ERRORS ANALYSIS: MOTHER TONGUE INFLUENCE ON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS’ PAPERS

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Abstract - The objectives of this study are to identify, classify, and analyze an error analysis of mother tongue influence on grammatical errors in English as Foreign Language students’ paper. The study conducted in Department of English the Academy of Foreign Language BSI Jakarta Indonesia. The students were enrolled in a writing course in the third semester of the academic year 2017-2018. The method used was descriptive method through content analysis in students’ papers. The result of this study showed, it was revealed that the mother tongue influence on grammar errors was the most common type of errors. The most common and salient mother tongue influence which were found in the students' paper are Subject-Verb agreement, verb tense and form, word order, plurality, and Passive voice. The study also showed that the errors occurred in the technical understanding of the target language. Furthermore, students need more reinforcement and development in understanding of Subject-Verb agreement.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Mother Tongue, Grammatical Errors

Introduction

The ability to master unbalanced or unequal languages often causes irregularities. In the mastery of a foreign language or a second language, a student cannot be separated from the influence of his first language or mother tongue. English as a foreign language in Indonesia has been taught from elementary school to university level. At the university level especially those with English majors, the English language component has been taught to include phonology, grammar, lexical/vocabulary presented through learning four language skills including Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The expectation from learning process given, the student would have the ability to write. But in reality, there are still many grammar errors in student writing. Mistakes may be due to maternal language interference when writing English sentences. This is in accordance with the opinion of Lott in (Bhela, 1999) "interference as errors in learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue".

Of all the four basic skills in language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), writing has been viewed as the most sophisticated skill to master. Researcher has identified this tendency as a critical issue to learners and users of any language. As (Richards & Renandya, 2002) explain; "there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating these notions into the legible text". Teachers of English as a foreign language are currently facing the challenge of adopting and developing a wide range of methods to accomplish effective teaching of English writing. In many cases, the majority of the students are still translating words, phrases, and sentences from Indonesian to English with often very strange results.

This research focuses on mother tongue influence on grammatical errors in Indonesian EFL students’ paper. It is based on the idea that effectiveness in English writing can be achieved by identifying, analyzing, and classifying the most common and salient errors made by students in their papers. Rod Ellis (Ellis, 2008) recommends error analysis as a tool to eradicate L1 interference in the language of ESL learners.

Discussing error analysis, it is better to know more about the differences between mistakes and errors. According to (Brown, 1994: 205), mistakes refer to a failure to utilize a known system correctly whereas errors concern a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. From the theory can be resumed that
mistakes do not require special treatment assuming they are recognized, while error refers to structure only. A mistake can be corrected by our self, but an error cannot. Errors are systematic.

Error analysis is an essential source of information to teachers. It provides information on students’ error which in turn helps teachers to correct students’ errors and also improves the effectiveness of their teaching. For learners, error analysis is indispensable, since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. The definition of error analysis according to (Corder, 2016) is “a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and TL itself”.

Further, (Richards, 1974) exposed the categories of errors, they are:

1. Interlingual errors: that is the errors happen in the learners' grammar which reflects the learners' mother tongue. These errors occur because there is interference from the learner's mother tongue.
2. Intralingual errors: that is the errors happen in the learner’s mother tongue but they don’t reflect the learner’s mother tongue, but it looks like the errors in the target language occur because the grammar, itself, affects one another in the target language.

A lot of causes’ errors have been analyzed by some experts. According to Slinker in (Richards, 1974:37), five sources of errors are:

1. Language transfer
2. Transfer of training
3. Strategies for second language learning
4. Strategies for second language communication
5. Overgeneralization of target language (TL) linguistic material

Meanwhile, (Corder, 2016) identified a model for error analysis which included the following steps:

1. Data collection: recognition of idiosyncrasy
2. Description: accounting for idiosyncratic dialect
3. Explanation (the ultimate object of error analysis)

Brown (Brown, 1994: 207-211) and Ellis (Ellis, 2008: 135-141) gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how to identify and analyze learners’ errors. The initial step requires the selection of a corpus of language followed by the identification of errors. The errors are then classified. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error, demands an explanation of different types of errors.

Meanwhile, according to (Nordquist, 2017) Mother tongue is a traditional term for a person's native language -that is, a language learned from birth. Mother tongue also called a first language, dominant language, home language, and native tongue (although these terms are not necessarily synonymous). So, mother tongue influence refers to the influence of the native language of the learner on his/her acquisition of the target language. Teachers who teach English as a foreign language, problems of mother tongue influence arise. One of these problems is mother tongue influence on grammatical errors in Indonesian EFL students’ paper.

Research Question

This research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the influence of mother tongue on grammar errors in student papers?
2. What is the cause of these errors?

Research Method

The population of the research consisted of 35 students who were in the third semester. This research employs descriptive method through content analysis in students’ papers. The research data are text taken from Introduction part of students' papers assignment. The research was taken in teaching learning process in Essay Writing subject on English Department Academy of Foreign Language Bina Sarana Informatika (BSI) Jakarta Indonesia academic year 2017/2018.

In order to analyze the types of various grammatical errors in students' papers, the error was identified and classified into different error types. The errors were counted and rated in the percentage of frequency. Since this error analysis used in this study focused especially on mother tongue influence in grammatical errors, the researcher ignored other writing skills, such idea expression, organization, and cohesion. An essay scoring involved error frequency counts for grammatical errors only.
Finding and Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the students make different types of writing errors in general and grammatical errors in particular. It can be noticed that the findings of this research are the students commit many errors in students’ paper and also showed that the errors occurred in the technical understanding of the target language and the influence of the mother tongue. In respect of the most common types of errors in studying writing, the findings of this study lend much support to the related the first research question How is the mother tongue influence on grammar errors in student papers? It was revealed that the mother tongue influence on grammar errors was the most common type of errors. Although the results of the research indicated the majority of the students are still making a lot of grammatical errors because of a mother tongue influence, to some extent, some writings were found well organized and had fewer errors.

The target language and its closeness to L1 play a role in promoting language transfer, but several other factors also influence transfer. This transfer depends on the perceived distance between L1 and L2, which constantly changes for students as they acquire more of the target language.

As described above, the main objective of this research is to identify, classify, and analyze students’ grammatical errors and to investigate is there any mother tongue influence and the cause behind their frequent occurrence and find a remedy to minimize committing such errors. In the following section, examples of students’ grammatical and discourse errors were collected for the purpose of analysis.

A. Error Identification and Classification

Examples of the grammatical types of errors all drawn directly from essays in the research corpus are given below and underlined along with the correct word or form immediately following each example:

1. Mother Tongue Influence in Grammar types of Errors
   a. Subject-Verb Agreement
      It is evident that this item had the highest percentage of errors 37%. The possible explanation why students tend to omit –s after singular third person subject may due to overgeneralization of the rule. In the Indonesian language, there is no Subject-Verb Agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Examples of Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Basically, every people in this world need love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It comes when someone feel something strange grow in his or her heart when everything seem nice and beautiful when something always gives a bright color in his or her life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table 1 example 1, there is a fundamental error in the subject-verb agreement between every people and the verb ‘need’ that should use the -s suffix because the sentence subject is of a single nature. The likelihood of this learner seeing the subject of the sentence is people, not every people, where ‘every’ gives a single meaning to any noun that follows it even though the noun is plural.

The same error is also found in second example on table 2, ... someone feel, ... something strange grow, ... everything seem, the three verbs do not end with -s as a singular third person marker.

b. Verb Tense and Form

High error in this study occurred within the error category of verbs, an error rate of 32%. The tenses most commonly misused were the simple present, past tense, future tense, and past perfect. This thing might happen because there are no verb changes of different tense in the Indonesian Language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Example of Errors in Verb Tense and Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ali born in Jakarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Many students will finished it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table 2 example 1, it can be seen that student overgeneralized. He transferred the past
meaning. This might be traced to the reality that the Indonesian language tense system is as a substitute simple and straightforward regarding the concept of time.

In the second example on table 2, students tried to express futurity by using "will" but he formed the tense in wrong way, he added –ed. This indicates the student has difficulties in the use of English verbs due to the absence of verb conjunction in the Indonesian language.

c. Word Order

Once again, there is evidence and counter-evidence of transfer in studies related to word order. Studies have focused on whether, for example, SVO L1s carry this pattern over into the L2. It is the fourth highest error occurrence rate 10%. The following are examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Example of Errors in Word Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The police order coffee milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What you can do to improve your English?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first example of table 3 shows that in making a sentence, the student uses his mother tongue because there is a differences word order between English and Indonesian language. In the Indonesian language the adjective follows the noun while in English the adjective precedes the noun.

The second example of table 3 shows that the student's overgeneralization in forming the right question in English has made him dedicate such an error because of the incomprehensibility of the question word order.

d. Plurality

A noun is defined as a word that is used to name any person, animal, thing, idea, state, or quality (Russel, 1993). In this study, the percentage of errors in the plurality is relatively low compared to other types of grammatical errors 10%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 Example of Errors in Plurality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Smoking can cause many disease like cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They should do some hobby.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table 4 example 1, a probable rationalization of dropping (s), students might not recognize that determiners including a few and many require plural nouns and because of the lack of training or incomprehensibility of the rule, such mistakes might also arise.

The second example shows, Indonesian students, in particular, confuse between regular and irregular plural nouns. They tend to keep the irregular plural as singular when it is plural as the case in example (a). They also include adding (s) to uncountable as in example (d). A possible explanation for this is that students try to over-generalize the rule where (s) is added to all plurals.

e. Passive Voice

There is the possibility that the type of papers made by Indonesian EFL students did not require the use of the passive voice. But what does show from the analysis of the errors of those who used the passive voice is that the percentage of errors is (11%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 Example of Errors in the use of the Passive Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Someone who has bad behavior can be changed because of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It can be see that smoking is bad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen in the first example on table 5, the sentence should mean active. The use of 'because' gives an active meaning. If we want to make it a passive sentence then the word 'by' is used. In this example, the student tried to over-generalization the rule as there is no verb to be in the Indonesian language.

In the second example on table 5, it can be said the student confuses between active voice and passive voice. This might be due to the lack of sufficient training and drills on this rule which leads to overgeneralization of the rule. The misuse of the verb to be is peculiar in this example since this verb does not exist in the Indonesian language.

B. Analysis of error and Explanation
The main purpose of the research was to explore and analyze the grammatical errors in English essays made by Indonesian EFL students and to find out the main reasons behind their continuous occurrence and to find a remedy to minimize committing such types of errors. After setting the categories, the researcher chose, based on the literature, the sources of errors. So, the errors were explained in the grammatical term, and thoroughly examined to find their sources, paying particular attention to L1 transfer, since the researcher needed to address the research question: "How is the influence of mother tongue on grammar errors in student papers?"

Table 6: Total Grammar Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Grammatical Errors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subject-Verb agreement</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Verb tense and form</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Plurality</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Passive voice</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>176</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher has detected 176 grammar errors in free compositions written by 35 Indonesian English students (see table 6). These errors were tabulated according to the times of frequency and percentage. The type of grammatical errors that were analyzed for this study was limited to 5 types. Most of the grammar errors were made in the area of subject-verb agreement 65 errors (37%). The other grammar errors are Verb tense and form; 56 errors were detected rated (32%), word order 21 (12%), Plurality 18 (10%), and Passive voice 16 (9%). The result of the research showed that the errors committed by the students were due to both interlingual and intralingual factors. Based on the findings, it was found that mother tongue interference is the major cause of grammatical errors in Indonesian English students’ papers.

Table 6 shows the frequency of the eight interlingual and intralingual grammatical types of errors found in the students' essays. It is clear from the table that the most common errors found in the essays were "Subject-Verb Agreement". The 65 errors related to agreement form the highest percentage among the other types of errors. And plurality and passive errors are the least dominant errors in the students' essay.

From the above analysis, it can be decided that students commit many grammatical errors in their English papers due mainly to sources. It was revealed that the mother tongue influence on grammar errors was the most common type of errors. The results of the research attraction to the first research question claiming that the incomprehensibility of grammar regulations rules also has a negative effect on students' writing English essay, and the most common and salient mother tongue influence which were found in the students' paper are Subject-Verb agreement, verb tense and form, word order, plurality, and Passive voice. The study also showed that the errors occurred in the technical understanding of the target language. Furthermore, students need more reinforcement and development in understanding Subject-Verb agreement.

Causes of Errors in Students’ English Writing

Based on these findings, it can be known that students do commit errors because of L1 transfer, and mother tongue influences the grammar errors on EFL students’ paper.

In this study, the researcher focus on two types of errors: (1) errors occur as a result of the native language, the process is called “language transfer” or interlingual transfer, (2) errors can be proved to be a result of “a clear overgeneralization of TL rules and semantic features, then she is dealing with the overgeneralization of TL linguistic material.” These are a case negative intralingual transfer committed later in the learning process.

The second source of error frequency identified in learner interlanguage is ‘intralingual transfer’. Those due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. They are objects produced by way of the learner which replicate now not the structure of the mother tongue, however generalizations based on partial exposure to the goal language. So, it can be concluded that English students in Indonesia still commit a large number of grammatical errors due to interlingual transfer and these are the mains sources of their frequent types of errors.

Conclusion and Implication

After analyzing the grammar level and discourse, it can be concluded that a number of different grammatical errors were found in students' papers. These were limited to five major errors:
Subject-Verb agreement, verb tense and form, word order, plurality, and Passive voice. The students also still do not understand the structure of a paragraph and also there is evidence of the influence of the mother tongue on errors that students make in papers. The students should re-understand the basic tenets of English grammar lesson. It is clear that the errors in grammar and discourse require more attention than the others. Teachers should then be more aware of these types of errors and provide the necessary follow up work to check the problem areas as discussed earlier. However, EFL teachers and researchers cannot ignore error analysis as an important tool by which they can learn more about the processes involved in the learning of a foreign language.

The findings of this research have suggested some implications which are of significance to EFL teachers and syllabus designers as follows:

1. The implication for EFL Teachers
   The research of the participants’ error helps teachers identify the problematic areas of headline language at different levels of instruction. Teachers should increase the number of assignments for the sake of which the students would have to do a lot of writing during their free time, hence they would be reading a lot of English material and thinking in English.

2. Pedagogical Implications
   One of the most widely suggested uses of the learners' mother tongue is a presentation of a contrastive comparison of the two languages to make the learners aware of the differences and similarities between them. This technique is believed to be helpful in that the learners will know when to transfer from their native language and when not to.

**Bibliography**


