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THE GRAMMATICAL ERRORS AMONG LEARNERS AND THE USE OF MULTIMODALITIES IN EFL CLASSROOM IN INDONESIAN

¹Idaryani, ²Rasyimah Rasyimah, ³Teuku Azhari

Indonesian Language Study Program, Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: idaryani@gmail.com

Abstract

Indonesia is one of the countries in expanding circles that English is learned as a foreign language. Thus, many challenges are faced by Indonesian learners due to the differences between Indonesian and English languages. This study aims to find out the challenges of Indonesian learners in learning English as a foreign language based on linguistic differences. The research aims to investigate the following issues: 1) What are the grammatical errors and the challenges that the learners face in learning English as a foreign language? 2) How do the multimodality resources impact students' comprehension on English grammatical knowledge? The study employed a descriptive qualitative method. The research data was obtained based on the focus group discussion, and observations. The participants of the study are 30 Pre-service teacher students in their second year from the Indonesian Language Study Program, Universitas Malikussaleh, Aceh province, Indonesia. The participants studied English as one of the prerequisite subjects, and the English study was conducted once a week. The result of the study shows that many participants have difficulty when interacting using helping verbs because they are not used to practicing it in their daily lives. The differences between Indonesian and English linguistic systems put learners on a real struggle to adjust the proper use of helping verbs in their sentences. Multimodality resources are strongly urged to be applied to support learners' comprehension of English grammar.

Keywords: Grammatical Errors, EFL Classroom, Indonesian Learners, Challenges, Multimodalities.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the non-native English-speaking countries. The Indonesian language serves function as a national lingua franca both in formal and non-formal domains and as a medium of instruction at educational institutions. Furthermore, as a foreign language and an international lingua franca, English is necessary to be learned by Indonesian learners from junior to higher degree levels. Normally, from junior to senior high school, English is taught throughout the semester. On the contrary, at the university level, English becomes one of the prerequisite subjects that is taught only in the first or second academic year. At the university level, students from any study program are necessary to learn the English language for many purposes including as one of the requirements of graduation that students

must achieve 450 TOEFL scores. Moreover, English is essential language for the students to be able to participate in students exchange program and any similar program offered by Indonesian Educational Ministry. Mastering the English language is also beneficial for learners in order to seek jobs or continue their studies as well as applying for scholarship programs.

Furthermore, learning English for Indonesian learners is not easy particularly to gain high scores in English tests such as TOEFL or IELTS tests. These tests are the only measurement tools for someone that considers whether or not someone a competent English user both for general or academic purposes. As a foreign language, besides English being an exclusive and prestige language that Indonesian people only use on specific occasions and places, English also has different grammatical rules from the Indonesian language that learners use in a daily basis. However, being able to master English well is crucial for learners to understand English grammar properly because the grammatical knowledge of English is necessary for learners' communicative skills and to be able to meet the specific score requirements of English tests.

Furthermore, adult learners who learn English through grammatical rules, tenses, and aspects are two of the crucial factors in mastering the English language. However, one of the most prominent issues faced by Indonesian learners is the difficulty in the use of tenses and aspects of English correctly, particularly for both present and past tenses. This is because Indonesian learners are not familiar with having tenses and aspects as part of the predicate of the sentences in the Indonesian language. They are not aware of how crucial is to use tenses and aspects correctly in English because the Indonesian language does not recognize tenses and aspects as part of the predicate of the sentence to indicate the time-changing. Besides, the verbs in Indonesian grammar do not change if the time in the sentence changes. On the contrary, one of the indications of time changes in English grammar is by changing the verb form. Moreover, the Indonesian language also does not recognize the helping verb *to-be* to indicate time or changing time for non-verbal sentences. Consequently, the learners have difficulty comprehending the changing of times in the predicate of the sentences by applying appropriate tense and aspects with correct verbs and *to-be* in the sentence. Previous research has been conducted that highlight the grammatical errors made by Indonesian learners (Sulaiman et al., 1990; Nurdin et al., 2019; Puspita, 2021; (Al-hamzi et al., 2023) however, they do not focus on the issues of reasons on why the learners face the challenges because of the different grammatical systems between Indonesian and English language in applying helping verbs do/does in their sentences. Having said so, this study tends to explore the following issues:

1. What are the grammatical errors and the challenges that the learners face in learning English as a foreign language?
2. How does the multimodality resources impact students' comprehension on English grammatical knowledge of English?

It is hoped that the research will contribute to a better understanding for English teachers and other researchers who are interested in the issues of the differences that the learners face in learning English due to the linguistic differences between Indonesian and English. Consequently, the teacher can consider better teaching strategies and proper modalities to support learners' comprehension of English grammar.

One of the challenges faced by Indonesian students in learning English as a foreign language is 'grammar'. Flynn (1988) for example, states that language learners have some previous

knowledge of grammar before they begin learning their second language which may not have any bearing on their prior linguistic knowledge. Therefore, the learners will unconsciously apply their grammar while learning a new language. Because of differences between Indonesian and English grammar, many of the learners find it difficult to learn a new language, English. Therefore, it makes them afraid of making errors when they deal with grammar. Nevertheless, making error is natural and actually necessary for language learners so that they achieve certain language competence (Krashen, 1982). Therefore, errors are not regarded as a failures anymore, but it is considered an important learning process that the students should experience to develop their competencies. Selinker (1972) calls this phenomenon as 'interlanguage'. He defines the Interlanguage (IL) "a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language (TL) norm". Wilkins (1972) also stated that mastering the grammatical system of a target language is crucial. Without sufficient grammar knowledge, linguistic creativity would be significantly restricted, and the ability to communicate would be greatly diminished. For that statement, it is clear that when learners are not capable in acquiring grammatical system of language, they will not be able to achieve language competence

Learning English as a foreign language is not an easy task because the learners have to learn the grammatical rules of the target language which most of the time are very different from the language that they normally use on a daily basis. Therefore, grammatical errors made by the learners are frequent. The previous study conducted (Al-hamzi et al., 2023) toward 20 Yemeni learners shows that the learner have it challenging in understanding the pattern of English language in the use of verb tenses including main verbs and auxiliary verbs in their writing. It happens because of the lack knowledge of the learners or because of the learners do not understand how to use it.

In the Indonesian context, the learners of learning English as a foreign language are also prone to grammatical errors in the English learning process. Some previous studies have been conducted to analyze the grammatical that learners make in learning English. The study conducted by Puspita (2021) on the influence of the Indonesian language on 67 students at one of State Polytechnic in Indonesia showed that the most frequent errors made by the students were in syntactical and in morphological errors. Further, she described that Indonesian language interference in student writing is past tense because verb has to be changed to indicate changing tense. She further added that students are confused particularly about the formation of regular verb and irregular verb because Indonesian grammar does not recognize changing verb to changing the time. In line with this, copulative also indicate that the challenging part of students in writing or speaking is in applying to be in their sentences. Most of the time the students fail to use appropriate *to be* in their sentence. Although Indonesian language also has copulative verbs however there are huge different between copulative verbs in Indonesian and English language because copulative verb in Indonesian language may or may be not used in the sentence (Sulaiman et al., 1990).

Furthermore, the study conducted by Nurdin et al., (2019) suggested that most of students face difficulty to understand of tense aspects in present tense and past tense. According to the study they conducted to students from one of the universities in Indonesia, they suggested that the ability of the students to use the present tense and past tense correctly were very challenging for most of the students in their sentences. They also underlined that the appropriate knowledge of learners in present tense and past tense can help them to construct their own sentence easily. The appropriate knowledge of using these tenses by students also improve their ability in speaking because the students were able to construct

grammatically correct sentences. In line with this Setyaningrum (2018) on her study showed that the most frequent error made by the Indonesian learners are omission, addition, misinformation, and mis-ordering when using past tense. According to her study to 22 students who study in the first year at of Islamic state, Kudus, most of the time, in the omission error, students fail to add *ed/d-* to mark the past tense in English language. In misinformation errors, the learners tend to choose wrong verbs to mark the past tense. However, her study only focuses on specific tense aspect which is past tense in students writing. Furthermore, Simbolon (2015) outlined that majority of errors happened in speaking among Indonesian learners is because Indonesian learners face difficulty in using *to-be* in present tense and present progressive tense because the Indonesian people are not familiar in using this in their sentence.

Multimodality resources in learning English

Multimodality refers to the way someone communicates not only through language but also through other semiotic resources such as images, sounds, and gestures (Kessler, 2022). In terms of EFL classrooms, teachers can use different modes consisting of linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, or spatial (Kress 2010, as cited in Sugianto, 2023) to improve students' comprehension in learning English. The study conducted by Sakulprasertsri (2020) shows that the integration of various semiotic modes into English classrooms can improve students' English skills and use their knowledge in real-life situations.

In line with this, Pramono & Suherdi (2019) postulate that multimodality is pivotal for today's communication because incorporating various modes of language learning will improve learners' comprehension in learning EFL. In line with this, the study conducted on the integration of multimodality used by English teachers (Japar, 2022) suggests that the multimodality resources can attract learners' attention and facilitate them in learning English, however, the study focuses on elementary school and does not delve further on the in middle high school level.

METHOD

The research employs a qualitative method. The data is obtained from Focus Group Discussion and observation. The participants of the research are students from one of higher education located in Lhokseumawe, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The study involved 30 participants. All participants are the second-year students from faculty of Indonesian language education study program. The participants have had their previous grammatical knowledge of English from junior and senior high school. The data was collected during the teaching-learning session. The meeting was conducted once a week and the research data was collected during 8 meetings. The observation was conducted for 4 meeting and Focus Group Discussion was done during two meetings. The participants were supposed to have previous exposure to grammatical knowledge during high school period and 8 learning sessions with other English teaching team during the first 8 meetings at the same semester before I taught the class on following the 9th meetings.

The procedures

In the meeting, the participants were asked to construct the interrogative sentences about general information and daily activities about their friends and one of the family members of their classmates. Therefore, the participant used helping verbs for both of singular and plural subject of the sentence. The sentences were only limited to the application of helping

verb do/does. Therefore, the students only focused on the use of present verbs in the Question and Ask activities (Qanda). The participants were given 30 minutes to construct 5 interrogative sentences before presenting Qanda activities with their peers in front of the class. They were previously forbidden to translate their sentences using google translate tool. Afterward, every two students perform Qanda activities. The observation was conducting during the Qanda activities when the participants respond the question from their friend reciprocally. The activities were last for an hour and half. After the Qanda session, the focus group discussion was conducted the following week to find out the participants' opinion about the activities. The Focus group discussion last for 35 minutes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of study shows that the difficulties that students face to express their opinion in English based on different time aspects between English and Indonesia for daily activities and daily conditions. They are struggling to construct their sentence when switching helping verb do with and without does. During the interaction of Qanda, some participants try to use gestures as other mode to help their peer when recall the use of helping verb do without letter 's'. The result of the study can be described as follow:

1. The grammatical errors and the challenges that the learners face in learning English as a foreign language

The result of study shows that when the learners write the sentence in interrogative type, they do not face any difficulty because most of them rely on the assistant of google translate tools. However, most of the students were struggling when they respond the questions of their peers. This is because they have to answer the question naturally from their friend so that they do not have time to use google translate or any other supporting tools. They genuinely rely on their grammatical knowledge they have to respond the questions. The results of study suggest that although the students have been exposed to English since middle schools, however, most of the students still face difficulty in understanding the use of appropriate helping verbs in their sentences. Most of them are struggles to construct their sentences when using those helping verbs.

This finding indicates that beside several benefits of technology on learning English language, in this case, it contributes drawbacks for the learners because when the teachers ask learners to do writing task in classroom, they will take shortcut by translating their sentences directly from English to Indonesian using google translate tool. This situation is dilemma for English teachers because on one hand, the technology can help learners in learning, on the other hand, the learners become lazy and put less effort to learns that impact to their ability to express their opinion by constructing simple sentences independently. this. This situation exacerbates the ability of the learners to create proper simple sentences with grammatically correct. It deteriorates their ability to improve the application of helping verbs into their sentences because the technology takes over that role. Therefore, the students are not get used to use these helping verbs and have opportunity to understand the function of those to signify the activity or their opinion on the different time aspects. This finding is in line with the previous study conducted Pazilah et al. (2019, as cited in Idaryani & Fidyati, 2021) pointed out that one of the disadvantages of applying digital technology into a language classroom is that the learners were easily digressed and misused the technology, and they will just use digital tools to find the answers online. Consequently, this results in

learners will be lazy to think critically because they can find the answer and any information, they have by using technology.

Furthermore, the other difficulty the learners face is the practicing helping verbs *do* and *does* into speaking ability when they have to switch their responses from confirmation statement to negative statement. This difficulty arises because students are influenced by Indonesian grammatical system that learners previously have had. When a learners need to answers the in-confirmation statement, in short respond, they need use apply helping verbs. However, if the learner responds the answer completely, the learners need to drop the helping verbs completely and answer the question completely by repeating the question into statement question. The process of the changing use of helping verbs make most of the students confused because they need to remember when they apply the helping verbs and when they drop them in the sentences according to the types of the sentences. Moreover, students also difficult to switch between helping verbs *do* and *does* or when they use those helping verbs or to drop them for positive and negative confirmation statements. Furthermore, the students also difficult to differentiate between *do/does*. They often mistakenly use those helping verbs for wrong subjects. Additionally, the learners are also hardly elaborate the using of helping verbs when they need to change the subjects of the sentences. It is because the learners instantly need to use one of appropriate helping verbs whether *do/does* according to the subject of the sentences.

This finding confirms that the difficulty learners face to apply appropriate helping verbs *do/does* is because they are not used to use helping verbs in Indonesian sentences in negative and interrogative statements does not necessarily need helping verbs *do/does*. When responding the questions, the answer 'yes' or 'no' in Indonesia language is sufficient and grammatically correct. However, it is another way around in English linguistic systems. Responding the question must always involve helping verbs (*do/does*) to indicate definite time aspects of the sentence because the helping verbs are necessary for definite time information of the sentences. In Indonesian grammar, the response of the questions does not reflect any definite time however, in English in any types of sentences, the time aspects are explicated either by helping verbs or main verbs. These grammatical dissimilarities result in difficult comprehension for learners to express their activities in the present time because they have to remember two different points to express the same time aspect in different ways; the learners must use the correct helping verbs with the correct subject and omit the helping verbs and change with the proper verb when the leaners use statement sentences.

Two of participants state that understanding proper use of helping verbs help them to construct their sentence precisely in term of meaning and syntactic structure. A good comprehension of using proper helping verbs enables them to express their opinion more easily and avoid grammatical errors in terms of meaning and the correct aspects of tense as two participants said "Yes, it helps me a lot to write a good sentence to express my opinion about my activities or if I need to ask someone activities". Another participant adds that, "*It enable me to construct my sentence precisely in simple sentence without losing the meaning and wrong structure*". This finding is in line with the previous study (Idaryani et al., 2021) that suggest the proper knowledge of English grammar enables the learners to express or convey their simple ideas precisely with different tenses.

2. The impact of multimodality resources on students' comprehension on English grammatical knowledge

Furthermore, the results of the study shows that the application of helping verbs and main verbs correctly must involve more than one mode. The participants do not get used to use the helping verbs and main verbs correctly if they only write it on their paperwork. However, adopting vocal modes to practice the use of those helping verbs in English language to support the learners' comprehension on different grammatical system to indicate time aspects. It means that adopting only text in teaching grammatical system of English is insufficient. One of the participants states that:

“When I only write it down on the paper, I just understand it. However, when I utter it, I find it difficult because I am used to use them in spoken form, so I believe this kind of dialogue improve my comprehension when applying these helpings verbs”.

Another participant suggests by practicing the use of helping verbs in form of question and ask method, it help them to memorize the changing use of helping verbs in different types of the sentences “*Practicing Qanda method help me a lot to use those helping verbs directly into my spoken*”. The other mode used by learners is gestures when learners are struggling to put helping verb *does* during Qanda activities and the teachers indicate the subject with names e.g Budi, Ani to help learners during the Qanda activities to improve their understand of using *does* for singular subject. The multimodal communication of people's names supports the learners' comprehension of the meaning of singular subjects in the third person most of the time Indonesian learners are confused since Indonesian language, the singular subject either third or the first person, and the second person does not affect the way to construct the sentences of general information or daily activities.

Therefore, the study indicates applying more than one mode: text and people's name in spoken mode to indicate singular subject can enhance learners' comprehension in term of grammatical differences between Indonesian and English language. This finding is in line with previous studies (Pramono & Suherdi, 2019; Japar, 2022) that the use of multimodality in teaching English as a foreign language supports the learners' comprehension because using more than one mode can give a more comprehensive explanation for the learners thus teacher should not resist of applying various modes in learning. Therefore, the study suggests that multimodality in learning English grammar play crucial role to improve learners' understanding on the different linguistic system between English and Indonesian. Moreover, most of the time, English is only use within the classroom. So, applying more than one mode or text only can help the learners to see differences to signify the different times in their sentences between English and Indonesian language. It will improve their understanding the function of helping verbs to signify time aspects in their sentences. This finding is in line with the previous study conducted Nan, (2015) that she suggested to adopt two modes in teaching grammar for learners in China.

CONCLUSION

There are many differences in linguistic systems between the English and Indonesian languages. Most of the time, the Indonesian learners have possessed previous grammatical knowledge that have many dissimilarities from English language. The dissimilarities result in the learners' confusion in expressing the simple notion or their daily activities even with simple sentences. These challenges are faced by the learners because the different system in signify the time aspects between English and Indonesian language. In terms of Indonesian system, determining time aspect is much easier just by adding proper adverbs of times. Those dissimilarities require crucial attention from English teachers to apply proper teaching methods and proper multimodalities to support leaners' comprehension of English grammar.

Further research should investigate the types of multimodality resources the learners need to use those helping verbs in interactive dialogues outside of the classrooms.

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