



## **AN INTERLANGUAGE ERROR ANALYSIS: A FORMATIVE EVALUATION FOR FRESHMEN**

### **ANALISA KESALAHAN *INTERLANGUAGE*: EVALUASI FORMATIF UNTUK MAHASISWA TAHUN PERTAMA**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper aims at finding the interlanguage errors made by the freshmen of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. This research needs to be conducted since the result can become a formative evaluation for lecturers in teaching English for the freshmen. The method used in this reserach is a qualitative-descriptive method, supported by simple quantitative calculation. The data were taken from students' mid term examination. The mid term examination included multiple choice, cloze procedure and composition or writing test. In writing test, the students were asked to write a one-paragraph composition. There were 6 (six) classes participaed in the test. One class was randomly taken as a sample A Target Modification Taxonomy by James (1998) is used to analyze and describe the errors. It analyzes what types of errors made most by the subject of this study. It was found that the most commonly made interlanguage errors by the freshmen are omission.

**Key words:** *Error analysis; Interlanguage; Target Modification Taxonomy;*

#### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menemukan kesalahan interlanguage yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa baru atau tahun pertama Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Padang. Penelitian ini perlu dilakukan karena hasil darai penelitian ini bisa dijadikan sebagai evaluasi formatif dari dosen untuk mahasiswa tahun pertama. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, didukung oleh perhitungan kuantitatif sederhana. Data berasal dari nilai ujian tengah semester mahasiswa. Jenis tes yang digunakan adalah pilihan ganda, melengkapi kalimat rumpang dan ujian menulis. Dalam ujian menulis, mahasiswa diminta untuk menulis satu buah paragraf. Ada 6 (enam) kelas yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Satu kelas diambil sebagai kelas sampel. *Target Modification Taxonomy* oleh James (1998) digunakan dalam menganalisa dan mendiskripsikan jenis kesalahan yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa.



Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa jenis kesalahan yang paling banyak dibuat oleh mahasiswa adalah *omission*.

**Kata Kunci:** Error analysis; Interlanguage; Target Modification Taxonomy;

## A. INTRODUCTION

Intensive Course (IC hereinafter) is one of the subjects in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang provided for the freshmen. IC course is a prerequisite for the students before they take other courses. Different from other subjects, IC is taught for 14 hours in a week. IC emphasis on the integrated English. Skills and language components such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are taught integratedly in intensive way. One of the expected outcome is the students begin to recognize the language skills and language components, and be able to develop their interlanguage so that they are able to use the language skills accurately and fluently.

Students enjoy learning English in IC class. Lecturers encourage students to always actively use English orally and written. Lecturers are required to use English as much as possible so that their language has become an input for students. The given input must be comprehensible input so that students can understand the message delivered by lecturers automatically (Krashen, 1985).

Input is not enough to develop the student Interlanguage. Swain in Skehan (1994) states that there should be output as an attempt to create an interaction between students and teachers. She claims that the output has a vital role to develop learners' interlanguage. Two of the roles of the inputs are to generate better input and to force learners into a more syntactic processing mode (Skehan, 1994). The first role suggests output indicate lack of comprehension so that teachers can provide more useful input. The second role forces students to use a more syntactic mood. In other words, they have to produce the language accurately and fluently.

Since students have to produce language accurately, grammar mastery is needed. Grammar is needed to teach because it provides comprehensibility and acceptability as it is mentioned by Swan (1994). First, the students are taught how to build and use certain structures. Knowing how to build and use certain structure makes it possible to communicate common types of meaning successfully. Without the structures, it is difficult to the make comprehension sentences. Second, in some social contexts, serious deviance from native spekaers norm of can hinder integration and excite prejudice - a person who speaks "badly" may not be taken seriously or may be considered uneducated or stupid. Therefore, students may want or need a higher level of grammatical correctness than is required for mere comprehensibility.

Lecturers often say to the students not to be afraid to make mistakes or errors in order to motivate students who are shy or reluctant to speak. Interlanguage students certainly make mistakes or errors. Making a mistake in learning a foreign language is a common thing. It also happens in acquiring first language or mother tongue.

A formative evaluation is needed to see students' progress or achievement in English. As Palotti (2010:165) articulates that the main aim of formative assessment is "*...diagnosing pupils' strengths and weaknesses, their achievements, difficulties and developmental paths, in order to make teaching more effective and, possibly, make pupils (especially older ones) aware of their own learning,...*" One way to evaluate students' progress is by analyzing learners' interlanguage errors.

By analyzing students' interlanguage errors, IC teachers, particularly, can better understand their students' interlanguage and learning process. It is necessary to

recognize the roots of errors before they are eliminated. Learners' misuse in grammar shows that teachers should pay attention to the reinforcement of knowledge delivered to the students. A research about students' grammar errors was conducted (Tiarina, 2014). The research investigated students' grammar errors in spoken language while they were doing practice teaching.

Different from the previous research, the focus of this study is about English learners' writing errors in their mid term examination, aiming at finding out the errors, analyzing the errors and showing some implications on English teaching, particularly in the IC class as a formative evaluation.

In 1972, American linguistics Larry Selinker generated the new word “interlanguage” which refers to language produced by language learners who are learning target language. Interlanguage is the language between native language and target language. In the development of learners' interlanguage, Error Analysis (EA) could play an important role.

Corder has made crucial points about error analysis (James, 1998). He pointed out that error analysis is significant in two aspects. Error analysis tells the teacher what needs to be taught, and it tells the researcher how learning proceeds. Language learners will be curious about the language they are learning (McKay, 2006), so they are willing to accept any feedback that will upgrade their language knowledge. Then they will get into the evaluation part of learning language and the students will be able to use words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thought (Harmer, 2007).

It is important to evaluate the students' language by showing the errors they have made rather than the right one (Ellis, 1997). Showing the error then noticing the right one will help the students to revise the students' misunderstanding about a certain language feature then their language learning could develop gradually over the time. However, to show the students' errors should be extended by the teacher as wise as possible.

Ellis (1997) defines the error as reflection of learner's knowledge and it occurs because the learner does not know the correct one. Lack of language knowledge such as pronunciation, accents, words use, vocabulary, and structure can be addressed to the students because of their error occurred. Therefore, they will learn this language knowledge gradually over the time. It means that the students will get their errors at the early moment of learning a new knowledge of a language lesson.

James (1998:6) quotes Lenon's definition of an error as “a linguistic form... which in the same context... would in all likelihood not be produced by learner's *native speaker counterparts*”. James adds that an error appears only when there was no intention to commit or make it. James (1998) uses the neutral term deviance(s) for all ways of being wrong as a foreign interlanguage language learner. Deviances can be divided into four types: slips, mistakes, errors and solecisms. He explains that slips can quickly be detected and self-corrected by their author unaided. Mistakes can only be corrected by their author if their deviance is pointed out to him or her. Errors cannot be self-corrected until further relevant (to that error) input (implicit or explicit) has been provided and converted into intake by the learner. Solecisms are breaches of the rules of correctness as laid down by purists and usually taught in schools. In this paper, the term ‘error’ is used to refer to the deviation or unsuccessful language which the learner produces and fails to correct automatically. In this sense, what we call errors include what James calls mistakes, errors and solecisms. An error can not be self-corrected. Brown (2007) says error analysis can be focused on linguistic elements.

The students or the error makers will obtain more luck from this error analysis study because they will know and realize the error they have made when they are learning a new material. Being shown the error they have made sometimes will be brought up next to their mind so that they will be aware of having the similar errors. They will be noticeable about the language features as well and it will possibly help the students to self-correct the errors they have made (Ellis, 1997).

There are many researchers focusing on interlanguage error analysis. Researchers from China, such as Sixia Gao, and Mi Ning do some relevant theoretical study. Gao (2009) analyzed the learners' errors in order to provide policies for teachers to have towards errors. Ning (2012) conducted interlanguage error analysis in advanced English learners' writing. He noted that there are more grammar errors found in their composition than lexical errors.

Researchers from Jordan also conducted the reserach about error analysis. Assafeh (2013) found that there is a statistically significance difference in students' performance before and after the exposure of the ability to detect and correct some "common" grammatical errors. Al Khresheh (2015) focused his study on reviewing and discussing the role in interlanguage in describing and explaining learners' errors in the process of acquisition L2. Tiarina (2014) did the research about grammar error analysis made by students studying Microteaching. It was found that the misselection was the most common error made by the Microtaching students. And the latest research is done by Jeptanus and Ngene (2016). Their research was about interlingual and intralingual errors. The finding is the nature and causes of the errors found can be used to get solutions to learners' poor performance in English language.

All research above used theory and error classification from James (1998). He proposes five classifications/types of errors. They are omission, overinclusion, misselection, disorder and blends. It is called a Target Taxonomy Modification. James had modified error classification from previuos experts, such as Dulay, Burt and Krashen in 1982. Omission is the absence of content and functions words. The example of omission is *He'll pass his exam and I'll  $\phi$  too*. Overinclusion includes overgeneralization, double marking and simple addition. The example of overinclusion is *He doesn't know\*s*. Misselection is the wrong form of a structure or morpheme. The example is *I \*seen her yesterday*. Blends are the situations where there is not just one well-defined target, but two. The learner is undecided about which of these targets he has "in mind". In this example *according to Erica and in Erica's opinion* seem to be blended.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

The method used in this reserach is a qualitative-descriptive method, supported by simple quantitative calculation. The data were taken from students' mid term examination. The mid term examination included multiple choice, cloze procedure and composition or writing test. In writing test, the students were asked to write a one-paragrah composition. There were six (6) classes participaed in the test. One class was randomly taken as a sample for this research.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The research instruments in this study were used to gain the answer of the research questions. The researcher conducted the research, collected data until analyzed the data of the study by herself (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In this study, the researcher collected students' writing. The theory of James (1998) was

used to classify the students' errors found in their writing test. The errors then were put in a target modification taxonomy table. They are omission, overinclusion, misselection, misordering and blends. By classifying the categories of errors, the researcher would be able to find out the what errors were made most by the students. The researcher used the table to explain the errors found in detail and chart to show the percentage of the error frequencies or amount.

Following analysis was based on from the most to least frequent grammar errors found. There were 57 errors found in students' writing. The most frequent error was omission. It was found that 47% errors were omission. There is one sentence that has no Subject (S) and Verb (V). The student omitted S and V in *In my hometown \*so many beautiful places*. It should be *In my hometown **there are** so many beautiful places*. There is one sentence that has no Subject (S) in sub clause as in *I \*happy when \*hear you will visit my hometown*. The previous sentence has two omission; they S and *be* omission. *Be* omission appear more. 10 *be* omission found in nonverbal sentences. Other sample of the errors are *The weather \*very cold, Batusangkar \*famous with Pagaruyung castle*, and *Hopefully you \*interested with my advice*. While sentence *Padang is different since you \*gone* is error of omission *be* in perfect tense. The third omission was as in *Carocok beach is also call\** "*The romantic beach*". This is an omission of perfect form of the verb. The fourth errors found in infinitive. Sentence *Because if you forget \*bring your camera, you will regret*. "To" is omitted in the sentence.

The second type of error is misselection (28%). The first misselection found was redundancy, leaving the grammatical features that do not contribute to the meaning of an utterance. The redundancy found was plural markers errors where most of the students leave the -s in plural markers and -'s in possessive adjective. For example these errors were found in *I suggest you to visit some beautiful \*place*, *You should make reservation in Basko Hotel for two or three night\**. The third one is verb construction. The students failed to use the correct verb as in *Pekanbaru \*have a good place\*likes SKA*, *So many people \*visited the beach and take the pictures*. The first sentence should be *Pekanbaru **has** a good place\*likes SKA*. The second one should be *So many people **visit** the beach and take the pictures* because the sentence talks about a fact.

**Table 1.** Error type

Type of errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors (%)
Omission	27	47%
Overinclusion	12	21%
Misselection	16	28%
Misordering	2	4%
Blends	0	0
Total	57	100

The third type error was overinclusions. Many errors reveal in two verbs (double marking) in one sentence. It can be found in the following errors: *I can tell that you \*are will be very happy*, *You can \*be feel fresh after swim there*, *I \*was read your email* and *I'm\* feel very happy live in Padang*. The student overused -s ending for the second person in *I remember you \*likes snorkling*. Finally, it was found that two misordering errors. The sentence *As you know Pagaruyung castle \*had \*roof unique like a buffalo head*. The sentence actually has two errors; they are

error in verb construction and disorder. The error is in *roof unique*. It should be *a unique roof* because adjective must be preceded the noun. Finally, no blends were made by the students.

Comparing to errors made by the senior that is the students who took Microteaching (Tiarina, 2015), senior made most misselection errors while freshmen made omission errors. It indicates that the freshmen are not aware with the verb *be* in nonverbal sentences, and verb constructions. It happens because English rules about *-s ending*, for example, are not found in Indonesia language since the students are still interfered by their first language.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The result showed the most commonly made interlanguage errors by the freshmen are omission. It indicates that students are not aware with the verb *be* in nonverbal sentences, and verb constructions. Suggestions will be listed as follow. First, teachers can evaluate the materials that have been given and design more materials related to sentence construction, double marking and English tense. Second, some basic grammatical items, such as sentence construction, double marking and English tense, should be reviewed, not only through the teacher's explanation, but also through error-based remedial program. Finally, students should be exposed to English as much as possible and encouraged to use English that they have acquired without fear or embarrassment, since everything can only be learnt to perfection through practice. If learners make grammar errors, they should not be left to feel inadequate, but should be encouraged and at the same time a lecturer and students altogether analyse the errors. This way the pupils will feel free to use English and hence gain confidence in its use.

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