

## **Error Analysis and Interlanguage: Reflections for Indonesian Teachers and Learners**

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**Abstract:** This paper aimed to describe the role of error analysis and interlanguage as a natural process in teaching and learning. Extensive history of English learning in Indonesia is described in the paper as it gives a view of how English has been used for decades. The terms of error and interlanguage by Corder and Selinker are also elaborated briefly. Errors occur due to two interferences: interlingual and intralingual. Clear instruments of students' performance towards English competence, feedbacks of teachers and students in language learning engagement, and a fruitful advantage for teachers and learners for their further resource of learning are some points that have been proposed for Indonesian teachers and learners.

**Keywords:** *Error analysis, interlanguage, language teaching in Indonesia*

**Abstrak:** Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan peran analisis kesalahan dan interlanguag sebagai proses alami dalam proses belajar dan mengajar. Sejarah yang panjang pembelajaran di Indonesia juga dijelaskan dalam makalah ini karena memberikan pandangan tentang bagaimana bahasa Inggris digunakan selama beberapa waktu. Ketentuan kesalahan dan antar bahasa oleh Corder dan Selinker juga diuraikan secara singkat. Kesalahan terjadi karena dua gangguan: interlingual dan intralingual. Instrumen yang jelas dari kinerja siswa terhadap kompetensi bahasa Inggris, feedback dari guru dan siswa dalam keterlibatan pembelajaran bahasa, dan beberapa keuntungan yang bermanfaat bagi guru dan peserta didik sebagai sumber belajar mereka berikutnya adalah beberapa poin yang telah ditulis untuk guru dan pelajar bahasa Inggris di Indonesia.

**Kata-kata kunci :** *analisis kesalahan berbahasa, interlanguage, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia*

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When learners learn a second or a foreign language, they tend to make errors. Errors are an inevitable part of the natural process in acquiring and learning a new language. Everyone makes errors when she or he constructs a new utterance of a new language. However, regarding this natural process of learning, errors cannot be seen as an offense. Instead, errors aid the learners to be more aware of the blunders they have made in a professional way. Corder (1981) states that errors are significant to the process of language learning but not mistakes because mistakes have no significance to the process of language learning. Ihsan (1999) asserts that errors should be faced and accepted positively as they are evidence of learning process. It is also claimed by Keshavarz (2012) that mistakes can be corrected by the learners if their attentions are drawn to them, but errors cannot be self-corrected. Nevertheless, determining the learners' errors and mistakes engages more studies and efforts. Keshavartz (2012) further states that true language learning is a process that necessarily involves errors. Analyzing learners' errors is crucial for teachers and the finding can be implemented in teaching and learning process.

The object of interlanguage research is to describe and explain the development of interlanguage and the ultimate failure of interlanguage is to reach a state of identity with the target language (Al-kresheh, 2015). Especially in Indonesia, many researchers found that Indonesian students still make errors in some linguistic features of English. Some researchers claim that most errors are made by students who have studied English for more than five years. Budiharto (2014) found out that the university students in Madura cannot build a complex sentence well due to the different word-order and sentence structure between Madurese language and English in terms of morphology and syntax. There are two kinds of errors in their sentence arrangement, that is, determining subject and verb agreement

such as: the use of "s" or "es" as the third person singular verb marker in simple present tense sentences and utterances as well.

Faisal, Mulya & Syamsul (2016) claimed that the dominant errors done by junior students on surface strategy taxonomy were selection (72%) followed by omission (14.4%), and addition (10.6%). Based on linguistic category taxonomy, the most dominant types of errors were word forms (48.4%), followed by articles (35%), nonfinite verbs (34.9%), verb tenses (34.3%), plurals (33.3%), and prepositions (30%). Sinaga and Sihombing (2014) described syntactical errors made by the graduate students of English Department and Applied Linguistics of the State University of Medan in writing their theses. Their study found that there are four types of syntactical errors: Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering. Faisyal (2015) revealed that the students of grade five of KMI Islamic boarding school in Klaten committed more errors in syntax rather than in morphology with different sources of errors, which is, language transfer, strategies of second language learning and overgeneralization. The findings also show that overgeneralization is the main source of errors, followed by strategies in second language learning, and the least is language transfer. Ampa and Basri (2013) found out that the native Indonesian-speaking students of English at Faculty of Letters UMI Makassar made 16 kinds of syntactic errors, such as identifier, be auxiliary, do auxiliary, word form, word class, and passive form. The findings also indicated that they made 18 manners of syntactic errors, such as misuse of verb form, omission of identifier, misuse of singular noun, omission of be, misuse of word order, misuse of identifier, and misuse of prepositional phrase as a subject.

Based on the findings of studies above, it proves that interlanguage errors take place in Indonesian classroom settings. Then, some queries arise, do the data above show

significant evidences of the failure of teachers of English? Does the English syllabus in Indonesian educational setting works well? Or are the students themselves who are not so focused and probably quite take it for granted while they are writing in? Is the time in teaching English sufficient enough? These set of questions may be given to the teachers who are aware of the success of their students in the process of language learning. However, the facts that English is taught only for an additional subject at elementary schools should also be investigated by the stakeholders. The mind-set of students towards English learning should be put in mind if they want to achieve good level of English proficiency. Despite the facts that have been shown above, it is worth noticing that English learning in Indonesia has been in such a long history. Then and now, providing English in primary schools is still debatable, moreover in rural areas.

### **English History in Indonesia**

English language teaching in Indonesia is influenced by its historical review where the Dutch (1700-1942) and the Japanese (1942-1945) occupied Indonesia for long periods of time. During the Dutch colonial period, only few Indonesians received education, but the majority of Indonesians were illiterate (Lauder, 2008). According to Ihsan (1988), the teaching of English in Indonesia during the Dutch period could be called "successful" in the sense that high school graduates could read English books without much difficulty. Good competence of the Dutch teachers of English, high motivation of Indonesian students, high salaries of the Dutch teachers and good environments and facilities of the schools are the four key factors of successful English language teaching in Indonesia in the Dutch era.

While in the Japanese period, the teaching of English was banned. Instead, The Japanese inflicted their language as the most dominant foreign language used.

However, Sadtono stated that *Bahasa Indonesia* was officially introduced as the national language, which "would later become one of the major obstacles for the success of English teaching in Indonesia" (Ihsan, 1988, pp. 2-3). After considering the social effects, politics and education, English was finally regarded as the first foreign language in Indonesia. A complicated task and social explanation of English in Indonesia from Independence to the present inevitably occupied information about the role of English that has played in society at large, especially in education. In addition, to the present, Government Regulation No. 19/2005 stipulates that language education should develop language competence with special emphasis on reading and writing according to the literacy level of education. In the content standard, it is mentioned that the ultimate goal of learning English is to participate in discourse or to communicate ideas, feelings, etc., in spoken and written English accurately, fluently and (/or) in an acceptable manner (Agustien, 2006 as cited in Yulia, 2014).

### **Error Analysis and Interlanguage**

Foreign or second language learners tend to pronounce words or utter sentences in their own ways. According to Selinker (1988), there exists a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm which is called by interlanguage (IL). The IL term has been generally acknowledged to signify the language learners' use of the target language. According to Tarone (1994), interlanguage is clearly different from both the learner's 'native language' (NL) and the 'target language' (TL) being learned, but linked to both NL and TL by interlingual identifications in the perception of the learner. Following Corder (1981), IL is the system of language learners, or simply the study of language learners' language.

Learners develop their own knowledge of language which is systematic, unique, and independent.

Interlanguage is somewhat EFL or ESL learners use to express their mind. Dulay, *et.al* (1982) prefers using the term interlanguage as transitional constructions. Transitional constructions are the language forms learners use while they are still learning the grammar of a language. For instance, a student who is still learning English might say “Why you not come?” or “Why you sad?” or “Why you mad?”. These flawed sentences are the transitional constructions which indicate learners’ progress in learning a new form of a new language. Further, Corder (1981) defines IL as an idiosyncratic dialect. It implied thereby that it is a dialect whose rules share characteristics of two social dialects of languages, whether these languages themselves share rules or not.

Errors are afflicted by the mother tongue interference which is known as interlingual interference. On the other hand, this interlingual interference is not the only source of errors that take place during the process of learning. The form of the target language also has an effect on making errors which is known as the intralingual interference (Geichi & Shekhzadeh, 2011). Hence, errors could occur by two prominent aspects namely, the interlingual or the mother tongue interference and the intralingual or the target language interference. There is an overlapping interference between the mother tongue and the target language. According to Henderson (1985), some errors could be predicted by Contrastive Analysis (CA). The latter approach assumes that learners’ errors are systematic (Corder, 1981). Then, Selinker (1972, as cited in Corder, 1981) discarded the ‘errors’ terms by viewing the language used by the learners as a whole language system. The purpose of Error Analysis (EA) is to investigate and analyse the teaching and learning process within the classrooms

settings. The concept of errors becomes the foremost trepidation in audiolingual approaches. It turns into the innermost apprehension of language teaching. Error analysis is a crucial area of applied linguistics and the second or foreign languages learning. The movement of EA can be characterized as an attempt to account learners’ errors that CA cannot predict or explain and to bring new theoretical climate of applied linguistic (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982).

### **The Role of EA & IL in ELT**

#### *Instruments of Students’ Performance towards English Competence*

Foreign or second language learning is a process of hypothesis in which trial and error always occurs. Even teachers could make errors in the process of teaching because errors are inevitable. For example, when a teacher is explaining a lesson he/she speaks with incorrect grammar. But teachers do know how to correct themselves after reviewing the process of teaching because teachers are more acquainted with the proper tenses, pluralizations, idioms, etc. Unlike teachers, students have not yet mastered the target language that is being learnt. They tend to make errors more than teachers do due to their less experience in identifying the correct forms of the target language. Learners’ errors of course give insight to the teacher about the learners’ difficulties in their learning process and, therefore, they are considered indispensable in learning and teaching process (Tizazu, 2014). Thus, teachers should analyse their errors by conducting error analysis to get an overall knowledge of students’ strengths and weaknesses in learning a foreign or second language. Regarding some facts about the importance of applying error analysis in the classroom settings, it is clear to the teachers that error analysis cannot be seen as an unvaluable source to measure students’ ability. Instead, it aids teachers not only to acknowledge how far students have

mastered the materials, but also to perceive how good teachers' methods and strategies in transferring the lessons and evaluating students' progress in learning.

Students cannot correct themselves to evaluate their learning progress. Neither can they realize and make the most of their ability in English. They do need teachers who can always rebuke and assess their enactment. Jayasundara and Premarathna (2011) state that doing EA in the classrooms can shed the light on designing curricula for the better fulfillment of ESL teaching and learning objectives in Sri Lanka. Yousefi, Soori, and Janfaza (2014) also agree that EA purpose is to re-evaluate teachers' teaching approaches and methods. With the evidence that IL might contribute to their language learning progress, patience is needed. More importantly that the errors they made are not fossilized yet, as the the length of time that they will have to face. As Fauziati (2011) suggests, some errors can be eradicated through external pedagogical interventions such as grammar instruction.

#### *Feedbacks from Teachers are Valuable*

Lee (2003) recommends some reasons of teachers did comprehensive marking to the students' writing assignment such as, teachers want to look at the overall performance of students, the errors made by junior students are basic, have to be pointed out, and manageable, students prefer comprehensive marking to selective marking, teachers are considered lazy if they do not mark all student errors, Students have to rely on teachers to tell them what errors they have made, if teachers don't mark all errors, students do not know what kinds of errors they have made, it is the teachers' duty to mark all student errors, parents want teachers to mark all errors. He also proposes the results of the interview of teachers did the selective marking of students' writing; 1) it can save time, 2) students can focus on specific area, 3) compositions are long, 4) heavy workload, 5) even if teachers mark all errors, students will still make the same

errors next time/students are not learning from their errors, 6) students cannot remember what teachers have marked, 7) marking all errors cannot really help students improve grammatical accuracy (Lee, 2003)

Applying error analysis, on the other hand, concerns with organizing remedial courses and devising appropriate materials and teaching strategies based on the findings of theoretical error analysis (Erdogan, 2005). Furthermore, teachers' responsibility is to systematically study such errors and bring to the attention of material developers and curriculum designers (Lighbown and Spada as cited in Tizazu, 2014). According to Fang and Xue-Mei (2007), teachers should learn how to tolerate some errors, especially some local errors. Teachers should keep tracking of how far towards the goal the learners have progressed and consequently what remains for them to learn. Meanwhile, the students themselves can yield errors as a reminder what to do and how to learn better in the future. In this sense teachers should teach students how to recognize errors and how to correct them. Thus, there should be an exchange of feedbacks between students and teachers during the process of teaching and learning. Since errors are inevitable, teachers have to provide students with plenty of practices inside or outside the classroom. With the feedbacks they have collected, teachers are to make new attempts to achieve approximate desired goals more closely (Fang & Xue-Mei, 2007).

#### *Fruitful Advantages for Teachers and Learners*

Analyzing learners' errors, in general, has two-fold advantages. Firstly, it gives a good understanding of the nature and types of errors so as to devise appropriate ways to avoid them (pedagogical advantage); Secondly, it provides an insight about the process of second language acquisition for the study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language

(Corder, 1981). These two significant advantages of error analysis are absolutely essential to make well-founded proposals for the development and improvement of the materials and techniques of language teaching (Tizazu, 2014). According to Corder (1981), error analysis is one of the most important tasks of the teacher in the language classroom, and it is a part of the skilled techniques of the teacher to decide when correction is necessary and to do it in a way that helps the learner to acquire most expeditiously the correct forms of the target language.

Corder (1981) proposed three advantages of studying errors, they are for the teachers, the researchers, and for the learners themselves. Firstly, for the teachers; if teachers are thoroughly aware of students' errors and do a systematic analysis, they would recognize how far students have learnt and put forward new methods and strategies for them. Secondly, for the researchers, errors are the evidence of how language is acquired or learnt. What procedures the learners make during and after the process of learning. Lastly, for the learners, errors and mistakes are devices to recognize how good they are in learning the language. It is also as a prompt for them not to do or use the same incorrect forms of a new language. Teachers can benefit from the findings of error analysis in many ways. Following the student's progress, the teacher is able to carry on his studies in accordance with what the learner needs to know and what part of the teaching strategy to change or reconstruct. Errors are a means of feedback for the teacher reflecting how effective he is in his teaching style and what changes he has to make to get higher performance from his students. Furthermore, errors indicate the points that need further attention. Thus, it can be inferred that language teaching cannot stand away from the findings of error analysis (Erdogan, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, errors are inevitable for all humans. Everyone makes errors and mistakes in his/her life. Errors and mistakes are two things that people cannot deny. They serve as the real evidence of a learning process. In a process of learning a second or a foreign language, errors are influenced by at least two interferences, namely, interlingual and intralingual interferences. The interchange of intralingual and interlingual factors triggers learners' errors. Thus, the learners have their own linguistic system in learning a new language. It is believed that interlanguage is influenced by describable behaviour's rule of linguistic systems.

Regarding rules of behavior, students and teachers need to work together to overcome learning problem. They may not be able to avoid the errors and mistakes, but they can rectify the errors by practising them frequently. Teacher's role is as the checker for students' errors, while students can remedy the mistakes through practice and study regularly. Hence, there should be feedbacks between teachers and students in the learning process. It applies to all teachers and students over the universe, including in Indonesia. Although English in Indonesia is considered as a foreign language and was formed through several issues, there is no reason to complain and stop learning. Indonesian teachers and students could still learn together to eliminate errors and mistakes in learning English and that can be achieved by analyzing and reflecting the errors they make.

Teachers should have good knowledge of English covering all linguistic and language aspects, viz., (phonetic (pronunciation), phonology (orthography), morphology (vocabulary), syntax (grammar, sentences), semantics, and pragmatics. Since grammar is the basic of English, all teachers should encompass the basic form of grammar. Teachers also should be aware with

students' errors. Sometimes teachers only focus on the lesson that they have to teach in a limited time at schools while students have to reach good English proficiency that is demanded by the government. It makes teachers pay attention to students' needs. They do not know what should be done for students if they make mistakes or if the students have low English proficiency. Thus, error analysis is needed to be accomplished by the teachers in order to see which part of language skills the students are still weak or low and to know what best strategies to teach them.

Students should study hard to master English well. Schools and teachers are not the only sources to learn and gain knowledge, but there are also plenty of English courses nowadays are everywhere in town giving different atmosphere in learning English. Digital era at the present day also helps them to quickly search for new information and learn English easier. However, those study efforts are useless if students do not practice English regularly and intensively. More exercises in speaking and writing can help students form and construct good sentences and utterances. Teachers and students should work together in order to get the best results in teaching and learning English. Furthermore, by applying EA in the classrooms, it can provide clear instruments of students' performance towards English competence, it also can give feedbacks of teachers and students in language learning engagement, and of course it is a fruitful advantage for teachers and learners for their further resource of learning.

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