
THE ACQUISITION OF VERB PHRASES INDICATED IN EFL STUDENTS RECOUNT TEXT

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the interlanguage in regard to verb phrase acquisition that high school students produce when they write English especially recount text. This study is conducted on the basis of the fact that high achiever students still make errors although they have learned English for a long time. Also, the error themselves are as a system and can be used to determine interlanguage. The result showed that around 40% students produce error in producing writing text. It means most students produce correct structure in their sentence. However, students mostly have problem in acquiring gerunds, modals, and negative transformation of verb phrase. Also, not many students used passive transformation in their writing text. Many of them prefer to use active sentences rather than passive one. In addition, there are three processes that contribute to students' interlanguage; language transfer, transfers of training, and overgeneralization. The errors they make show that they go through development process and their acquisition of the target language must be on the interlanguage continuum. Therefore, interlanguage provides a more comprehensive way dealing with students' error, they are not perceived as something negative but as a construction of their own process of learning.

Keyword: Interlanguage Analysis, Text Analysis, Verb Phrase Acquisition

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia Curriculum, grammar aspect is integrated with all the four skill in English. Students do not learn grammar separately; apart from it students learn to put them correctly in their spoken or written English skills. Furthermore, grammatical aspect is one of the important points in writing English. Students' knowledge in grammar contributes to effective language use in writing. However, students' grammatical errors are considered as sign of human fallibility, so that they potentially occur in their language. In term of second language acquisition, the error which produce whether spoken or written target language known as interlanguage error (1). It covers the special mental grammar that learners constructed during their development.

This paper draws some interlanguage errors that made by students as indicated in their writing text especially in recount text. This study focuses only on the use of verb phrase that occurs in students' writing. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- What verb phrase do the students produce in their recount text?
- What processes contribute to the students' use of verb phrase in their recount text?

The study is conducted to 5 Senior High School students in SMAN 3 Padang. They were chosen randomly as students in higher achiever class. It assumed that they have good understanding in learning English especially in writing recount text.

2. ERROR ANALYSIS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second language acquisition is the process in which people learn a language other than their native language either inside or outside the classroom (1). There are two systems in second language performance; acquired system and learned system. The acquired system is a process when the learner requires meaningful interaction in target language through natural communication. Meanwhile, learned system is the product of formal instruction which result in conscious knowledge about the language.

Between mistakes and errors, there's differences (2). A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or slip in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes, in both native and second language situations. An error is a noticeable deviation, reflecting the competence of the learner. It is a systematic deviation made by the learner who has not yet

mastered the rules of the target language. The learner cannot self correct an error because it is a product reflective of his or her current stage of L2 development, or underlying competence (3).

Error analysis is an activity to reveal errors in written and spoken utterance. It is the investigation of second language learners. Learners' error can be regarded as a device to learn. Furthermore, investigating the learners' error is an effective means to describe the understanding for learner's occurrences (4). There is a need for students to recognize the error which occur in their writing, it is to perform how they acquire the language use in writing.

The Verb Phrase

Lexical verb

Lexical verb (also referred as main verbs) decides what elements that the sentence must or must not contain. Lexical verb typically express actions, state, or the predicate meaning (5). Lexical verbs include the base form of verb, third person singular present form, past tense form, past participle in perfect construction, and the -ing form with *be* to indicate progressive aspect (6).

Auxiliary verb

Auxiliary verbs are the verbs that contribute in other ways to the sentence meaning. These verbs help other verb and they will always occur with another verb (5). There are two types of auxiliary verbs; modal auxiliary (e.g. *can, could, may, might*) and primary auxiliary (e.g. *be, have, do*) (6).

3. THE IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF VERB PHRASE

Verb phrase substantially concerns the verb string of the clause. The verb string includes the kind of lexical verb where the verb string consists of one verb and any other verbs belonging to the class of auxiliary verbs (5).

Principally, recount text constructs past experience. In this case, the using of past tense is a must for the writer, since past tense is the form of language used to refer the events that happened in the past. Past tense also expresses activity or action in the past.

The use of verb phrase in writing recount text:

Verb Phrases	Error	Non-error	Total
Verb Agreement	11 (20%)	43 (80%)	54
The use of have/has	9 (23%)	29 (74%)	38
Problem with Gerunds	8 (72%)	3 (28%)	11
Problem with Modals	9 (64%)	5 (35%)	14
Negative Transformation	17 (53%)	15 (47%)	32
Passive Transformation	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	3
	56 (37%)	96 (67%)	152

Grammar as a learned system in language acquisition, from the data, it can be seen students have good acquisition in constructing verb agreement. Most students produce correct structure in their sentence. Also for the using of have/has, students have a great understanding to produce them correctly. However, students mostly have problem in acquiring gerunds, modals, and negative transformation of verb phrase. Furthermore, not many students used passive transformation in their writing text. Many of them prefer to use active sentences rather than passive one.

The description of student's error in producing verb phrase can be as the following examples:

- ... After we in grouped. We were started to hiking. First, we were walked along the long streets that very tired. Then, we were accrossed the small river, at there my foot falled into the river, that made my shoes weted. After that, we were climbed it with rope that was heavy and so tired... (Student no 2)

Furthermore, most of the students are understand about the using of auxiliary verbs (*perfect, progressive, passive auxiliary*); however some of them do not use it appropriately in the sentences. It can be seen as followed:

- ... Afternoon, I and my father were are conference hotel while talking. We were talked about something. He is gave me advice to me became success person. He is wanted I became success person. In my heart, Isad listened him said. I really wanted to make him happy... (Student no 1)

There are also students who have low ability in using the appropriate verbs in sentences. In some condition, this disability also makes readers confuse in understanding the meaning of this sentences. The description of students' writing in using the verbs can be seen in the following examples.

- ... before continue go to Bukittinggi. We arrived in Bukittinggi at 01.00 Pm. First we went to Jam Gadang and take picture, we continues go to zoo see an animal like a bird, orang utan, and another. The trip is tired on 03.00 Pm... (student no 2).
- ...After that we back to car and continued the trip, suddenly I got a little accident. My leg is crash of the car... (student no 1).
- The hill was smoothly and extremely sleep, because me almost falled into the gorge, that was very scared. It was end yet, because we must walked along the river... (student no 5).

Apart from this, there are also many students who achieve good acquisition on the use of verb phrase. The description can be seen in the following examples:

- ... We were playing basketball together after jogging. It was very funny. After that, we went to beach, at beach we were playing wave and we wrote at the sand. We took many pictures. I was happy at that time... (student no 4)
- ... We left home at five o'clock. We arrived in BIM at five thirty. We went to Jakarta by airplane. We went to Jakarta at six o'clock. I was a little worried to flying. After some hours, we arrived at Soekarno-Hatta Airport. We stayed in Jakarta about one week. In the first day, we went to Dufan... (student no 3)

4. PROCESS OF INTERLANGUAGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

To acquire second language or foreign language learner developed a language system which is influence by their language knowledge (7). Interlanguage refers to the structured system that a learner constructs at any given stage in language development (1). Therefore, interlanguage is a learning process of transfer knowledge to acquire second language.

The characteristics of interlanguage are developed by Selinker as follows (1):

1. Language transfer (learner's interlanguage may be transferred from the first language)
2. Transfer of training (some interlanguage elements may derive from the way in which the learners were taught)
3. Strategies of second language learning (identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned)
4. Strategies of second language communication (an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers of the target language)
5. Overgeneralization of the target language material

5. IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' INTERLANGUAGE IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXTS

Regarding the process of interlanguage, from data of 5 higher achiever students in SMAN 3 Padang, it can be described that students mostly acquired language as a language transfer. Students' first language really influenced their expressions in writing text. This process is called negative transfer. See the example of students' writing below:

- ... After we in grouped. We were started to hiking. First, we were walked along the long streets that very tired. Then, we were accrossed the small river, at there my foot falled into the river, that made my shoes weted... (student no 2)

In those expressions, students tend to translate their sense in first language. For instance, *we were walked along the long streets that very tired*. It is a purely translated from their first language-Indonesia Language thus a reader cannot feel the English sense in the sentence. In Indonesia the expression is *kami terus berjalan jauh hingga sangat lelah*. Let see another sentence, *we were accrossed the small river, at there my foot falled into the river, that made my shoes weted*. This expression also come up with the ideas of translating first language into second language.

Furthermore, students' interlanguage is also influenced by transfers of training. Learners' interlanguage performance is a result of identifiable items in training procedures. Learners produced several terms which usually used in classroom. Let see the following examples:

- We left home at five o'clock.
- We arrived in BIM at five thirty.
- We went to Jakarta by airplane.
- We went to Jakarta at six o'clock.
- We arrived at Soekarno-Hatta Airport.
- We stayed in Jakarta about one week.
- In the first day, we went to Dufan.

The preceding examples showed that students are exposed to use pronoun as subject, and followed by lexical verb to describe their past activities. It may happen because the teacher almost present drills with pronoun in every practice.

Moreover, the most common process of interlanguage in students' recount text is overgeneralization. Some interlanguage elements are the result of overgeneralisation of target rules and semantic features (1). Overgeneralization occurs when the student has mastered a general rule, but does not know the other exception of certain condition. See the following example:

- We were talked about something.
- He is gave me advice to me became success person.
- He is wanted I became success person.
- In my heart, I sad listened him said. I really wanted to make him happy.

The preceding example describe that students have already understood very well about the use of past participle of lexical verb to show the past events. Students also have known that they need to use auxiliary verb to link subject and lexical verb. However, they used them inappropriately. Their limited knowledge of grammatical rule produced error on their writing products. It should be *we talked about something* rather than *we were talked about something*.

5. CONCLUSION

The primary goal of the study is to investigate the interlanguage in regard to verb phrase acquisition that high school students produce when they write English text. Based on the result of the analysis using acquisition criteria, it can be assumed that in general the use of verb phrase has not been acquired by all students. Around 40% students produce error in producing writing text. From the data, it clearly describes that most students produce correct structure in their sentence. Also for the using of have/has, students have a great understanding to produce them correctly. However, students mostly have problem in acquiring gerunds, modals, and negative transformation of verb phrase. Furthermore, not many students used passive transformation in their writing text. Many of them prefer to use active sentences rather than passive one.

In addition, there are three processes that contribute to students' interlanguage; language transfer, transfers of training, and overgeneraliation. The errors they make show that they go through development process and their acquisition of the target language must be on the interlanguage continuum.

Therefore, interlanguage provides a more comprehensive way dealing with student's error, they are not perceived as something negative but as a construction of their own process of learning.

By the result of verb phrase acquisition and students process in interlanguage analysis, it will be good if teachers can present real life examples on the use of verb phrase in writing. So that students can realize the using of grammatical aspects in acquiring writing skill.

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