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Grammatical Error Analysis Approach in Teaching Polish as a Foreign Language to Ukrainian Learners. A Review of Dominika Izdebska-Długosz's Monograph "Błędy gramatyczne w polszczyźnie studentów ukraińskojęzycznych" (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2021, ss. 472)[1]

Abstract

The reviewed monograph is one of the few publications on error analysis approach to teaching grammar of Polish as a foreign language. The book provides an extensive theoretical study of errors from several perspectives (linguistic, psycholinguistic, didactic and sociocultural), with a particular focus on the analysis of grammatical blunders made by Ukrainian learners of Polish in their written assignments, as well as profound methodical guidelines and resources for practitioners engaged in the process of teaching Polish as a foreign language to Ukrainian students, whose linguistic competence profile is characterized on the basis of the contrastive analysis of Polish and Ukrainian. The research is grounded on the empirical data collected by the author in the course of her teaching experience, which makes the theoretical findings reliable and practical recommendations worth implementing in teaching practices.
Keywords: error analysis; grammatical error; Polish as a foreign language; Ukrainian learners of Polish; teaching grammar

The volume under review, titled *Błędy gramatyczne w polszczyźnie studentów ukraińskojęzycznych* and authored by Dominika Izdebska-Długosz (2021), is a comprehensive monograph, providing a detailed account of available theory and research findings in the field of error analysis in the process of learning Polish as a foreign language by Ukrainian students, as well as supplying language teaching practitioners with abundant didactic resources in the mentioned content area.

The author draws the attention of both teachers and learners to a few topical issues in teaching Polish as a foreign language, with the highlighted triad that spans the whole book:

1. Advantages and disadvantages of teaching homogeneous groups of students.
2. Language interference (transference) of close and distant languages.
3. Teaching Polish to Slavic students.

[1] Dominika Izdebska-Długosz, "Grammatical errors in the Polish language of Ukrainian-speaking students" (Krakow: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2021, pp. 472).

Although the title of the book sounds quite "practical" (somehow veiling the broad spectrum of the scientific value of the monographic research), its author provides a profound background of the whole theory of error analysis in language learning and teaching. At the same time, with a specific focus on Ukrainian learners of Polish, the volume presents methodically designed activities for grammatical skill development, being grounded on quantitatively substantiated error analysis.

The book reminds us that in the time of intensive globalization processes enhancing the influence of diversity in every aspect of social life, it might often be helpful to get a deeper insight into homogeneity of certain activities. Such is the case with the current state of development in Polish Glottodidactics, being directed into the study of learners' needs. For the last decade, Poland has experienced extensive immigration from a number of distant and neighbouring countries, with Ukraine considered as the leader in this process (exacerbated by military conflicts in pro-Russian eastern Ukrainian regions of Lugansk and Donetsk since 2014). As a result, there have appeared to be about two million Ukrainians faced with the need to learn Polish as a foreign language, constituting the dominant group of students in the majority of language courses around the country.

At the same time, the book is devoted to the controversial areas, as viewed both from the perspective of linguistics and language teaching: error analysis and contrastive analysis of contact languages in their complementary efficiency for foreign language learners and teachers. The traces of error analysis studies can be seen as far back as of the beginning of the 20th century, first with the interest in native speaker errors in S. Leonard's "The Doctrine of correctness in English usage, 1700–1800" (1929) and H. Frei's "Grammaire des Faures" (1929), then shifting to the taxonomic second language error analysis in the second half of the previous century by P. Brown and J. Scragg in their "Common errors in Gold Coast English" (1948) (James, 2013, pp. 9–10). Then it was seen as the best substitute for widely criticized behaviourism-based contrastive analysis, which asserted that errors in language learning are "…to be avoided and their influence overcome" (Brooks, 1960, p. 58).

During their heyday, errors attracted a great deal of attention of both researchers and practitioners and were seen as useful resource for teachers in planning and adjusting further language learning procedures, informing "…the teachers what needs to be taught, telling the researcher how learning proceeds", and providing learners with the information for testing their expectations and hypotheses about the target language (Corder, 1967, p. 166). Despite being an established participant in the field, the concept of error analysis has provided an impulse for controversial debates. The last two decades of the XX century witnessed "mounting criticism of error analysis…. for its poor statistical inference, the subjectivity of its interpretation of errors, and its lack of any predictive power" (James, 2013, p. 17). This is evidenced by a number of monographs as well as a proliferation of journal articles worldwide, the majority of which have been analysed and cited in the volume under review.

The development of information technology, the formation of the Knowledge Society (Economy 4.0.) and digital tracking of all possible types of human actions, the implementation of artificial intelligence algorithms capable of imitating the patterns of neural brain activity may bring about the lacking potential for language learner error analysis, thus reviving the vitally important knowledge enhanced by the latest technological advancement for the best advantages of motivated language learners. It is in the mentioned contexts that the current review attempts to evaluate the newly published book by Dominika Izdebska-Długosz, becoming more than welcome in the academic and practically focused circles as a valuable addition to the line of the popular (psycho)linguistic and didactic dispute. Browsing the available literature on language comparison and interference, we noticed the lack of comprehensive studies providing a clear comparative description of the language systems of Polish and Ukrainian with the specific focus on possible interference/transference issues and their pedagogical implications. Thus, the volume and scope of the monograph is well justified (almost 500 pages) due to its multifaceted deep study of the urgent problem.

The monograph is a reader-friendly book, consisting of the introduction, four chapters, conclusions, some supplementary resources, the list of tables and graphs. Each chapter starts with an

introductory outline and concludes with a short summary highlighting the core ideas discussed by the author. The number of references cited in total is impressive: more than 400 positions cover the articles and books published in different languages worldwide.

The first chapter opens with an attempt to carry out a deep theoretical analysis of the key concept – that of an error, taking into account the achievements of both domestic and world-famous researchers in the realm of psycholinguistics and methods of teaching foreign languages. The author sets a hyper-difficult goal: to analyse the concept of error in all its possible dimensions. This multidimensionality of the research embraces the following issues: the concept of error is presented through the prism of related sciences; all possible classifications of errors have been analysed, their causes and error record types; the characteristics of error makers (native speakers of the language or foreign language learners), in particular Ukrainian learners of Polish; the type of speech in which errors are made (oral or written communication); techniques of error correction procedures (from analysis to recommendations on how to prevent or eliminate the errors).

The investigation under review highlights a specific understanding (characteristic of the Polish linguo-didactic studies) of a certain type of errors under the common concept "błąd glottodydaktyczny" (glottodidactic error), extensively discussed in the subchapter 1.2.1 of the first chapter. Although the interdisciplinarity of the research problem turned out to perplex the author in the use of certain terms, like the differentiation of a language error (błąd językowy) and a didactic mistake (błąd glottodydaktyczny), Dominika Izdebska-Długosz remains loyal to the domestically accepted approach. The author's choice of the mentioned above word combination (glottodidactic error) is influenced by the current scientific discourse in Polish glottodidactic publications: the similar concept can be found in the research by Michalina Biernacka (2019, p. 186) who highlights the difficulty in defining the concept of a glottodidactic error, since in the subject literature one can find the teachers' errors (methodical, ethical, and teaching content errors) standing behind the term, as well as students' errors (Grochala, 2015, p. 87), which might confuse readers in understanding the nature of the notion. In 2015, the editors of the journal *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Kształcenie polonistyczne cudzoziemców* dedicated the whole issue to the discussion of the notion of a glottodidactic error, number 22 in particular. At the same time, some Polish researchers dare not use the mentioned above term, substituting it with a descriptive concept and differentiating between causes of students' errors made as a result of the learning and teaching processes (Komorowska, 2002, pp. 176–177; Rabiej, 2015). In the western methodical tradition, though, there is a generally accepted strategy to treat all inaccuracies in foreign language learning as errors, with an array of causes distinguished (often classified under the umbrella names of linguistic causes (both interlingual and intralingual) – language interference, foreign language competency level, and extralinguistic ones – motivational learning reasons, teacher-induced reasons, to name but a few), which in the process of language acquisition are almost impossible to be traced and isolated (Brown, 2000, p. 224; Corder, 1967; Mackey et al., 2016; Pawlak, 2014, p. 2; Richards, 1972).

It is our obligation to draw special attention to the study of causes and sources of students' errors. The author takes a close scientific look not only at the notion of interference (interlanguage and intralanguage) from the perspective of its negative or positive influence on a learner's success in language learning or as an error source, but also at all possible factors, which predetermine the situations when language interference can take place. With reference to the specificity of the target group of students, the author emphasizes the question of common features of contact languages (Ukrainian and Polish in this respect) as a significant factor of negative transfer caused by a student's linguistic experience with the native language (this approach in particular, as the author summarizes, has been neglected for a long time, just because the contrastive linguistics, having gained some popularity under the influence of structuralism, was mainly focused on differences of the contact languages, which then were taken into account in error analysis and the process of methods design for language learning instruction).

What we find especially valuable in the monograph is that the author has managed to present systemically and diligently the specific characteristics of Ukrainian learners of Polish, their country

background, the development of their linguistic personality influenced by historic, geographic, ethnic, political, sociocultural and other factors which contribute to errors in the process of learning Polish: the author has studied all possible scientific endeavours into the problem of errors made by Ukrainian learners of Polish, having summarized the most significant aspects playing the decisive role in planning of the teaching/learning process as well as in educational material and curriculum design. Here the author puts forward a compelling argument about the necessity to consider the influence of Russian, which (together with Ukrainian) is the language of everyday use for a relatively large group of Ukrainian students (with the exception of learners coming from western Ukrainian regions), thus creating the phenomenon of natural bilingualism and affecting the process of learning other languages in proximity to Ukrainian and Russian (this phenomenon has been discussed in a number of scientific publications; Levchuk, 2019, p. 1, 2021). Therefore, the chapter allows the reader to understand the very nature of grammatical errors emanating from both linguistic similarities and differences, and sociocultural perspectives, as well as to become equipped with the hands-on advice and practice possibilities aimed at bringing Ukrainian language learners to a proficiency level in Polish.

In the second chapter, the author problematizes and challenges the questions of the place and role of teaching grammar within which the concept of grammar errors has been analysed, constituting the key issue of the research. Here, both diachronic (the study develops from the birth of foreign language teaching methods as a science up to the modern post communicative trends) and synchronic (methods of teaching Polish as a foreign language are analysed by the author, with detailed analysis of teaching Polish grammar from the perspective of general didactics as well as narrowly methodical angle of the necessity to comply the teaching process with the specific methodical principles; the author tackles the issue of task system typology, singling out those directed to the development of grammatical habits and skills) approaches have been adopted. The author succinctly takes the reader through a well-crafted journey into the realm of textbooks particularly designed with the goal of teaching Polish grammar to foreign learners.

While discussing the problems of teaching Polish grammar, the author devotes a separate subchapter to the description of Ukrainian learners of Polish, starting her deliberations with the proposal to use a certain group of teaching methods (which we believe is somewhat out of place – it would seem reasonable to shift this part of the study later in the chapter, as a summary and practical implication of the research), then providing the exhaustive comparative characteristics of contact languages (Ukrainian and Polish) with a special attention to grammars of both, thus inspiring some discussion on the challenges that might be encountered by Ukrainian learners of Polish, and finally rounding off with the analysis of communicative approach potential, within the framework of which successful practice of Polish grammar by Ukrainian students can be designed. The novelty of the author's viewpoint can be seen in the attempt to reconcile the approaches of the representatives of Contrastive Linguistics and Psycholinguistics with those of Linguistic Pedagogy (Second Language Instruction), which resulted in an interesting reflection on the topic of integrated foreign (Polish) language teaching, current understanding of the communicative competence through the prism of pluralistic approach to languages and cultures and the process of their teaching.

The third chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology of the author's empirical study with carefully written characteristics of the target group students (Ukrainians), research conditions and resources and tools used. The most significant achievement of the study in this respect is the exhaustive analysis of the grammatical errors made by Ukrainian students in their written assignments with the focus on language levels characterized in the theoretical chapters of the book (morphological and syntactic). The whole corpus of the collected data concerning students' errors should be viewed as an invaluable material not only for teachers of Polish as a foreign language, but also for linguists researching in the area of contrastive linguistics, language interference, lexicographers, developers of digital resources focused on enhancement of interlanguage interaction.

The fourth chapter (though seems to look poor and incomplete in comparison with the previous three, but may serve as the space for further scientific and practical endeavours of grateful readers, since it opens the possibility for them to find and implement a complex and systemic solution of the raised in the monograph problem) centres around the author's perspective on the resources aimed at helping teachers of Polish as a foreign language to practically realize the theoretical assumptions and conclusions made in the book.

The monograph rounds off with conclusions (presented both in Polish and English), and a book's summary in four languages – Polish, English, Russian and Ukrainian. For readers' convenience, the author provides the index of the proper names mentioned in the study.

Overall, it should once again be emphasized that the author of the monograph has attempted to accomplish an extremely difficult task: on the one hand, the phenomenon of an error in language acquisition and learning requires a significant research of psycholinguistic aspects in this process; on the other hand, with a goal to provide a pedagogical solution to eliminating the consequences of the erroneous written communication of Ukrainian learners of Polish, the author has made a try to carry out a didactic study of the mentioned problem. It seems like the complexity of the scientific problem, its multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature as well as the solution sought caused some inaccuracies in the usage of certain terms, like the concept of "grupa badawcza" (research group), which the author uses to denote the group of persons taking part in the experimental procedures (Izdebska-Długosz, 2021, pp. 6, 170), that instead should be named as "grupa badana", or the researched group (this can be seen in many doctoral dissertations, master's papers and articles; Szpakowski, 2014, p. 295), but semantically means the group of persons performing the experimental procedures with the researched group.

The comments offered above are by no means intended to diminish the scientific value of the monograph under review, its colossal contribution into the theory and practice of both linguistic and pedagogical research. Moreover, we consider the book to be a precious bridge between somewhat isolated psycholinguistic and didactic studies that will surely trigger the other brave investigations at the overlapping borders of two grand fields, because it is in this particular connection that they function in reality causing inconveniences and difficulties for language learners and teachers, the prevention and elimination of which was the goal of the author.

The words of gratitude should be expressed to Dominika Izdebska-Długosz for her painstaking and industrious work, the desire to present the true beauty of the Polish grammar to a Ukrainian student and make the learning process exciting, for the presentation of further and urgent research areas to young scientists in the field of linguistics and methods of foreign language teaching. Well-documented in sources, covering the relevant and topical literature, the monograph will be of particular interest to those who are interested in broadening their knowledge about grammatical errors made by Slavic learners of the close languages in a more general sense. The book, which is an impressive work promoting interdisciplinary studies and constituting an innovative and comprehensive resource, should also be of great use for future and in-service teachers who are eager to design the process of well-planned and methodically sound learning of Polish as a foreign language by Ukrainian students. At the same time, it would be a mistake to assume that this volume is pertinent only for those engaged in teaching Polish to Ukrainian learners – it has a wider reach and should be viewed as a gem for interdisciplinary junction of linguistic, psycholinguistic, didactic, and cultural studies.

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