Error Analysis on a Short Speech:
a Case of an ESL Indonesian Learner*

Sari Hidayati**
sari_hidayati@uny.ac.id

INTISARI

Dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Ingggris sebagai bahasa asing, kesalahan (error) dipandang sebagai hal tak terelakkan yang dapat dilakukan oleh siswa sebagai bagian dari proses pembelajaran itu sendiri. Lebih daripada itu, analisa yang sistematis terhadap kesalahan yang dibuat oleh siswa atau *Error Analysis* (EA) dapat memberikan manfaat baik bagi guru, peneliti maupun bagi siswa itu sendiri (Corder : 1967). Studi ini adalah studi kasus terhadap seorang pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing yang tengah mempelajari bahasa tersebut di Australia. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis kesalahan dominan, di antara analisa kesalahan fonologi, morfologi dan sintaksis, yang dibuat oleh siswa tersebut. Adapun pengklasifikasian dari kesalahan mengikuti kategori kesalahan yang dikemukakan oleh Brown (2000). Temuan studi ini menyatakan bahwa kesalahan dominan yang dibuat oleh siswa adalah kesalahan morfologi, yang diikuti oleh kesalahan fonologi dan sintaksis.

Kata Kunci: Analisa Kesalahan, Fonologi, Morfologi, Sintaksis

1. Introduction

Errors are considered as the inevitable consequences of language learning. They are in fact part of a learning process and may provide valuable insight into the language learning process. Corder (1967) differs the term 'error' from 'mistake' in that the term 'error', considered as systematic error, occurs in a second language while the term 'mistake', considered as non-sytematic error, occurs in one's native language, and therefore it is not significant to the process of language learning.

Corder also points out that errors are significant either for the teacher, the researcher, or the learners. Analyzing learners' errors provides the teacher with an understanding of how much progress the learners made as well as an indication of

whether or not the learners are ready for the next stage of the learning process or even if they face problems in certain areas of learning process. A systematic analysis of learners' errors, therefore, is an important part of the teacher's job to have a complete picture of what the nature of learners' knowledge is at that point of time, which features of language are creating problems for learners in the language learning process, and what knowledge should be learned more. Strevens (1969) suggests that if a regular pattern of errors could be observed and the learners were seen to progress through this pattern, it was a sign of achievement in learning. As for the researcher, studies on error analysis are conducted not only in order to understand errors per se, but also in order to gain insights of what is learned from the analysis and apply that to improve learners' language competence. Also, from the analysis, the reseacher might recognize the importance of errors in language acquisition process and started to examine them in order to achieve a better understanding of second language acquisition process, e.g. how learners acquire a second language, and what strategies the learner should use. Analysis of errors also is of importance for the learners in that they can learn from the errors, identifying the categories of errors and possible sources of errors, and finding appropriate approach to improve their language competence.

This study aims to analyze the errors produced by an Indonesian learner in speaking in a given short speech task. The analysis comprises pronunciation, morphological and syntactic analysis. It attempted to answer the questions: which type of errors is dominantly produced by the learner? what is the implication of such errors for the language teaching and learning?

The paper first presents the methodology which describes the participant, the task, data collection and analysis. Next, it presents the findings followed by discussion which elaborates the phonological error analysis, followed by morphological error analysis and syntactic error analysis. Finally it highlights the implication of the findings for the language teaching and learning.

2. Method

2. 1. Participant

One Indonesian ESL learner participated in this study. The learner, aged 25, is a male learner from Yogyakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. He has only been living in Australia for six month and will stay for another six months. The learner has been learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia for fourteen year, since he was in the first year of Junior High School (equal to year 7 in Australian education). Before he came to Australia, he conducted the IELTS test and gained the score of 5.5.

The learner is a doctorate candidate from a university in Indonesia who came to Australia for the purpose of conducting further study on theories in relation with his study, and will come back to Indonesia to complete his doctorate degree afterwards. His Bachelor's and Master's degree, both specializing in biological science, were completed in Indonesia. He works as a lecturer at a university in Indonesia.

Although the learner has been learning English for fourteen years, he has not used the language much in daily life, including in his study and work. However, during his stay and study in Australia, the learner has been required to conduct activities related to his study, such as having discussion with his academic supervisor, working in groups with other colleagues, attending seminars and doing oral presentations. The learner was chosen to participate in this study considering that he shows eagerness to study English as he is at present joining an English course at the University of Queensland, while at the same time he should also focus on his study related to his degree.

2. 2. Method of Data Collection

2. 2. 1. Data Collection

For the purpose of analyzing the errors produced by the learner, the learner was required to give a short speech which was then recorded. The written version of the recording can be seen in Appendix 1, in bold font. The learner was given a written list of prompts of possible topics to cover, such as: your opinion about studying in Australia;

living in Australia; if you have come back to Indonesia, what thing(s) about Australia you will tell your friends/ family.

Following the recording process, a short interview was conducted to ask the learner regarding his cultural background as well as issues related to his experience in learning English. For the learner's convenience and confidence, the collection of the data was conducted at the learner's place of study, the University of Queensland.

2. 2. 2. Data Analysis

After the learner completed the recording, the recording was transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The analysis first focused on the pronunciation errors, and then morphological and syntactic errors were analyzed (see Appendix 1). Each type of errors was listed and presented in tables for easy reading and analysis (see Appendix 2). The lists of the errors are coded following the categories of errors proposed by Brown (2000), namely omission, addition and substitution types of errors. Also, the analysis includes the notions of interlingual and intralingual transfer (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1997) to analyze the source of the errors and puts the ideas of global and local errors (Ellis, 1997; Burt & Kiparsky, 1972) to identify whether or not the errors obstruct the meanings.

3. Findings

The findings suggest that the most dominant errors produced by the learners are morphological errors, followed by phonological errors and syntactic errors respectively. With regard to morphological errors, substitution type of errors is most frequently found in the speech, followed by addition and omission type of errors respectively. Similarly, in syntactic analysis, substitution type of errors appears to be the dominant errors followed by addition and omission type of errors respectively. Phonological errors are found more in the mispronunciations of vowels than those of consonants.

4. Discussion

4. 1. Phonological Analysis

The phonological analysis shows that the learner tends to produce more errors in vowels than consonants. In dealing with consonants, the learner shows difficulties in pronouncing the interdentals consonants [θ] for the word 'think' as seen in lines 1, 4, 17, 18 and [ð] for 'weather' in lines 12, 13, 14. Also, labiodentals consonant [v] is substituted by another labiodentals consonant[f] in line 3 for the word 'university', 'provides' and in line 9 for the word 'living'. The other error is the incorrect pronunciation of [ʃ] which is pronounced as [s] for 'especially' in lines 10 and 16, and for the word 'transportation' in line 9 which is repeated for three times. However, it is noted that these errors do not cause differences in meanings.

In the area of vowels, the learner finds difficulties in pronouncing diphthongs in English, such as the sound [o], which is used instead of [au] for the word 'about' in lines 5 and 9 and [e], used instead of [eɪ] for the word 'transportation' in line 19. The other errors found in pronunciations of vowels indicate that the learner tends to mispronounce the sounds [ʌ], [e], [ə] and [æ]. These sounds seem to be confused with and substituted one another. As seen in line 8, the learner pronounces the word 'asian' as /ʌsɪʌn/ instead of /esɪən/, and in line 17 he pronounces the word 'interesting' as /ɪnterestɪŋ/ instead of /ɪntrəstɪŋ/, while in line 19 he pronounces /trʌnsp rtesɪən/ instead of /trænsp :teɪʃən/.

The other errors, seen as minor ones, are found in line 8 in which the learner pronounces the sound [o] instead of the lengthened sound [:] for the word 'court'; [u] instead of [ə] for the word 'difficult' in line 9; [e] instead of [ɪ] and [ə] instead of [e] for the word 'especially' in lines 10 and 16.

4. 2. Morphological Analysis

The most dominant morphological errors produced by the learner are substitution type of errors. Most errors are in misusing derivational morphemes which result in wrong word forms. As seen in line 8, the derivational morpheme –ly is omitted which results in wrong form of adverbs. In line 10, the learner uses 'compare' instead of 'comparison', and in line 17, he uses derivational morpheme –ence in 'convenience' instead of using morpheme –ent for 'convenient'. In addition to errors in using derivational morphemes,

the learner also produces errors dealing with the use of inflectional morphemes. In line 1, for example, the learner drops the morpheme –ing and in line 3 and 4 he uses incorrect inflectional morphemes which result in wrong past participle forms.

The other substitution errors are seen in lines 10 and 12, in which the learner uses preposition 'with' instead of 'to', and in line 7, in which he uses noun 'one' instead of 'reason', and subordinator 'because' instead of 'that'. The other incorrect uses were found in line 5 (wrong ordinal number), line 19 (incorrect auxiliary verb), while the inappropriate use of pronoun and demonstrative were found in lines 5 and 15.

With regard to addition type of errors, it is noted that the learner finds difficulties dealing with the uses of prepositions. The unnecessary prepositions were put in lines 2, 5, 10, 15 and 16. The other errors were the unnecessary use of article 'the' in line 11 (two times), subordinator 'so' (line 15), pronoun 'us' (line 16) and indefinites 'many' (lines 8). In omission type of errors, the most noted errors are the omission of inflectional morphemes –s as plural markers (lines 3, 4, 5 and 13). The other errors found are the missing of subordinator 'which' (line 1), coordinator 'and' (line 3), an article 'a' (line 6) and the missing of inflectional morpheme –s as singular subject marker (line 15).

What can be drawn from the morphological analysis is that the learner produces errors mostly in the incorrect derivational morphemes resulting in wrong word forms; the use of prepositions, either wrongly used or added prepositions and the missing of inflectional morpheme –s as plural marker. These findings are consistent with what is stated in *Asian Language Notes No.3* (1983) released by Commonwealth Department of Education, describing that Indonesian speakers tend to find difficulties in using derivational morphemes such as –ly since Indonesian language has no equivalent to such English adverbial suffix. In terms of the uses of prepositions, it is mentioned that equivalents of most of the English prepositions are found in Indonesian language. However, in many cases the prepositions serve different purposes in the two languages so that in general the use of English prepositions is difficult for Indonesian speakers. For example, prepositions 'in', 'on', 'at', 'into' and 'onto' may be easily be confused with

**   Sari Hidayati, S.S., M.A. ia a teaching staff at English Education Department, UNY, Yogyakarta. She obtained her Master of Applied Linguistics in Griffith University, Australia.

and substituted for one another. As for –s inflectional morpheme for plural marker, it is mentioned that the marking of nouns for number is optional in Indonesian language but compulsory in English. Indonesian speakers, therefore, may be inclined to forget to add plural endings in English. Also, the errors in omitting plural endings may be due to pronunciation difficulties with final clusters containing [-s] and [-z]. In other words, the morphological errors are made due to negative interlingual transfer from the native language.

4. 3. Syntactic Analysis

Errors found in the syntactic analysis are mostly seen as substitution type of errors. In this type of errors, the learner tends to produce errors dealing with passive form and infinitive form. As seen in line 3, the learner fails to put the appropriate past participle form 'provided' instead of 'provides' which results in wrong passive form. Similarly, in line 4, he uses 'including' instead of 'included' required for passive form. The errors dealing with infinitive form are found in line 13, in which the learner uses verb 'has' instead of 'to have' and in line 17, where infinitive 'to live' is used instead of 'living'. The other examples of substitution type of errors are the use of inappropriate subordinator 'that's why' instead of 'so' in line 6 and the incorrect preposition phrase 'in compare with' instead of 'in comparison to' in line 10.

The addition type of errors is indicated by the use of unnecessary noun and pronoun which result in double subjects in a clause. As seen in line 13, the use of pronoun 'it' is overlapped with 'the climate or the weather' which serves as the subject of the clause. In line 19, the learner puts the noun 'transportation', overlapped with 'I' as the subject, which results in double subjects in the clause. The other examples of addition errors are seen in line 13, in which the use of 'is' is overlapped with 'seem', the verb of the clause, resulting in double verbs in the clause; and in line 15 in which the use of 'so' is overlapped with 'because' results in double subordinators in the clause.

There are only three cases found within the omission errors. In line 1, the learner does not put subject and verb in a subordinate clause resulting in incomplete clause. In

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line 7, the head (noun), i.e. 'place', of the noun phrase is missing, while in line 17, the learner does not put the verb of main clause, subordinator connecting the main and the subordinate clause, subject and the verb of the subordinate clause. This indicates that the learner still finds difficulty in constructing a complex sentence.

Referring to the syntactic analysis, it can be concluded that in order to improve his proficiency in English, the learner needs to pay attention to passive forms, phrase forms and the construction of complex sentence. The error in passive forms seems to be caused by interlingual transfer. As stated in *Asian Language Notes No.3* (1983), although there is a clear distinction between active and passive forms in Indonesian language, in practice it appears that Indonesians have many problems with the passive form and make numerous mistakes. Such mistakes arise from the complicated forms of the passive, which also involve the verb 'be'. The different positions of elements in noun phrases between the two languages may also confuse Indonesian speakers. In Indonesian language, the position of adjectives modifying the noun always follows it.

Concluding Comments and Implication for the Language Teaching and Learning

This study has demonstrated the analysis on errors found in a short speech by an ESL Indonesian learner. The findings indicate that the learner produces more morphological errors than phonological and syntactic errors. In general, it is clear that the learner's problems deal with the use of derivational morphemes which cause wrong word forms; inflectional morpheme –s as plural marker and the incorrect use of prepositions. As for the phonological errors, the errors are found more in the vowel than consonant area.

With respect to second language pedagogy, before the teacher formulates what kind of strategies will be employed or what topics of materials will be delivered to the learner, it is suggested that the teacher should first distinguish the global errors from the local errors (Ellis, 1997). The global errors should be given more attention as the errors may cause differences in meanings. For example, the use of active voice, instead of

passive voice, can violate the overall structure of a sentence and result in a totally different meaning.

Generally speaking, it is obvious that the learner needs considerable help with the word-building affixes such as –ly, -ent, -ion and the conversion of, for example, 'ease' to 'easy' to 'easily'. Also, the learner needs to be given some practice in the use of English plural markers –s and –es as well as the irregular plurals in English such as 'sheep' which can be used both as singular and plural. To improve the learner's knowledge on the use of prepositions, it is useful to make the learner familiar with the use of prepositions by placing the prepositions within phrases, such as 'angry *with*', tired *of*', 'come *in*', 'pick it *up*' and so on. This can also prevent negative transfers from the native language as well as build the learner's awareness of the differences between both languages, as Indonesian language has different prepositions for those phrases, such as 'angry *to*', 'tired with', 'come *to*' and 'pick it' (without a preposition). To improve the learner's pronunciation skill, especially in vowels, the use of minimal pairs will prove helpful in contrasting the sounds. The following is examples of minimal pairs intended to distinguish sounds which seem to be the learner's problems, such as [e] and [eɪ] and [e] and [æ] (cited from *Asian Language Notes*, *1983*):

[e] - [eɪ]		[e] and [æ]	
let	late	pet	pat
met	mate	peck	pack
shed	shade	mess	mass
pen	pain	send	sand

To sum up, to improve a second language learner's proficiency indeed involves a lot of hard works. Error analysis is one of the ways for the teacher to understand what problem areas the learner is still facing. Furthermore, the error analysis is conducted to build an efficient teaching and learning for the teacher as well as the learner so that the learner's goals in the target language can be achieved.

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