliaries are sometimes called, helping verbs, and defined as verbs used in combination with other verbs to convey shades of meaning regarding time, duration, futurity, volition, possibility, probability permission and obligation.”

A Dictionary of Linguistics' by Mario A Per and Frank Gayor (1954) gives the definition for an auxiliary verb as follows. “A verb used in combination with another verb to express the mood, tense or aspect of the action denoted by that main verb”. In a sentence construction the auxiliary verbs occur after the main verb in SOV languages and before the main verb in SVO languages. Auxiliary verb system in a language is a very important topic of study in linguistics. Here we are considering the auxiliary verb systems of English and Malayalam which follow SVO pattern and SOV pattern respectively. A wide range of dissimilarities exists between these languages, especially, with regard to their auxiliary systems.

1. For the purpose of the present study let us examine the major differences between English and Malayalam auxiliary systems.

English

1. It is analytical in nature. The words occur individually.

S AV MV

eg:1. The boys are playing.

2. Structurally, it follows the SVO pattern. The verb occurs immediately

Malayalam

1. Agglutinating in nature. The words occur contiguously

S MV AV AV

a:nkuttikal Kaliccukontirikunnu
Boy (pl) play(progressive)

It follows the SOV pattern. The verb occurs at the end position and the auxiliary verbs occur

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

after the subject and in the verb phrase auxiliary verbs precede the main verb.

- S AV MV O
eg:2. The boys are playing football
S AV AV MV
3. They have been working.

3. In a construction maximum three auxiliary verbs can occur

- S AV AV AV MV
4. They will have been found out.

4. The auxiliary verbs are classified into two-Primary and Modal auxiliaries. They help the main verbs to form the aspects of tenses, questions, negatives, voice moods etc. They have grammatical function more than lexical or semantic function.

5. An auxiliary is mandatory to form a question or negative or voice in formal situation

- eg:5. He likes it.
6. Does he like it ?
7. He doesn't like it.

6. In formal questions auxiliary is used and there is a subject auxiliary inversion taking place.

8. He is playing
9. Is he playing?

7. The form of the auxiliary is decided by the number and person of the subject and tense.

after the main verb joined with the main verb.

- S O MV AV AV
a:nkuttikal/futbo:l/Kaliccukonttirikkunnu
Boy (pl) football play (progressive)
S O MV AV AV AV
avar TV kanTu konTirikkukayanΘ
They TV see (progressive)

Maximum five auxiliary verbs can occur in a cluster.

- MV MV MV AV AV AV
avar TV kantu konTirikkukayayirunnirikkum
They TV see be might have been.

They are classified into, three-bhedaka:nuprayo:g' Ka:la:nuprayo:g' and 'pu:rana:nuprayog'. They are main verbs shedding their original meanings and assume a new meaning to modify or perfect the meaning of the main verb in the sentence. More than syntactic function they have semantic relevance.

Auxiliary in not required to make questions or negatives.

- avanΘ iTΘ isTamaNΘ
He this like – copula
avanΘ itΘ isTamaNo?
He this like – copula Q-mi
avanΘ TtΘ isTamalla.
He this like – copula –negation.

In questions auxiliary in not required and no inversion of subject and verb takes place.

- avan kalikkukayanΘ

- He play copula
avan kalikkukayano:?
He play – copula Q.m

There is no such issue in Malayalam. The subject verb agreement does not occur.

A learner with Malayalam as his mother tongue faces difficulties and problems in acquiring English which is different in many ways, especially, in the acquisition of auxiliary system. The present study is an attempt to look into the errors committed by the Malayalee

learners of English as their second language, and it is analyzed based on the theoretical developments in the study of errors and the L₂ acquisition by Corder (1971), Nemeser(1971), Selinker (1971) Dulay and Burt(1974), Richards (1974) et al.

The learner develops his own language in the process of learning a target language, which may be incorrect or deviant. Several studies have been conducted on this subject of the errors of the learners and it has been labeled differently by different linguists. Corder (1971) calls it 'idiosyncratic dialects', Nemeser (1971) calls it 'approximative system'. Selinker (1971) popularized it by the name 'interlanguage'. Dulay and Burt (1974) prefer using a lighthearted slang, 'goof' to refer to an error.

The Applied linguists, are very much concerned about the learner's language. The study of second language learning/acquisition process is directed towards the 'interlanguage' and the errors of the learner. We usually refer to the term 'error' to describe the faulty or incorrect oral or written expressions of the learner. The term 'mistake' also is used sometimes. On analyzing the errors it is found that they are deviant utterances and are systematic and developmental. But mistakes are only slips of tongue or pen. According to David Crystal (1997) 'error' is a term in psycholinguistics referring to mistakes in spontaneous speech or writing attributable to a malfunctioning of the neuromuscular commands from the brain. He also speaks about 'error analysis' as the study of learner's language. Thus, it is found that errors are the language of the learners and they are regular and systematic.

We identify errors by comparing what the learner said/ wrote and what he intended to say/write and comparing with his expressions with errors what a native speaker would have said/written i.e. comparing the learner's original utterances/ sentences with reconstructed utterances/ sentences which are called the 'translations of the learner's utterances/sentences into the target language. They can be empirically traced and systematically analyzed.

In the growing demand for English today, it is learned formally or in - formally by people in Kerala, as it is the case anywhere in the world. But, as mentioned in the introduction there are a lot of differences between these two languages. The verbs, having a major role in the structure of any language, the study of auxiliary verb system of L₁ (Malayalam) and L₂ (English) has a great relevance. In the attempt of approximating the L₂ the learners go wrong and commit errors in this area which could be rectified to a great extent by the effective class room teaching. In English, the auxiliary verbs are systematically studied and identified. There are 24 auxiliaries which come under two categories – Primary (is, am, are, was, were, have, has, had, do, does, did) and Modal auxiliaries (will, shall, would, should, can, could, may, might, must, ought to, used to, need, dare). They are used to form aspects, negation, questions voice etc. and express moods. They always take a preverbal position.

Several linguists have investigated in to the area of Malayalam auxiliaries. There is, still, a want of a scientific and systematic study and analysis in this area. Gundert(1962), George Mathan (1969), Rajarajavarma (1970), N Rajasekharan Nair (1990), Asher(1966) et al are among the major grammarians who have examined the auxiliaries in Malayalam. Generally they came under the term 'Aunuprayogam' which are used after a main verb. Various classifications and labelings were done by these people in their attempt to identify and analyze the auxiliaries in Malayalam. Gundert(1962) called them 'Sahayakriyakal' and George Mathan(1969) called the 'Sahayavacanaññal'. He states that these auxiliaries are attached to the main verbs in order to add certain special meaning denoting the mood and the character of the main verb. The

auxiliaries in Malayalam are originally main verbs. They have shed their original meaning completely or partially in order to modify the main verb and have taken certain grammatical functions. They have a post verbal position unlike English auxiliaries.

Two types of auxiliaries are identified in Malayalam. 1. Aspectual 2. Modal. Those occur after the participle of the main verb are called aspectual verbs and those occur after the infinitives are called modal verbs. But they occur vice versa too. So there are certain irregularities in the classification.

10. maram vi:Nu po:yi
Tree fall (V participle) went
The tree fell down.
11. maram vi:la:n po:kunnu
Tree fall (V infinitive) go
The tree is about to fall.

The classification of auxiliaries in Malayalam

The aspectual verbs

koTu - give	a:yiri - become (progressive)
taru - give	konTiri - progressive
va: - come	kaLa - throw any
po: - go	taLL - push
po:r - come	koL - hold
no:kk - look	iTTuL - has
ka:N - see	vay - keep
iri - sit	uL - is exist

Modals

a:m (from) become	sa:dikk - can
aNam from ve:Nam) want	okk - can
a:TTe from ottun to be (suitable)	paRR - can
kaLi - can	

The meanings given are the original meanings but the auxiliaries lose their original meanings and dissolve in the main verbs, and as auxiliaries they have several shades of meaning. Other than these, words like 'viT'(leave) 'aya' (send) 'ti:r' (finish) 'camay' (happen) ku:T' (negation) 'vannΘ' (come) 'etti' (reached) 'ce:r'(join) are also considered to be auxiliaries.

Therefore the number of the auxiliaries is not clearly identified and the semantic scope and extent also is not fully realized. Most of the auxiliaries modify the meaning of the main verb. Some of them are used to denote the time aspect of the main verb and certain others are used as the perfective of the main verb.

12. avan o:Ti po:yi
He ran went
He ran away
13. avan o:TikkaLaññu
He ran threw away
He ran away/escaped
14. ña:n paRaññu nokki
I said looked

- I attempted by saying.
15.ñā:n atΘ eTuttΘ nokkaTTe
I take look to be
Let me try to take it.
16.avar enikku taranam
They me give become
They should give me.
17.ni: vanne:ti:ru
You came finish
You must come

In the sentences above ‘o:Ti’ ‘paRaññu’, nokkΘ’ ‘taru’ are main verbs (no:kkΘ in sentence 15) ‘po:yi’, ‘kaLaññu’, no:kkΘ (in sentence 14) ‘aNam’, ‘aTTe’ are helping verbs.

But the requirement of the auxiliaries in these two languages are also different. The differences in the auxiliary system of both the languages create problems for the learners in their attempt to acquire the target language. There may be problems of deletion of auxiliaries, hyper correction and attempts for simplification and over generalization.

For the present empirical study various types of methods were implemented. Controlled and uncontrolled types of tests were conducted among the +2 level students .42 students were given tests. Questionnaires and oral tests were used. The learners were given topics to make their own writings. Samples are also collected from the class room interactions with the students. Several constructions with errors are identified through the various tests conducted. A very strong interference of the mother tongue of the learners can be traced from the learners’ language.

When we analyze the example cited above we see that the auxiliary verbs in English and Malayalam are differently used in terms of position and meaning and no equation is possible. In the Malayalam examples the simple sentences have taken auxiliaries where as in English it is ungrammatical.

These dissimilarities in nature and behavior and usage between the auxiliaries in the L₁ and L₂ of the learners create critical problems in their acquisition. The analysis and interpretation of the errors committed by the learners shall be considered next. There are unnecessary insertion, omission or deletion, wrong combination with the main verb, wrong selection of the auxiliaries etc.occurred in their attempt to approximate the L₂. We can understand that these errors either due to (a) simplification, (b) hyper correction, (c) over generalization, (d) language transfer etc.

Look at the following samples of the learners language. The number of sentence with errors are given in brackets.

18. a * The children play cricket now.(11)
b * The children playing cricket now. (13)
The children are playing cricket now.
19. a * We live here since 1990.(12)
b * We living here since 1990.(8)
We have been living here since 1990.
20. * When you came?(16)
When did you come?

21. * Which film you seen at the last time?(16)
Which film did you see last time?

22. * I seen the cinema(16)
I have seen the cinema

In all these sentences the learners omitted or deleted the necessary auxiliary. The sentences were given under controlled situation and they had a clue at the end of the question ie, the adverbial 'now' indicating that it is to be in progressive aspect. In sentence 18 a.11 students out of 42 failed to add the auxiliary 'are' and the affix 'ing'. In sentence 18 b 13 students failed to use auxiliary 'are'. In sentences 19 a. and b. and 22,20 students deleted the perfective aspects 'have been' In Malayalam, there is no need of an auxiliary preceding the verb. So in the learners' language they delete the auxiliary verb form and simply transfer the equivalent forming their language. So it could be a process of Language Transfer which means that the features of L1 are transferred on to L2. Sentences 20 and 21 are questions and in questions deletion of auxiliary is found common. 16 students are failed to use the suitable auxiliary verb. In Malayalam a question does not necessarily need an auxiliary verb. For example 'ni : eppo:l vannu?'. (You when came-see sentence 20.

na:n a: sinima kanTu / konTirikunnu / kanTiTuTə
I that cinema saw / have seen (see sentence 22)

The sentence can convey the message in any one of these three forms. The learners tend to choose the simplest from. Hence in their English counter part they delete the auxiliary and these sentences clearly show the strong interference of the mother tongue.

The following interlanguage of the learners tell us another area of the errors.

23. * I usually is rise at 6 pm (14)
I usually rise at 6 pm

24.a *My parents have visited Delhi two year ago.(12)

b *My parents visiting Delhi two year ago.(11)
My parents visited Delhi two years ago.

25 a *The school will reopens next week.(12)

b. * The school will have re – open next week(14)
The school will re open/ reopens next week.

The sentence in this set are to be expressed in simple tenses. Sentence 23 is simple present and the students have wrongly inserted auxiliary 'is' in it. In sentence 24 a 'have' is inserted. Present perfect tense, 'have visited' with a definite time indicator, that is, 'two years ago' is incorrect. In sentence 24 b 'are' and 'ing' of the progressive aspect have been inserted wrongly.

Look at the Malayalam equivalent of sentence 24 'ranTu varsangaLkku mumbə enRRe matapitakkaL delhi sandarssicciTunTə / sandarisiccu. Malayalam does not strictly insist any particular form here. But, in English, the time indicator 'two years ago' insists us to put the sentence in simple past tense. In sentence 25 a modal 'will' indicating futurity is wrongly inserted. When a simple present tense can very well express futurity here a double futurity expression occurred. In sentence 25 b 'have' is wrongly added.

26. * Language is plays an important role in human life.(9)

Language plays an important role in human life.

27. * I was like the song.(7)

I liked the song

28. * Ten students are died

Ten students died

The sentences 26,27 and 28 also tell us about the similar errors and we consider them in the same way as in the case of the above sentences. The wrong usages like 'is plays', 'was like', 'are died' are very common among the learners of English with Malayalam mother tongue. These errors may be cases of negative transfer, that is, presuming that all past tense sentences should be preceded by an auxiliary, the learner tries to bring an auxiliary verb form 'are' to the front of the finite verb like 'die'.

The next set of sentences taken from their spontaneous writings shows us another area of errors.

29 * The dead body was give to the family.

The dead body was given to the family.

30. * Where did you went ?

Where did you go ?

31. * You have working very well

You have worked very well

32. * I had know

I had know

33. * I will studying my lessons well

I will study my lessons well

Though these students succeeded in keeping the agreement of the verb with the subject they failed to choose the right form of the main verb to suit the sentence. Sentence 29 is in passive voice and the combination be+past participle form is lacking. Sentence 30 is a very common mistake found among the Malayalee learners of English. The use of double past occurs very commonly. When we examine the Malayalam sentence, we can see that the main verb is in past form, where as, in English in the same situation, present form is taken in such cases. English changes the auxiliary into past form and main verb into present form. The learners, often commit errors in this area. The interference of mother tongue is very strong here. Sentence 31 and 32 are sentences to be used in perfect tense and it needs 'to have' + past participle form of verb. But the learners' language show a wrong combination here 'Have' + 'ing' form (Present participle) and 'have' + base form. In sentence 33 futurity is to be expressed. The combination 'will' + present participle form never occurs in English. 'Will' + bare infinitive is the required combination. In Malayalam version the main verb itself assumes futurity. See the Malayalam construction,

34. 'ñā:n enRRe p:aTannal nanna:yi paTikkum'

I my lessons well learn.

I will learn my lessons well.

These examples show that the learners have not acquired the auxiliary system of English properly and they tend to make a random selection of the verb forms.

Errors occur in another area, ie, in the right choice of the auxiliary to suit the main verb form and the tense required to express the idea. In English the verb/or auxiliary form must agree with the number and person of the subject and also the tense.

- Look at the following learners' sentences.
35. *The Children is playing cricket now.(14)
The Children are playing cricket now.
36. *We has been living here since 1990.(15)
We have been living here since 1990.
37. *He have been trained properly(14)
He has been trained properly.
38. *How are your new country?(4)
How is your new country.?

The influence of the L1 is very explicit in the sentences with errors. The L1 of these learners does not have subject verb concord

39. avan kaLikkukayaNə
He is playing
40. avar kaLikkukayayaNə
They are playing
41. nammaL kaLikkukayaNə
We are playing
42. ñan kaLikkukayaNə
I am playing

In these sentences the main verb kaLikkuka and the auxiliary 'a:Nə' do not change according to the change in the subject. But in English the verb/auxiliary verb must agree with the subject. In the above sentences from 35 to 38 of the learners they tried to approximate L1 with the L2. The absence of concord in the L1 might have given them problem in choosing appropriate auxiliary verbs for the reason they haven't acquired the auxiliary system of English fully. In sentence 35, the subject 'The children' does not consist a plural indicator 's' in it. This might have tempted the learners to think that the 'children' in singular and to choose 'is' as suitable auxiliary.

In sentence 36 and 37 it is evident that they haven't mastered the auxiliary system fully. Sentence 38 does not use 'are' as an auxiliary but as a copula or linking verb. Several such cases are found among the learners under the study.

43. * The news were very shocking
The news was very shocking
44. * His eyes was small
His eyes were small
45. *He have a sad face
He has a sad face

In English and Malayalam the auxiliary verbs can be used as main verbs too as copulas. In English the auxiliary verbs retain the special functions of making questions and negative. In sentence 39 the learner attempted over generalization presuming that the subject news is plural as it contains 's' at the end of it. Several such errors are found in this area as well.

Language learning process is a continuous process in the approximation of the target language. What we have analyzed is the aspect of auxiliary of English and Malayalam and the problems faced by the learners of English as second language with Malayalam as their Mother tongue system.

References

1. Bernstein. D. 1077, “An Introduction to Transformational Grammar”, Cambridge, winthrop Public Inc.
2. Dulay H.C and Burt M K, 1974, “You cannot Learn without Goofing”, In Rechards, 1974 pp 95 P3
3. Corder, S.Pit, 1971 “Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis”, IRAL 9,2 PP 142-160
4. Corder, S.Pit, 1981, “Error Analysis and interlargere” Oxford, OUP.
5. Gundert Herman 1962. “Malayalabhasa Vyakaranam”. “Kattayam”. National (FE 1868) Book stall E 08
6. Mathan Rev. George, 1969. “Malayalam Vyakaranam” Kottayam, National Book stall P6 1863.
7. Pei Mario A and Frank Gaynor, 1984 “A Dictionary of Linguistics ”, New York, Philosophical Library
8. Nair N Rajasakharan, (1990) “Auxiliary verbs in Malayalam”, Annamalai, University Asher RE 1966,
9. Nair V. Sarath Chandran, 1986 “A Study of the Errors of the Second Language Learners in Malayalam”, in the proceeding of Dravidian Linguistics Conference.
10. Nemeser Williams, 1971, “Appeoximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners” IRAL, 9, 12, 115, 125
11. Ravi Iruchayan, (1994) “Prayogiga Vyakaranam”, The State Institute of the languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
12. Selinker, L.1972, “Interlanguage” IRAL. 10:3, 219.231
13. Varma A.R Rajaraja, 1970, “Kerala Pa:ni ni: yam” Kottayam National Book Stall (FB 1845)