What results give which strategies in error annotation

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Objectives

- Share with you a number of issues regarding identification and classification of errors in learner corpora

- Encourage discussion

- Favour standardisation

Materials

- Examples from
  - SPICLE: Spanish component in ICLE (200,376 words)
    - German component in ICLE
  - NOCE: English learner corpus by Spanish speakers (269,237 words)
- Error taggers covered
  - Louvain tagger: ICLE (Dagneaux et al. 1998)
  - NICT JLE tagger, English by Japanese learners (Izumi et al. 2005)
  - EARS, English by Spanish learners (Díaz Negrillo 2007)
  - Kölmyr (2003) *To Err is Human,* English by Swedish learners
  - FRIDA, learner French (Granger 2003)
  - FALKO, learner German (Lüdeling et al. 2005)

Background

Learner corpus researchers' claim: the weaknesses of previous data collections can now be overcome thanks to the general features of learner corpora (Nesselhauf 2005: 41):

- large size, representativeness, machine-readable format, contextualization of occurrences

- Error tagging are largely determined by the nature of learner corpora
- Agreement on a most adequate annotation policy is very much in need

Background

Error tagging in learner corpora:

What for?

- Mark what otherwise would be inaccessible
- Group errors of the same nature
- Provide descriptions of errors (CALL, FLT, SLA)

What type of descriptions?

- Objective, systematic and useful

Contents

- Error identification
- Error classification
- Error description

Error identification

Issue 1. What is an error?

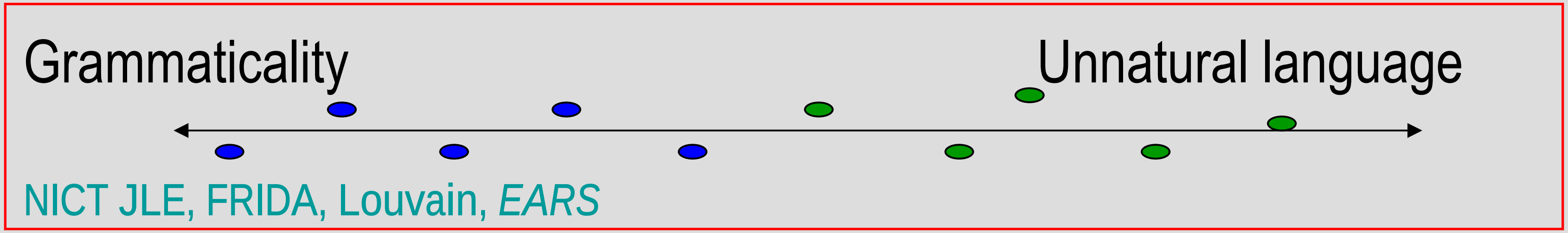
Coder (1973: 260): “those features of the learner’s utterances which differ from those of any native speaker”

Lennon (1991: 182): “a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context, and under similar conditions of production would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the native speaker counterparts”

Error = various types of non-native performance (grammatical, semantic, syntactic deviances and whatever sounds unnatural to the NS)

Error identification

Error = non-nativeness



Grammaticality

Unnatural language

NICT JLE, FRIDA, Louvain, *EARS*

1) One of **this** reasons is […] GR-1-A-EN-003-X

2) I decided to study "Filología inglesa" in Granada. The first problem was the **inscription** […] GR-1-A-EN-021-F

3) […] when you travel somewhere, if you don't speak **the first language of there**, you can always […] GR-1-A-EN-0-40-X

4) An explicit example **to take in the hand** is how one kills a snake. ICLE-GE-SAL-0014.4

Error identification

- Error taggers mostly cover grammatical and lexical errors while description of other instances of unnatural language do not attract as much attention.

- Grammatical but unnatural learner language is still non-native and might be equally described.
  - It’s most common among advanced learners.

Error identification

Corder (1973): mistakes vs. errors

- mistakes (NS and NNS), can be self-corrected
- errors (NS), can't be self-corrected, interest of SLA research

Issue 2. Error = lack of knowledge?

5) […] these **eople** who wanted to improve […] ICLE-SP-UCM-0019.3

6) […] something **than** in my opinion could be very interesting.[…] GR-1-A-EN-095-F

Error identification

How do people deal with this?

- 'Typo': FRIDA
- No distinction mistake vs. error because it is difficult to decide:
  Kölmyr (2003)
- A distinction is made at the explanation level:
  FALKO (Lüdeling et al. 2005)

- . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . - . -

Mistakes vs. errors. You can:

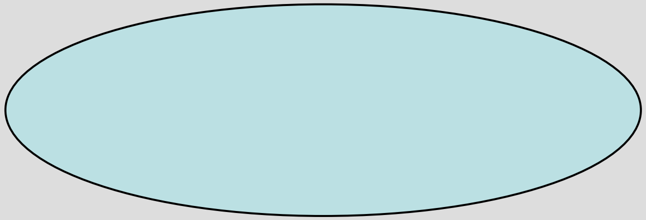
- Ask writers
- Check whether the occurrence is systematic / recursive
- Inter-rater reliability tests
- ….

Error identification

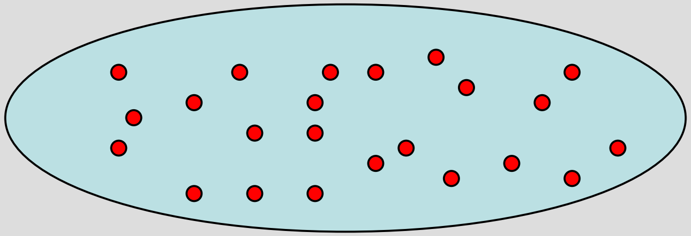
Issue 2. Mistake vs. error?

9) […] something **than** in my opinion could be very interesting.
GR-1-A-EN-095-F

Untagged corpora



Tagged corpora



Matching performance to competence in learner corpora might not be so straightforward

Error identification

Issue 3. How many errors are there?

7) Mary Wollstonecraft **write** in 1792 Vindications of the Rights of Women. <ICLE-SP-UCM-0040.4>

Tense? 3rd person singular? Both?

8) […] the oil, butter, milk that they **apperence** like very healthy products, […] GR-1-B-EN-044-Z

Word class? Spelling? Both?

Kölmyr (2003): Minimum Correction Principle (MCP)

EARS: underlying errors are tagged.

Describing learners' performance or correcting their writing?

Error description

Linguistic description of errors

- Issue 4: Basis of description
- Issue 5: Borderline cases

Error description

Issue 4. Basis of description:

targeted form? learner's performance?

9) The main feature of a campus like Louvain-la-Neuve is **(GA)** the **its** conviviality

10) Nowadays the mobile phone **is using** by children. GR-1-B-EN-062-Y

Voice, passive? active?

Aspect, continuous? non-continuous?

FRIDA, Louvain, EARS:

- there might be various targeted utterances, so describing objective observable data might encourage objective and consistent annotation process

Error description

Issue 4. Basis of description = ?

10) our parents, teachers, etc. who want that we get our **mets** and we don’t want dissappoint them. GR-1-A-EN-066-F

11) mobiles call the attention **of people** […] GR-1-B-EN-062-Y

12) […] they forgot the primary use **of them** […] GR-1-B-EN-027-Y

If what is observed is described:

- How do describe cases that do not correspond to English forms? (ex. 10, verb)

- This might result in that various targeted possibilities might fall under the same tag/description (ex. 11 and 12)

Error description

Issue 5. Borderline cases

13) Then your parents don't **say** you: you must eat more […] GR-1-A-EN-029-Y

Omission of the preposition? Lexical misselection? Both?

14) They could affect the **hear** basicaly […] GR-1-B-EN-061-Y

Word class? Spelling?

-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-·-

EARS:

Describing objective observable data, i.e. learners' choices, seems to encourage objective and consistent annotations

Error classification

- Issue 6. Error information types
- Issue 7. Delicacy of description

Error classification

Issue 6. Error information types

Louvain, FRIDA, NICT JLE, EARS

Level: grammar, spelling, lexis, etc.

Unit: POS, diacritics, comma, etc.

System: tense, collocation, derivation, etc.

FALKO:

Error explanation

Target modification taxonomy (omission, substitution, ordering, intrusion)?

Execution errors (*childs) vs. errors in category selection (*one children)?

Description of errors according to more than one information type enables a variety of searches and purposes

However, it is a slow and tedious process

Error classification

Issue 7. Detail of description

Most taggers are generic (Louvain, NICT JLE)

A fine-grained error tagger: EARS

15) I decided to study “Filología inglesa” in Granada. The first problem was the **inscription** […] GR-1-A-EN-021-F

16) […] it’s an **objective** that I have to **get**. GR-1-A-EN-002-F

17) […] took my things...phone, money, **bonobus** and […] GR-1-A-EN-013-F

18) I tried to **entry**, […] GR-1-A-EN-013-F

19) […] is **unuseful** […] <ICLE-SP-UCM-0019.3>

20) Nowadays the mobile phone **is using** by children. GR-1-B-EN-062-Y

Voice, passive Aspect, continuous

Error classification

Issue 7. Detail of description

Most taggers are generic (Louvain, NICT JLE)

- error tagging is faster
- seem to enable reusability
- may require further categorization from the end user

Conclusions

1. Because of the specific nature of learner corpora, **error tagging calls for its own policy**, which may differ from traditional SLA research
   - subjects are not available to the researcher
   - observable data is all that there is left
2. Focusing on observable data might enforce **consistent, objective** annotations
3. Annotation policy and, consequently, results are determined by the **purposes of error tagging**
   - correction or description of learner performance?
4. While most error taggers focus on grammatical errors there is still an area which remains largely unexplored: **unnatural language**
   - categories will rise when cases of this nature are grouped together and studied carefully

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