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Error Analysis and Its Implications for the English Classroom: A Case Study of an Advanced English Learner

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Abstract: This study aims to examine English spoken language uttered by Indonesian EFL learners by employing error and interlanguage analysis. It principally focuses on highlighting the value of error and interlanguage analysis on the development of Indonesian English language teaching classroom. The data were in the form of language transcription taken from a structured sociolinguistics interview with an advanced English learner. The results indicate that errors, either on phonological, grammatical, lexical, or pragmatic competence, are principally caused by L1 or interlingual transfer, despite few occurrences of developmental errors. Regarding the implication of this study for language classroom, it offers several suggestions for improving English language classroom including an introduction of varieties of chunk languages and adjacency pairs used across cultures to students.

Keywords – Error Analysis, Interlanguage, English Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

As second language speakers, making mistakes during the course of producing the language is inevitable. The earlier theory of second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) considered any kinds of error as a result of first language (L1) or native language

interference when speakers transfer L1 habits into second language (L2) systems (Ellis, 2008; Poulisse & Bongaerts, 1994). Nevertheless, this notion was discredited by SLA development, suggesting that error is a signal of second language processing development and it is not necessarily caused by L1 interferences. Language errors were then categorized into two types: interlingual (caused by L1 interference) and intralingual (caused by target language (TL) system) (H. D. Brown, 1994; Connor, 1996), which will be described in the following section.

Some studies have been conducted in different contexts, suggesting the learner's L1 influence on English writing. Solano et al. (2014) investigated Ecuadorian students' English writing and concluded that their L1, Spanish, had influences on their writing, mainly causing errors in grammar and vocabulary. Choroleeva (2009)analysed English writing of Bulgarian learners. It was found that their L1 influenced their writing at the level of phonology, orthography, vocabulary and grammar. Additionally, Pudin et al. (2015)analysed the influence of L1 on Malaysian students' English writing and found that the errors are mostly on pluralization and sentence structure. In the case of Indonesia, Fauziati (2017)examined senior high school students writing by using both error and interlanguage analysis. The result indicated that the dominant native language influence was on vocabulary and the target language influence was on grammar.

These previous studies, however, tended to study written language, rather than spoken, and very limited work have analysed the implication of error and interlanguage analysis for the development of English language classroom, particularly in Indonesian contexts. Also, the subjects were primarily senior high school students with a variety of English proficiency levels. Therefore, this study endeavours to conduct error and interlanguage analysis on spoken language and the implication of error analysis for the development of English language classroom in Indonesia, with advanced English learners as subject participants. It began with a review of second language acquisition theories. The data collection process and method were presented prior to the analysis of the subject's language proficiency by looking at the use of phonology, grammar, vocabulary and pragmatics. Finally, before providing a conclusion, it discussed the implication of the analysis for second language pedagogy especially in Indonesian contexts.

Interlanguage

Interlanguage or learner language is a term used to describe each individual's progress at learning target languages. Sharwood-Smith (1994, p. 7) defined interlanguage as "the systematic linguistic behaviour of learners of a second or other language; in other

words, learners of non-native languages". Interlanguage is unique in the sense that it is not like native language nor target language. However, it is quite difficult for researchers or teachers to certainly depict the whole pictures of students' interlanguage as according to Selinker (1972 in Ellis, 2008), a linguist who coined the term, it is a mental process, meaning it is in the human's brain. Nevertheless, we still can examine the evidence of interlanguage through student's language production.

According to Ellis (1985b), learner language, the alternative term for interlanguage which refers to "the oral and written language by L2 learners" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 4), is systematic, dynamic and permeable. It is systematic because students do not create the rule haphazardly, instead, they follow consistent rules that they built up to the point of the stage. However, although systematic, the rules are dynamic. They can change slowly as accommodation to the new rules of target language system at the developmental stage. Its permeability refers to the possibility of language system to change because of the influence of environment, motivation, learning process, and L1, as students' L2 acquisition progress.

Regarding to its permeability and dynamicity, interlanguage is then variable. However, Ellis (1985a) states that its variability is both systematic and non-systematic. Systematic variability can be acknowledged by two conditions, namely situation and context. Situational variability entails the rapid change of linguistic forms based on the situation which Labov (1970) restrictedly refers to whom the second language speakers are talking to (in Ellis 1985b). Contextual variability or in letter occasion, Ellis (2008) calls it as a linguistic context, is when the use of one linguistic form effects the others. Meanwhile, non-systematic variability is more to the idiosyncrasy of L2 speakers in using communication strategies upon performance failure, such as false start, back-tracking, and others, and also their language style to transfer meaning as a result of "competing rules in learner's competence" (Ellis, 1985a, p. 121), such as using two or more different linguistic forms for the similar function interchangeably during the same interaction.

Error Analysis

Error analysis is one of SLA theory that had occupied large discussion among linguists. It is a process of looking at L2 learners' errors (Corder, 1981) and an attempt to identify, explain and evaluate why the errors happen (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Error analysis comparatively appeared to replace contrastive analysis which extents behaviourism theory of SLA. While contrastive analysis sees errors as unacceptable and need to be avoided for the L2 acquisition to perceive smoothly, error analysis, which is more associated with mentalism theory of SLA, considers making errors as natural for

learners and as Ellis (1985b) points out, they can provide indications of the process of acquisition. Furthermore, analysing learners' language errors entails two functions, namely providing learners' state of knowledge and serving a pedagogic practice to design remedial practice to improve learners' second language performance.

Errors occur as L2 speakers attempt to move at certain stage of their ways to reach target language boundaries but fail to arrive because of interferences coming from two sources, namely interlingual and intralingual transfer. The former transfer is a result of mother tongue interference. However, not all forms of L1 are transferrable to L2 and most second language speakers are aware of that (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Kallerman (in Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 65) explains that "prototypicality" and linguistically similarity of L1 to L2 are two factors why students tend to transfer some forms of mother tongue over the others. Intralingual transfer refers to the faulty of learning L2 strategies, such as over-generalisation, "incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply" and "ignorance of rule restriction" (Richards, 1971, p. 206). In a similar vein, O'Grady et al. (2011) divided errors in the ontogeny model for SLA into two: transfer errors and developmental errors. The former represents errors influenced by native language, while the later suggests a sort of errors caused by overgeneralisation or simplification of target language rules, which is similar to Intralingual error or transfer.

Cognitive and interactionist theories of Language Learning

Students can acquire target language among others through a cognitive process referring to conscious learning of second language. Mitchell and Myles (2004) divide the process of learning bits of language into three stages, cognitive, associative, and autonomous. Cognitive is the stage in which learners notice differences of language systems in their L1 and L2. Associative refers to a stage where learners are familiar, understand and attempt to internalise the target language systems but still require conscious efforts to use them in production. Meanwhile, the autonomous stage refers to a stage where students are able to produce the target language without requiring any references to declarative knowledge. In other words, this is the stage where the target language system becomes automatic lead to the condition where students are less aware of what they are doing. These cognitive stages, therefore, gradually can mitigate the consciousness of language learning.

Interaction hypothesis extends the Krashen's comprehensible input in the sense that interaction provides comprehensible input for students to acquire language (Gass

&Selinker, 2008). Accordingly, interaction triggers the use of negotiation meaning involving the use of communication strategies, such as comprehension and confirmation checks, to arrive at mutual understanding which is prominent for input comprehended. Furthermore, students can benefit from interaction in the sense that they can access negative evidence of the gap between what they wanted to say and what they are able to say which triggers the modification of output (Mitchell & Myles, 2004)

METHOD

This present study was part of research project that utilised a qualitative case study to investigate the implication of error analysis for Indonesian English language classroom development. It, however, only provides a glimpse of one case study participant or a pilot study. The data were in the form of language transcription taken from an interview. It is a structured sociolinguistics interview, in that the principal goal is to collect spoken language samples, instead of content (2002). The subject was a 30-year-old Indonesian male student of a university in the United Kingdom who has advanced English proficiency skills, with Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level of at least B2. The interview lasted approximately 35 minutes conversation based on three tasks of different complexity and was recorded and transcribed afterwards. Task 1 was a general interview about the interview's experiences living in the UK so far, focusing on his decision to study in the UK and his good and uncomfortable experience. The second task required the participant to retell the TV program he had seen lately. The third task asked the interviewee to discuss a current issue that had occurred in Indonesia. Then, we conducted error analysis based on several linguistic competence.

The following section is the analysis of interviewee's interlanguage focusing on his phonological, grammatical, lexical competence, and pragmatics competence upon these three tasks. It is not only aimed at identifying his errors across those competences but also, as Tarone and Swierrzbin(2009) stated, locating where he succeeded to get the forms right to complete the whole picture of problematic examples.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Phonological Competence

There were some common phonological errors constantly occurred in all three tasks. First, the interviewee replaced 'th' sound to /t/ as in 'ting' [thing] and 'wit' [with]. This problem stably occurred across the three tasks and there was no difference whether the sound is in the beginning or in the end of the words. We categorized this error as a result of

L1 transfer. Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that some languages don't have /θ/ and Young (2001) confirms that /θ/ do not exist in Indonesian consonants, thus, Indonesian speakers often assimilate /θ/ into similar sounds in existing sound which is /t/. Johnson (2013) states that pronunciation and lexis are vulnerable to first language transfer. Thus, in this sense, we can see that the interviewee's previous knowledge of L1 and a tiny boundary of this dental fricative sound caused him to inevitably transfer to his pronunciation of English.

Secondly, the interviewee occasionally enunciated final position of consonant cluster of 'gh' or 'ght' with /g/ sound, such as not to mention all, 'hig' [high], 'even thoug' [even though], and 'droug' [drought]. This kind of error may show his interlanguage system as again, a result of the interference of his native language. According to Swan and Smith (2001) Indonesians have very limited consonant cluster and the typical 'syllabus structure in simple words is consonant-vowel-consonant', thus, it is reasonable why Indonesians, such as the interviewee, often dropped the sound of some consonants such as /p, t, and k/ when they fall 'in post-vocalic and final position' of word consonant clusters (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. 281). However, when we look more closely at this error, we can see that the interviewee could also pronounce 'gh' sound correctly in the word 'through'. As such, we cannot put the blame of this kind of errors merely on the L1 interference. Instead, we suggest that there is a possibility that an induced error also comes to play. Induced errors refer to errors led by 'the nature of instruction…received' (Ellis, 2008, p. 60). They can be resulted from the faulty language instruction in classrooms (Stenson, in Ellis 2008) or from everyday second language exposures. In our classroom observation in Indonesia, we found some of English teachers pronounced the ending of 'gh' or 'ght' sound as the way the interviewee did, which in some extent used to influence students' pronunciation. It seems that the interviewee experienced similar experience. Thus, it may be argued that the interviewee's inability to pronounce 'gh' or 'ght' sound may also be influenced by the faulty pronunciation he received in language classroom. Meanwhile, his ability to pronounce 'through' correctly may be influenced by his daily exposure to similar word from advertisement such as 'drive through' (fast food company service). It supports the idea that the amount exposure to target language shapes language learners.

Thirdly, the interviewee was confused occasionally to use vowel /ai/ and /I/ when he pronounced letter 'I'. In some occasion, he replaced /ai/ with /I/ when /ai/ is the correct pronunciation, such as 'environment' [env/i:/ronment], while in another occasion, he pronounced /ai/ when /I/ sound belongs, such as 'Italy' [/ai/taly]. In Indonesia, his first language, the letter 'I' is less variously pronounced as /I/ but we do not suggest that this

error is led by his first language interference. Instead, it may have been a manifestation of his L2 development process. In this case, his inconsistently error demonstrates that he is aware of the rules regarding the pronunciation of /ai/ and /I/ but was unable to pronounce them correctly on a consistent basis. This may be true since in most occasion during interview, he actually pronounced /ai/ and /I/ correctly.

Overall, pronunciation of /θ/, 'gh' or 'ght', /I/ and /ai/ sounds are areas in which the interviewee made common errors. It is not suggested that he should sounds like native speakers, moreover with the fact that English is as *lingua franca* where varieties of English including pronunciation emerge as a result of English spoken around the world. However, pronouncing those sounds correctly is worth learning since it enables the utterances more comprehensible.

Grammatical Competence

Many grammatical errors were found in the interviewee's speech, but most salient common errors in numerous occasions across the three tasks, which will be the focus of explanation in this section, are the use of past verbs, and plural markers. In most occasions throughout the three tasks the interview failed to use past verbs to recall past experience or past events. It could be assumed that this error, to some extent, is a result of his attempt to transfer his L1 system. Accordingly, Bahasa Indonesia does not have past-form verbs to retell past events. They are sufficiently indicated by time signal only ('last two days', 235, and 'in the end of November', 297). However, in few occasions, he could manage to use them correctly such as 'thought; 'didn't' in task 1, and 'forgot', 'caused' in task 2. The inconsistently of this error reflects the interviews' understanding of the target language system itself rather than transferring his L1. Therefore, this error could also be a manifestation of his developmental process of L2. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), we have to look at some stages of development to depict individual learners' behaviour, because learners in one stage may make use of typical aspects of other stages. In the case of my interviewee, he could use the past verb-from correctly but failed in another stage.

Another common error was plural marking. Utterances such as 'two day', 'two match', 'three or four club' are salient to the analysis because it demonstrates an attempt to transfer L1 systems. Young (2001) states that dropping plural endings is a common problem of Indonesian and Malay English speakers since Indonesian and Malay do not have plural morpheme system. Instead, plural nouns are formed with number or plural quantifier. Here, the interviewee's longer exposure of first language and the complexity of

the interaction might lead him to take the same approach to use plural marking in target language system, English.

Lecical Competence

Few of errors in lexical competence are found, although there are numbers of hesitations, fillers, vague languages, and self-repetition across the tasks during interview. Occurrence of these strategies are normal in spoken discourse and considered as fruitful. They can help the speakers to buy sometimes to formulate his utterances moreover if the topics of interaction are less familiar (Thornburry, 2005). However, the use of those aspects of spoken reduced gradually when the interview went on to task three. It may be due to the familiarity of the topic. According to Johnson (2013), if the task involves topics that are familiar or within interlocutors' interest, they will find the task easier. Thus, in such less stressful interaction, speakers tend to use wide range of vocabulary and more complex sentences. Here, although the interviewee did not have sufficient information about the news in task 3, however, the topic regarding the news, natural disaster, is among of his academic interest. Thus, it made the flow of his speech went more smoothly. Even more advanced vocabulary was spotted used by the interviewee such as 'casualty', 'drought', 'deforestation', and 'precipitation'. In this case, regardless other problems that the interviewee exhibited, this seems to indicate his strength.

The interviewee employed some of communication strategies suggested by Ellis (2003): approximation or word substitution ('settlement with government' for TV license,; 'Alfamart' for convenient store), 'appeal' for assistances, and deliberate transfer ('kos-kosan'). These communication strategies are achievement strategies and considered as compensatory in nature (Ellis, 2003), which means that the interviewee used them due to his lack of vocabulary. The fact that the interviewee attempted to maintain the flow of interaction using these communication strategies indicates his L2 development process. It means that he is aware of how to communicate effectively but has limited knowledge to communicate completely accurate.

Pragmatics Competence

Pragmatics is commonly associated with endeavours to save face: 'public self-image of person' (Thomas, 1995; Yule, 1996, p. 60). It leads the notion of politeness as an action to mitigate the face threatening acts (Culpeper, Haugh, & Kádár, 2017). Positive politeness attempts to maintain interlocutors' self-esteem, while negative politeness attempts to preserve interlocutors' independency (P. Brown & Levinson, 1978). However,

pragmatics involves the knowledge beyond face saving acts. It refers to the context and culture embedded in the language use. It explains why people use certain language forms be vocabulary, structure and others. Neglecting and not knowing the pragmatics will possibly breakdown the interaction.

Within the interview, it was found that the interviewee seemed neglecting the possibility of the threat to the interviewer's independency and his self-esteem. When he explicitly sought my assistance with the words he did not know, there was possible imposition to the interviewer's negative face and threat to his positive face as well, had the interviewer rejected to help. However, it also may be a prompt to his awareness of politeness. The interviewee might have considered his action thoroughly and noticed that the threat would be weak since we are acquaintances and the interview was hold under less formal circumstance. As O'Keeffe (2011) stated, the occurrence of one of these accounts: power difference, social distance, and cultural ranking, influences the strength of face threatening acts. Therefore, the interviewee had negotiated the threat without damaging both interlocutors' face and successfully went on the conversation.

In addition, the interviewee failed to understand the question and provided unexpected answer. The question is meant pragmatically to ask how he feels about his accommodation, but he understood it literally as how he technically found it. We assumed this misunderstanding derived by his L1 interference. While the utterance was within native speakers' culture, his perceiving lied within his L1's cultures. In Indonesian culture, such chunk language means literally technical process, while in native speakers' culture, it pragmatically refers to the feeling towards something. We did not react to his response, instead, we reformulated the questions afterwards because we frequently have heard Indonesian people respond similarly to such questions. However, it was hardly rarely, if ever, found native speakers respond the same way in that context. Thus, we classified this error as L1 interference.

Implications for the Language Classroom

The problem of pronunciation of /θ/, 'gh' or 'ght', /I/ and /ai/ sounds are common errors among Indonesian English speakers (Young, 2001). Unfortunately, until recently, in some areas in Indonesia, the English language classroom still emphasizes heavily on syntactical knowledge and little attention is given on pronunciation. As Ellis (2008) suggested, teachers should address students' errors that may breakdown the communication. Since incorrect English pronunciation may cause difficulties in communication particularly when their interlocutors have different first language, it

triggers the shift of language pedagogy to pay more attention to this area. Task-based pronunciation (see Mora & Levkina, 2017) could be an alternative approach to address this issue.

Grammatical competence is another area that may need to be properly addressed since grammatical accuracy is difficult to be achieved without instruction (Polat & Kim, 2014). This research corroborates the finding of Watcharapunyawong and Usaha's (2013) study and Pudin et al.'s (2015) analysis that the LI interference was dominant in the verb tenses and pluralisation, in particular L1 that does not have past-form verbs and plural morpheme system. Since the data were spoken language, it seems important for the teacher to consider distinguishing between the grammar of spoken language for fostering speaking skills or natural interaction and grammars that primarily reflect written standards (Carter & Mncarthy, 1995). In addition, the use of corpora (written and spoken) in teaching grammar (Jones & Waller, 2015) could be an effective approach to teach and compare these two types of grammar.

In addition, the pragmatic problem of interviewee regarding the chunk languages reflects the necessity for teachers to introduce more varieties of chunk languages and also adjacency pairs used across cultures. It may sound difficult to teach all of them since different places use different styles. However, teachers may start with triggering students' awareness of these varieties by requiring students to listen or watch real life interactions of Americans or British or some other native speakers via video or movies (Davies & Tyler, 2005) or directly as peer tutors (Williams, 2005) and pay attention to the intended languages. Then teachers can motivate students to find other varieties of these languages during their self-study.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study has highlighted the value of error and interlanguage analysis on the advance of Indonesian English language teaching classroom, although it has a number of limitations, particularly the small population of participant. In general, the results demonstrate that errors, either on phonological, grammatical, lexical, or pragmatic competence, are principally caused by L1 or interlingual transfer, despite few occurrences of developmental errors. Regarding the implication of this study, the teacher is suggested not to overlook phonological competence of learners as it still becomes shared errors among Indonesian students. Also, an introduction of varieties of chunk languages and adjacency pairs used across cultures or in cross-cultural institutional talk is needed to deal with pragmatic interlanguage issues. It should be noted, however, a further study with

larger population samples must be conducted in order to boost the empirical credence and increase the generalisation of the findings.

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