

Utilizing learner language to craft well-targeted endorsements in English language teaching practices

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ABSTRACT

Learning a foreign language for those who have their first and second language often puts learners in imperfection mastery such as irrelevant lexical choice, and source cultural bounds language utterances. Knowing the concepts merely cannot guarantee the process of avoiding mistakes or errors that learners have. There has been an amount of research on learner language which focuses on language corpus but little on highlighting the research specific language components grammatically contributing to language learners' competence. Therefore, to fill the void, this study aimed at scrutinizing and yielding information on the practical way of phenomena in Indonesians' interference by knowing the students' feature descriptions of language competence. In this research, a guided interview was used to sub-ethnic of Banjarese which covered several Banjar Kuala and Banjar Hulu pre-service English teachers in getting the data of this study. The findings reveal language problems in lexical aspect, semantic confusion, incorrect use of word-formation pattern, prepositional misuse, and problems in language syntax and discourse. The implication of this study calls for recommendations to adopt techniques in mitigating suggested learner language in the area of subject-verb concord, tenses, and lexical problems in a process of language development



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1. Introduction

The phenomena of learning English as a foreign language have been spread over the world. Slow and fast, success and failure in learning the language become 'pieces of stuff' that depict teaching and learning achievement in an academic setting. In Indonesia, the learning of English has been started since students in the secondary level, yet the attainable mastery of the language performance in the level of either written or, in particular, spoken does not reflect the duration of learning the language. Hence, there is a belief the system of immediate education is not as successful as expected in teaching English (Tosun, 2012). A number of academic papers have supported this notion (Aktas, 2005; Bayraktaroglu, 2012; Enginarlar, 2003; Darancik, 2008; Gunes, 2011; Hamamci, 2013). Therefore, in learning English, there is a space to reflect on whatever ways in which how learners learned the language to ensure the learning quality process in terms of aspects in language that have been completely learned and acquired from every developmental stage. In order words, by paying the attention to the pace of learners' learning, the opportunities to witness and nurture their language development can be addressed appropriately.

The discussion on how learners learned will be closely related to historical based knowledge on the concept of contrastive analysis (CA), error analysis (EA), and Interlanguage (IL) since they had been major areas of inquiry in second language acquisition (SLA) research studies (He, 2019). He highlighted that contrastive analysis became a paradigm in foreign language learning during 1950s and 1960s. The concept of contrastive analysis (CA) was first developed by Charles Fries in 1945 as an integral component of the methodology of FL teaching. It CA, it was noted that in learning an FL, the learner tended to bring with him the knowledge of the L1, and suggested that this should be taken into consideration in teaching the L2 (Al-khresheh, 2016). Such descriptive comparison serves to show how languages differ in their sound system, grammatical structure, and vocabulary.

However, contrastive linguists had made over claims or high expectations from the teacher. In fact, a few parts of the learning problems can be predicted. Many problems are of the native language. The main problem is that language learning cannot be comprehended by a purely linguistic study; those who were concerned with language learning shift their attention to the new disciplines of error analysis, performance analysis, or interlanguage studies. Likewise, the contrastive analysis was denied by many as an applied discipline.

Since its inception in 1970s, Agbay & Reyes (2019) uttered that error analysis had been a subject of interest of many scholars in the past in identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting flaw forms done by learners based on linguistics perspective. Moreover, it pictures out what problems occurred, through a systematic study or learners' error not just to identify learning problem but also to open the mind of language learner (Johanssen, 2008). It is not merely a matter of revealing the surface position of where the spots of language deficiency are, but also heed the focus to correct version and something that underwrites to learner's progress in target language mastery. In order words, the heart of instruction has been a shift from the teaching of second language acquisition whose main concern is language teacher to analyzing the learner language in the classroom (Tarone & Swierzbis, 2009).

In the following phase, problems were also found EA. The study of errors is not sufficient to recognize learners' difficulties rather the entire learners' performance was very crucial to be the object of study, whether as it talks about errors and non-errors, through performance analysis. Then, the next phase of development was interlanguage studies (ILS). It was the study of learner language as a system to show the gradual development towards the target language. The central attention is on the learning process as a comparison with first language acquisition. Özkayran & Yılmaz, (2020) explained that there are two types of error categories, namely, intralingual and interlingual. While the former is perceived by learners who feel that second language patterns are similar to first language forms, the latter is an incomplete application of rules of second language learned.

As the part of interlanguage study, Rustipa (2011) added that interlanguage is resulted from L1 transfer, strategies of second language training (e.g simplification), and overgeneralization of second language forms. Moreover, Lasaten (2014) categorized errors in taxonomy comprising of (a) grammatical (prepositions, articles, reported speech, singular/plural, adjectives, relative clauses, infinitives, verbs and tenses, and possessive case); (b) syntactic (coordination and conjunctions, sentence structure, nouns and pronouns, and word order, fragment and run on); (c) lexical (word choice); (d) semantic (literal translation); and (e) substance/mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling).

Previous studies have been conducted on EA and interlanguage. Several of them such as Turkish EFL learners' linguistics and lexical errors by Ozkan Kirmizi and Birten Karci in (2017), and the Nitty-gritty of Language Learners' Errors conducted by Bandar Mohammad Saeed Al-Sobhi in 2019, and contrastive analysis study of interlanguage errors by Gibriel in 2020. The first study reported that the most causes errors made is L1 interference while the second study examines the errors caused by negative language transfer and why such errors occur. The third study elaborated theoretical review on CA, EA, and IL. Even a bulk of previously mentioned studies have been elaborated, however, a little research is conducted in the Indonesian context particularly in interlanguage perspective. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to find out a linguistic analysis on interlingual process done by Indonesian pre-service English teachers and formulate recommendations as its contribution for language teaching practices.

2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative method. The research subjects were the pre-service English teachers recruited from students of English department academic year 2017- 2018. The total number of subjects was 108 students in which there were 83 students categorized as Banjar people speaking Banjarese in their daily lives. From the total number of Banjar people, 70 was specified as Banjar Kuala while 13 students were classified as Banjar Hulu.

The techniques in collecting data used by researchers were elicitation and documentation. The former technique was to get the information about learner language through interview which then to be transcribed into written form to see erroneous sentences of spoken way. The latter one was to scrutinize grammatical error which might occur obtained from written one. Both ways were applied to get a better picture in error analysis framework toward the students' performance to apply comparative taxonomy to search for whether the source of errors came from interlingual or intralingual. Furthermore, having those series of activities, the researchers could reveal several learner language characteristics e.g., lexical characteristics, syntax, and discourse.

3. Findings and Discussion

This part discusses research aims which address a linguistics analysis on interlingual process followed by discussion based related theories and recommendations to English language teaching.

3.1. A Linguistics Analysis on Interlingual Process

Learner language not only covers the discussion of phonological areal in language transfer, but it also talks about another aspect of interlanguage errors. There are two models of analyses. Learner language areas are stated by Lightbown et.al. (2013) who explained them into developmental sequences, grammatical morphemes, negation, questions, relative clauses, and reference to past. Furthermore, the other study was conducted by Johanssen (2008) encompassing the lexical, syntax, and discourse characteristics of learner language. Here is the [table](#) which elaborates the findings:

Table 1. Banjar Kuala Learner Language Error Identification

No	Banjar Kuala (Place of Origin)	The Number of Subjects	Learner Language Error Identification
1	Banjarmasin	32	article and plural, lexical error, equivalence error, concord, nominal sentence construction, simple sentence muddle, tenses confusion, relative clause problem, the use of negative, spelling problem, verbal sentence construction, pronoun problem, conjunction problem, active sentence, to infinitive problem
2	Banjarbaru	10	verbal sentence construction, tenses confusion, concord, prepositional phrase, plural noun problem, conjunction problem, reference, complex sentence problem, combining sentence problem, to infinitive problem
3	Martapura	4	combining sentence problem, lexical error, concord, determiner problem
4	Barito Kuala	2	sentence construction, noun phrase/word order, preposition misplace, concord, lexical error
5	Pelaihari	9	concord, mechanics problem, prepositional gerund, lexical error / confusion, singular/plural noun, comp adjective problem, tenses and verbal problem, verbal concept problem, conjunction problem, quantifier problem, complex sentence problem, passive voice, article problem
6	Tanah Bumbu (Batulicin, Pagatan)	9	apostrophe, modal, relative clause, mechanics problem, miscellaneous problems in sentence construction [no clear nominal sentence], verb form confusion, concord, determiner confusion, tenses, complex sentence problem, comp adjective problem, verb phrase problem
7	Kotabaru	4	conjunction problem, subject determining problem, nominal sentence, verb missing, lexical confusion, relative clause, spelling problem, negation problem
Total		70 subjects	

With regard to language learner errors done by pre-service teachers of Banjar Kuala, it was found that concord, lexical confusion, tenses become the most frequent errors possessed by them from several regencies besides other problems such as spelling problem, sentence types, the use of modal. This finding has been pinned by Ferris (2011) who said that ‘morphological, syntactic, and in particular lexical forms deviate patterns of learned language, expected from learners who learn the target language. In this respect, the errors are caused by limited resources patterns of mother-tongue language which lead learners to decide what has been possessed previously in the first language in actuating language performance in the target language (James:2013).

Table 2. Banjar Hulu Learner Language Error Identification

No	Banjar Hulu (Place of Origin)	The Number of Subjects	Learner Language Error Identification
1	Hulu Sungai Utara (Amuntai)	3	tenses confusion
2	Hulu Sungai Tengah (Barabai)	2	part of speech confusion, negation (developmental sequence), verbal confusion, concord problem
3	Hulu Sungai Selatan (Kandangan)	3	lexical choice, the absence of verb, concord, clause construction problem, spelling, verbal sentence problem, clause construction problem, lexical confusion, tenses confusion
4	Rantau	2	mechanics problem, nominal sentence problem, plural noun problem, demonstrative pronoun, tenses problem concord, lexical problem, verbal confusion
5	Balangan	-	-
6	Tanjung	3	tenses problem, preposition, plural noun
	Total	13 subjects	

From Table 2, it is noticeable that tenses problems, verbal confusion, case of singular and plural also become considerable hurdles reflected in speech produced by pre-service English teachers. In line with Ferris (2011), James (2013), and Gibriel (2020) also emphasized that errors in tenses and verb forms are frequently found for those who learn English in the process of their foreign language learning. Geographically, South Kalimantan consists of 13 regencies, they are: Kotabaru, Tanah Bumbu, Tanah Laut [Pelaihari], Banjarmasin, Barito Kuala, Banjarbaru, Banjar [Martapura], Tapin, Hulu Sungai Selatan [Kandangan], Hulu Sungai Tengah [Barabai], Hulu Sungai Utara [Amuntai], Balangan and Tabalong. All regencies’ inhabitants are mainly inhibited by the ethnic of Banjar who speak Banjarese in their daily lives even though several ethnics reside in that region like Dayak, Java, Bugis and Arab.

Although this province has many regencies at which Banjarese is the primary language used, there are two main dialects of Banjarese: Bahasa Banjar Kuala and Bahasa Banjar Hulu (Hapip, 2008). Banjar Kuala is spoken by people who live in Kotabaru, Tanah Bumbu, Tanah Laut [Pelaihari], Banjarmasin, Barito Kuala, Banjarbaru, Banjar [Martapura], while Banjar Hulu Dialect is used in Tapin, Hulu Sungai Selatan [Kandangan], Hulu Sungai Tengah [Barabai], Hulu Sungai Utara [Amuntai], Balangan and Tabalong.

Several researches in phonological area in terms of vowel as well as problems in spelling for foreign language learners had been conducted regarding to one of sub-dialect, Banjar Hulu. McMahan (2012: 103) who explained that BBH, in terms of vowel, has only 3 vowels: /ʌ/, /i/, and /u/, compared to English which entails 12 vowels: /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɒ/, /ɔ/, /i:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/, and /ə/. The investigation of Banjar dialect had been strengthened by two previous studies. Firstly, Suryadikara, et. al. (1981) stated that Bahasa Banjar Hulu has three vowels /i/, /u/, and /a/, and

Bahasa Banjar Kuala has six vowels /i/, /u/, /a/, /o/, /e/ and /ə/. Secondly, Kawi (2002) mentioned that Banjarese has six vowels recognize six vowels, namely: low vowels /a/, high vowels /i/ and /u/ and middle vowels /e/, /ə/, and /o/. As the second language that learners learn English, the phenomenon of language transfer in which the first language is believed by many researchers is to be one of the main factors that influence second language production (Dewaele, 1998; Cenoz, 2001; Liu, 2001; Ortega, 2008; Tremblay, 2006; Torrijos, 2009). Different sound systems between English language and the native language of the learners can lead to phonological errors as the learners tend to substitute the English features with what is familiar in their native language during oral communication (Rahmah & Sari, 2016). From the findings, it can be highlighted 2 classifications: an overview of learner language in the area of lexical characteristics and area of syntax and discourse.

Learner Language in the Area of Lexical Characteristics

Errors which include overuse of common words and lack of variation become lexical characteristics of learner language. There are 12 times lexical problems that are done by English learners of Banjar Kuala Learners (BKL) and 4 times done by Banjar Hulu learners (BHL) as they are challenged to make a written text regarding their perception of what they want to be in the future. They are the following identified selected problems that Banjarmasin pre-service English teachers have.

One of the problems identified here is improper choice of diction. As BKL are asked under topic future profession, one of them stated that "...because they parent did not have money" instead of saying 'their' word, he mentioned 'they'. It is done by the learner unconsciously. The other example includes the statement of "I also want to be the Indonesian *embassy*". The word *embassy* here is not appropriate. In this context it is better to be replaced by the word *ambassador*. The other error produced by learner is reflected in the statement of "I aspire to be a translator". In this case, the word 'aspire' is better taken over by 'am inspired.'

In the meantime, the similar errors had been shown by BHL. One of them corresponds the question by stating "I choice this dream because I want to be useful person. The diction of 'choice' here is not properly stated. In this 'verb' position, the noun 'choice' is better replaced by the word *choose*. Moreover, there was also a learner who stated "every day I do *reproduce* friends. Instead of saying 'make', the learner mistakenly said improper word utterance. The second area is mistakenly done by BHL and BKL is word confusion. Conceptual confusion is the learning of target language's words, but still semantically confused, for example, "After I graduate from *degree*, I hope I can get scholarship". The word 'degree' is better substituted by this undergraduate level because the word 'degree' is still too general and interpretable.

The next area that is difficult for learners from Banjar Kuala is the use of proper preposition/prepositional phrases. The discussion over preposition is not only talking about the use of which to state about the place or position but also become complementary in completing the other lexical verb. As the statement spoken by one of them said that "I want to be a good teacher because when I was *on* Junior High School". Even he has learned it overtime when he was in secondary school, and now he is in the university level, the use of that proper preposition is still a problem as is shown in the oral production performance. Likewise, Banjar Hulu learner also showed a similar mistake reflected in his statement such as "I took my first step to reach my dream *by* learn English *of* this time". In this respect, the preposition 'by' is supposed to be followed by verb with gerund, and the preposition 'of' is better changed with the use of 'at'.

The last area which sometimes confuses learners both for Banjar Kuala and Banjar Hulu is the use of apostrophe. As one of the selected sample of learners who said the statement of "I want to make my father happy and achieve my father dream". In this case, 'my father dream should be completed with the existence of apostrophe to become my father's dream. Thus, even this seems simple, the use of such punctuation will bring a good meaning of a possession.

Learner Language Characteristics in the Area of Syntax and Discourse

As it deals with the area of syntax and discourse, there are four main errors that were observed here despite its high frequent level of errors produced by Banjar Kuala and Banjar Hulu pre-service English teachers. The first is the use of inappropriate pronoun (Gilquin, G., & Granger, S., 2015). To be more specific, the use of reflexive pronouns is fairly common to be the spot of errors. The example of the asked learners who corresponds the answer said “Future work I want is bank employee because of *his* big salary”. The pronoun ‘his’ here might be changed into ‘its’ to express the possession of a thing.

The second is the use of verb and verb phrases. Of the analysis, there are several errors that Banjar Kuala [around 11 errors and Banjar Hulu [4 errors] learners do in this study. Several learners from Banjar Kuala said “it *is can make* me always remember”. In this case, there is a possibility that learners are still confused to distinguish use of nominal sentence and verbal sentence. So as the modal comes, it is usually not preceded by the existence of ‘to be’. The other error also done by learners is reflected by the statements “I *still* thinking to try another job” and “when I know the doctor *is costs* a lot. In this matter, there is an appearance of ‘to be’ in the former sentence, while at the latter sentence the existence of ‘to be’ is not necessary.

Similarly, Banjar Hulu learners also did errors as some of them produced sentences such as “It because our prophet said good for everybody” and “My attempt to do that is always study and learn”. In the first sentence, the absence of ‘to be’ is not seen there while in fact it is important to show the good sentence construction. While in the second sentence, confusion over sentence types of nominal and verbal sentence has occurred here. A solution offered, there might be two ways; one way is by deleting ‘is’ in maintaining the other parts, and the other way is keeping the ‘to be’ and making the verbs become a progressive sentence. The third focus in the area of syntax and discourse is the use of proper concord (Johanssen, 2008). Interestingly, the most common error done by the learners either Banjar Kuala or Banjar Hulu is concord (around 20 errors). Concord is the connection between the subject and verb. They are inseparable one another. Here are several descriptions of concord errors of Banjar learners.

For Banjar Kuala, several learners produced sentences as follow “One of the advantages *are...*”, “I want to be a person who *have* a permanent job.”, and “I want to become a person who *learn* better”. The earlier example statement needs to change to ‘are’ to become ‘is’ because subject from ‘one of’ is customarily classified as singular. For the second sentence and third sentence, even in the adjective clause structure, the concord is still applied, and in this case, the learner failed to identify its rule; therefore, in this case, the italic word ‘have’ is better replaced by ‘has’ while the last sentence the word ‘learn’ is added the ending -s to be ‘learns’. Similarly, the Banjar Hulu learners still did errors in their utterances as two of them stated “He always *work* hard for my family” and “Why I really want this dream *come* true”. The word ‘work’ in the first sentence is supposed to be added -s there while the word ‘come’ is also added -s to be ‘comes’.

The last main errors problem discussed in this study is tenses problem (Simbolon, 2015). Like any other Indonesian learners as they learn English as a foreign language, BKL and BHL also got tenses problem. For both of these learners, it is hard to differentiate between past tense and present tense as they tell a past story. For example, one from Banjar Kuala said “I always change what I want to become since I *am* kid”, and the other from Banjar Hulu stated, “My family always *supported* me recently as I want to plan my future action in my life”. The first sentence from BKL uses present by the existence of ‘am’. However, it should be expressed in the past tense by the use of ‘was’, while for the second sentence, the word ‘supported’ which is stated in past form should be expressed in present form to be ‘supports’ because its time period as it is spoken and meant for is in the present occasion.

3.2. Recommendations to English Language Teaching Practices.

Regarding the problem in SV concord as the agreement between subject and verb in a sentence, it is a very essential part of sentence formation. If the existence of a subject or verb is absent, the sentence cannot be formed and the meaning is corrupted in that structure. In light of the problem of concord that the students have, the teacher can use a variety of techniques; one of them is by using

direct exposure. In this discussion, it is better for English teachers to bring about the theme of concord within its detail like interrupting phrases or preposition with usually follow the subject in order that students will be able to identify the availability of either subject or verb as predicate.

Another technique to handle the issue of subject and verb issue might be the use of the Hand-shape coding technique. It is a combination of hand technique and shape coding technique. Shape coding is a variant of the technique using types of shapes such as circle, rectangle, oval, triangle, and others or arrows to code the structures of a sentence such as detecting subjects, verbs and predicates. Besides, shapes are used to cipher the phrases and objects such as “line up” in the sentences (Ebbels, 2013). With regard to tenses, since the different use of tenses of English as the target language and only single fewer tenses for the Indonesian language, the difficulties of Indonesian learners are dominantly found here. For example, deductive and inductive techniques can be used to learn tenses. While deductive one can be used to easily remember rules of English grammar, the inductive one can be used for making them easier to use in the communication area.

The other technique that can be used is by using tenses simplification. In this talk, the 16 tenses of English can be reduced become 3 main tenses: present, past, and future. The other subdivisions can become the detail for those three main tenses that are used rarely in daily conversation. By this strategy, Indonesian learners can be familiar to understand tenses of English because of its similarity. With respect to lexical problems, there are several ways that can be taken to get out of it; one of them is by utilizing Word net; lexical database for both English and Indonesian language. The learners are introduced to the dictionaries or glossary which provides detailed information on the word use. It is done to select words appropriately based on the context of utterance. Another way to make learners aware of lexical choice as they speak to the target language, English in particular, is by introducing material of collocation, phrase, clinch, idiom, and so forth; it is supposedly done to make them realize that English does not only consist of a row of single word complied one after the other but also have words that stick together which carry a new meaning rather than in the separate position.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study as a corresponding to research aims show that there are several phenomena of interlingua process carried on by pre-service English teachers as foreign language learners to a certain degree. The most three frequent problems that happen to both Banjar Kuala and Banjar Hulu people in South Kalimantan, one of the ethnic variants in Indonesian are concord, tenses, and lexical. While the others are: verbal and nominal sentence, conjunction, and singular plural noun determination. The rests comprise other sentences' construction determiner, reference prepositions, comparative adjectives, and active and passive sentences. These findings can inform both the teachers and learners not only for the sake of improving target language competence knowledge but they also prompt the awareness to avoid such those problems by having more exercises in those more frequent areas since goals of learning are constituted from the learners' needs as a form of built-in syllabus not solely from planned and imaginary teaching plan. In addition, since learner language has been coined with research in linguistics, this study can be an impetus for other researchers toward the involvement of the other linguistics aspects in English language teaching so the real contribution to the language instruction area can be more apparent.

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