English Department Students' Most Frequent Errors at Swadaya Gunung Jati University, Cirebon

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on error analysis of second year students from four classes of English department at Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati Cirebon. A total of one hundred and four of enrolled students participated. They were asked to interview someone about his or her profession and personal life and write the report in three paragraphs. Both interview and report writing conducted in group of three or four. Data collected from the interlingua and intralingua categories and were analyzed to find the most frequent error of these students. The frequent error is obtained by calculating the number of error from each category and presented in form of percentage. The findings show that the most frequent error is from the interlingua aspect which is the selection of wrong word in the case of divergence between L1 and L2 (50%). The result will be beneficial for selecting treatment so that the students can improve their mastery of English

Key word: the interlingua, intralingua, divergence

Introduction

In the context of learning and teaching foreign language, mistake and error cannot be separated from the learners. Very often, learners say or write something that is incomprehensible. It is confusing, yet interesting when seeing a learner gets things wrong. When learners made a perfectly error-free utterance, teachers only know a little about what is going on in their mind. But when they make some errors, teachers can look at their nature and try to work it out why the errors were made. Errors hold vital clues about the processes of FL learning. They more or less act like the pain that tell the doctor more than all the parts that do not hurt (Johnson: 2001). Therefore, this study will analyze the errors that were made by the learners from two approaches. The first approach is interlingual aspects which has something to do with the L1 interference. The second approach is intralingual aspects that comes from within the L2 itself.

Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at categorizing and finding out the most frequent error that was made by the sophomore students of English department.

Research Questions

The research question proposed by this study is:

What is the most frequent error that is made by the sophomore students of English Department in Unwagati Cirebon?

Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspective use in this study is error analysis in EFL/ESL learning and teaching. The categorization of error is based on Kielhöfer's (1975) and Legenhausen's (1975) studies which is summarized by Els (1984).

Definition of Terms

Some key terms used in this study are:

EFL, L1, L2, Error analysis, target language, error analysis, interlangual error, and intralingual error.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Delimitations

This study is only focus on categorizing and finding out the most frequent errors that are made by the participants. The analysis is conducted from written document which are the participant's written works

Limitations

This study only have limited sample so, it cannot be generalized. Besides, since this study only categorizing and finding out the error, the participants did not receive any treatments. In this case, people who read this study cannot find out the progress of the participants' writing.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in a way that it is important to analyze student's errors. By analyzing student's error, teacher can take an appropriate treatment to fix the error that the students have made before. By doing this, hopefully teachers can improve student's competency in writing and decrease the numbers of errors.

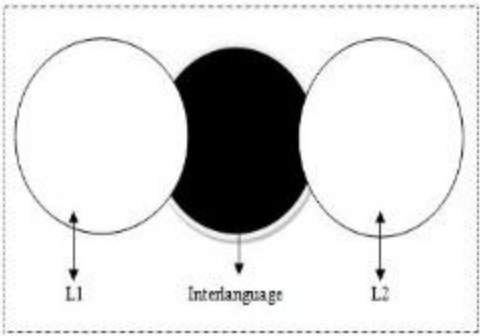
Review of the Literature

According to Edge (1989, in Harmer: 2001), mistakes are divided into three types. They are slips, errors, and attempts. Slips happen when the students make mistake but they realize it and correct it immediately. Errors happen when the students make mistakes but they need other people's help to correct the mistakes. Attempts happen when students try to say something but they don't know how to say it yet.

There are two major causes for errors that most students do. They are L1 interference and developmental errors. L1 interference commonly happens to the English learners as second or foreign language that have already had deep knowledge of at least their first language. The students get interferences from their first language that they are confused and it can provoke errors in their use of English. For example, Bahasa Indonesian doesn't have tenses

system that indicates time, and there are no present, past, or participial verbs in its language system, so English learners in Indonesia mostly consider tense is the most difficult thing to learn and that they are often confused in deciding verb inflections.

Interference is also known as interlanguage (Selinker: 1972 in Corder: 1981 and Els et.al.: 1984). Corder (1981: 17) mentioned the interlanguage error is a part of ideosycractic dialects. It is a dialect that the rules share characteristic of two social dialects of language, whether these language themselves share the rule or not. In the other word, interlanguage happens when the L2 learners bring the L1 rules when they are learning their L2. Corder (1981) describes interlanguage as follow:



Kielhöfer (1975) and Legenhausen (1975) as cited by Els et.al. (1984), divides interlaingual errors into several categories. Their study focused on L2 French and L2 English of German learners.

1. Interlingual phonological errors.
   E.g.: This is a *na/ti/onal*newspapaer (/tʃ/ instead of /ʃ/; German national)
2. Interlingualmorpho-syntactic errors
   E.g.: Can you give me some informations about this programme? (L1: informationen=L2 information)
3. Interlingual lexical errors.
   a. Selection of wrong word when words are phonetically related in L1 and L2.
      E.g.: There are *snakes* in the garden (L1: Schnecken=L2: Snail)
   b. Selection of wrong word in the case of divergence between L1 and L2.
      E.g.: He was total *foreigner* to me (L1: Fremder=L2 stanger/foreigner)
   c. Word innovation as a result of literal translation from L1.
      E.g.: Unordinary (L1: ungewöhnlich = L2: out of the ordinary)

Another cause for errors is developmental errors. For native English speakers, this error took place when they were children. Some researchers call this phenomenon 'over-generalization'. To make it simple, over generalization is when children who starts by saying I eat, we see, etc. correctly all of sudden start saying *I eated or *we seed. This also happens to English as second

or foreign language learners. The common mistakes they made such as *did they made breakfast this morning or *my bag is more gooder than your bag.

A developmental errors, as it has been mention above, can also be called an intralingual errors. Richards (1971) mentions an intralingual error reflects the learner's competence at a particular stage and illustrate some of the general characteristic of language acquisition. In the other words, an intralingual error happens as the effect of leaners' incomplete mastery of L2 comprehension. It comes from within the L2 itself. As interlingual errors, intralingual errors are also divided into several categories. Kielhõfer (1975) and Legenhausen (1975) in Els et.al. (1984) categorized intralingual errors into:

1. Intralingual phonological errors.
   E.g.: *G/oo/d* (/u/ instead of /ʊ/, cf. food)
2. Intralingualmorpho-syntactic errors.
   a. Innovation as a result of overgeneralization
      E.g.: They *buyed* a new car (bought)
   b. Deviation in word order.
      E.g.: She saw *coming in a young girl* (a young girl coming in)
3. Intralinguallexical errors: selection of wrong word as a result of phonetic relatedness within L2.
   E.g.: He let the pearls *dispose* in a drawer (dissapear)

Several studies have been conducted around error analysis. Most of them focus on interlingual analysis. Alonso (1997) conducted a research on interlingual errors in Spanish students of English as a foreign language. The aim of his study is at finding out the most common types of interlingual errors that Spanish students make when they are learning English as a foreign language. Apparently, the most common mistake is on the transfer of structure deviant forms. His finding is in line with what Burdog (2004) and Dan (2007) have found. They found that the most frequent errors are in the lexical and morphological level.

Methods

Research Design

This research uses blending method between qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative method is obtained from the researcher's choice in choosing writing topic and interpretation of the data that has been gathered. The interpretation method of the data that is used in this research is comparison and prediction. The quantitative method is from the researcher's calculation the frequency of different types of errors.

Data Collection

Sample, Population, or Subjects

The population of this study is one hundred and four sophomore students of English Education Department who take Structure Three class. These students are from four different classes. From one hundred and four sophomore students, the samples that were taken only ten pieced of students' written works. The samples were provided from the limited population. The subject of this research is students' written work.

Instrumentations and Materials

The instrument of this study is students' written works that have been collected by the researcher. The material for the written work is the students' written report about someone's life. In this case, the written works mostly contain reported sentences. The researcher also conducted an informal interview with the students about the obstacles in writing the report

Procedures

This study was conducted in three steps. The first step is the researcher gave an assignment to the students to interview someone about his/her daily life, carrier (from the beginning until now), motivation, or whatever students wanted to know about her/him. After the interview, the students had to report the interview in three paragraphs. Both the interview and the repot writing were conducted in group of three or four. However, since the limited numbers of students and a pretty long holiday, there were some students who did both the interview and the report individually. The students did the assignment in two weeks.

The second step was conducted at the time the students submitted their written works. After gaining the data, the researcher took ten writing samples in random to be analyzed. Before analyzing the data, the researcher classified the errors from first ten sentences of each sample into seven categories. This classification is presented in form of tables. Since the researcher took only first ten sentences from ten samples, it means the number of subject in this research is one hundred. After the classification was done, the frequency of the errors from each category was calculated using this formula:

$$\frac{Total Number of errors from each category}{Total Number of subjects\ (100)} x\ 100\%$$

The third step was conducted after the errors for every category was calculated. It is analyzing the data which is going to be discussed further.

Data Analysis

The analyses of the data covered the categories of Error Analysis (EA). The data was analyzed one by one according to error category. There are two broad category of error presented in this research. These two categories were then split into more sub-categories:

A. Interlingual Errors
   1. Interlingualmorpho-syntactic errors
   2. Interlingual lexical errors
      - Selection of wrong words when words are phonetically related in L1 and L2
      - Selection of wrong words in the case of divergence between L1 and L2
      - Words innovation as a result of literal translation

B. Intralingual Errors
   1. Intralingualmorpho-syntactic errors
      - Innovation as a result of overgeneralization
      - Deviation in word order
   2. Intralingual lexical errors: selection of wrong word as a result of phonetic relatedness within L2.

Result and Discussion

This part consists of data presentation on the frequency of errors (in percentage) from each category in form of table and the analysis and interpretation of the data that has been presented.

Result
Interlingual Errors

Table 10.1
Interlingual Error

No.	Errors	Percentage
1.	Interlingualmorpho-syntactic errors	48%
2.	Interlingual lexical errors:	
	a. Selection of wrong word when words are phonetically related in L1 and L2	0%
	b. Selection of wrong word in the case of divergence between L1 and L2	50%
	c. Word innovation as a result of literal translation	3%

Interlingual errors happened when foreign language learners are interfered by the structure of L1. They depend on linguistic differences between L1 and L2 and are also known as interference (Els et.al.: 1984). In this research, the most frequent interlingual errors that were made by the students are the selection of wrong word when words are phonetically related in L1 and L2 (50%). The second frequent error that was made by the students isinterlingualmorpho-syntactic errors (48%). The least frequent error in interlingual error in this research is word innovation as a result of literal translation while none of the students made errors in the selection of wrong word when words are phonetically related in L1 and L2.

Interlingual Errors

Table 10.2
Interlingual Errors

No.	Errors	Percentage
1.	Intralingualmorpho-syntactic errors	
	a. Innovation as a result of overgeneralization	40%
	b. Deviation in word order	4%
2.	Intralingual lexical errors: selection of wrong word as a result of phonetic relatedness within L2	10%

An intralingual error takes place within the L2. Therefore, unlike interlingual errors that can still be traced back using contrastive analysis, intralingual errors are unforeseen on the basis of contrastive analysis (Els et.al.: 1984). In the case of intralingual errors, the most frequent error appears in this study is in morpho-syntactic part which is innovation as a result of overgeneralization (40%). The least frequent error made by the students in this study is on deviation in word order (4%).

Discussion

Interlingual Errors

As it has been mentioned earlier, interlingual errors are traditionally known as interferences. In the context of EFL teaching and learning, interferences also happens at least to the students in this study. This part of the study will discuss the result of interlingual errors that have been presented in part 4.1.

Interlingual Morpho-Syntactic Errors

Interlingualmorpho-syntactic errors focus on the errors in morphological and syntactical constructions. As it has been mentioned before, the influence of students' L1 can be very interfering to their FL learning. In the context of FL learning in this study, most of students had difficulties in expressing their writing in English. This happened because some of constructionsthat are morphologically and syntactically accepted in Bahasa Indonesia cannot be accepted in English. This is in line with what Mei et.al (2000) found. In her research, she found that Malaysian students have problem in morphological and syntactical construction. These problems can be addition or omission of words. For example:

*His mother allowed him to be back home

L1: Ibunyamengizinkankembalikerumah

TL: His mother allowed him to go back home

In Bahasa Indonesia "kembali" is a verb while in English "back" is an adjective. A clause in English should contain subject and verb since the students considered "kembali" and "back" are verbs they omitted the verb in their writing. Therefore, they made an error.

Another problem in morpho-syntactic error construction made by the participants in this study is that they tended to ignore tenses. This is consistent with what Harmer (2001) stated, the error can be at the level of grammar where a

student's first language has subtly have different system. In the context of FL learning in Indonesia, the problem appears because Bahasa Indonesia doesn't have the concept of tenses. It doesn't have present verbs, past verbs, or past participial verbs. Verbs are verbs in Bahasa Indonesia, they do not inflect on tenses, and hereare some examples:

*He continue his study to Kejuden elementary school in 1990

L1:

IamelanjutkansekolahnyakesekolahdasarKejudenpadatahun 1990

TL: He continued his study to Kejuden elementary school in 1990

Interlingual Lexical Errors

a. *Selection of Wrong Word when Words are Phonetically Related in L1 and L2*

When L1 and L2 are phonetically related, learners tend to make errors in selecting words. These errors especially happen when L1 and L2 have the same root. In this study, there was no student who made this kind of error. The possible reason is Bahasa Indonesia and English are not from the same root, therefore there are not many words which phonetically related between Bahasa Indonesia and English.

b. *Selection of Wrong Word in the Case of Divergence Between L1 and L2*

Selecting of wrong word in the case of divergence between L1 and L2 is the most frequent error that the students did in this study. This case appears because the students still have difficulties in understanding the use of words in English. English words are used differently from the words in Bahasa Indonesia. Mostly, the words in Bahasa Indonesia have the same meaning in every context and situation, but in English, the use of words may vary depends on the context.

Take a look at some examples below:

- After the teaching certificate is dropped out, she became a teacher

  L1: Setelah AKTA 4-nya keluar, iamenjadi guru

  L2: After the teaching certificate is released, she became a teacher.

- Ikin and his wife can grow their group becoming a famous group

  L1:

  IkindanistrinyadapatmembesarkanGrupIkinmenjaditerkenal

  L2: Ikin and his wife can make their group becoming a famous group

In their mind, 'dropped out of the school' and 'releasing something' have the same 'keluar' meaning. In fact they have very different meaning. The students in this study did not realize this. Their mastery of vocabulary usage is

still lack and it affected to their diction in writing. While in the second example, the students think that 'grow' that they used in the sentence is the same as 'grow' in the sentence like 'I grew up in London' which is in bahasaIndonesia 'sayabesar di London.' They didn't know (or forgot) that the word 'grow' is not applicable for inanimate things.

c. Word Innovation as a Result of Literal Translation

Word innovation as a result of literal translation is a kind of communication strategy used by the students when they have to use a word, but they don't know how to say it in L2. So, they create the literal translation to cover what they did not know. In this study, there are not many word innovations. This is probably because the students here were more aware about their L2 (apart from their mastery of the use of words in L2). One of the examples of this innovation can be seen in the example bellow:

- He didn't have money to continue his study to SPG

L1: Iatidakmemilikiuanguntukmelanjutkansekolahnyake<u>SPG</u>

L2: He didn't have money to continue his study to <u>teaching school</u>

Intralingual Errors

Intralingual errors come from within the L2 itself. In the other words, it doesn't have something to do with the L1. It is the result of the application of rules by the L2 learners which do not yet correspond to the L2 norm. This part will discuss the intralingualerrors that have been found in this study as presented on the table.

Intralingual Morpho-Syntactic Errors

a. Innovation as a result of overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is a part of students' errors when they learn a foreign language. It is also the effect of their incomplete mastery of comprehending L2 rules and norms. Overgeneralization also occurred in this study. And apparently it is the most frequent error in the case of intralingual errors. Overgeneralization cases that appear the most are on subject-verb agreements see the example bellow:

*He<u>study</u> in KalijagaPermai elementary school (L2: he studies)

The students know about 'I study', 'they study', 'we study', so when it comes to singular subjects they thought it would be the same. As a result, they overgeneralized the rule. Another overgeneralization case is in plural nouns, here are the examples:

*Her first children's name is Amanda Putri (L2: her first child's name)

*He has black hairs (L2: He has black hair)

The first and the second sentences both have the same problem in overgeneralization. Students know that most of plural nouns should have affixed –s but they forget about irregular noun verbs like children and hair. The error in the first and second sentences occurred because children and hairseem to be like singular nouns. So, the students who wrote these sentences thought 'children' and 'hair' are the same noun form as 'table' and 'chair'. They overgeneralized the rule of singular and plural nouns.

b. Deviation in word order

Deviation in word order also commonly happens in the context of foreign language teaching. 4% of the sample made this error. It can be said deviation in word order is also a part of overgeneralization. As it can be seen from the example bellow:

*We asked her which traditional food does she like (L2: which traditional food she likes)

The possible reason for this was the students know the rule for interrogative sentence using question words. Unfortunately they also applied this rule to form a dependent clause. They deviated the clause into an interrogative form. It is not applicable for the sentence like the example above.

Intralingual lexical errors: selection of wrong word as a result of phonetic relatedness within L2

Errors that the students made in this part has something to do with phonetic relatedness within the L2 itself. Sometimes in a language there are some words that have almost the same phonetic. In the context of English learning and teaching in Indonesia some students also made this error. This study has found that the selection of wrong word as a result of phonetic relatedness within L2 in also happened, here is some example:

*In his *mine*, there was a dream (L2: mind)

**Than* when he was teenager, his dream came true (L2: then)

'Mine' and 'mind' also 'than' and 'then' have almost the same phonetic relation. Therefore, the students in this study probably confused because their phonetic relatedness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has found that the most frequent error comes from the interlingual factor particularly in morphological and syntactical

level. This indicates the students in this study still lack of mastery in choosing appropriate English words for their composition. Over all, the interference factor from L1 becomes one of the major factors in their learning of L2.

This study is conducted not to judge student's errors but to analyze and categorize their errors so that teacher can take appropriate actions to anticipate their student's errors. For further research it is better to give the students some treatment so that they know how to fix their errors.

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