A CASE STUDY OF NL INFLUENCE IN UNIS FKIP ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' INTERLANGUAGE

Irmala Sukendra; Agus Mulyana; Imam Sudarmaji
1, 2, 3Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf Tangerang
Email: iskn@yahoo.com

Abstract
Regardless to the facts that English is being taught to Indonesian students starting from early age, many Indonesian thrive in learning English. They find it quite troublesome for some to acquire the language especially to the level of communicative competence. Although Krashen (1982:10) states that “language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication”, second language acquisition has several obstacles for learners to face and yet the successfulness of mastering the language never surmounts to the one of the native speakers. Learners have never been able to acquire the language as any native speakers do. Mistakes are made and inter-language is unavoidable. McNeili in Ellis (1985, p. 44) mentions that “the mentalist views of L1 acquisition hypothesizes the process of acquisition consists of hypothesis-testing, by which means the grammar of the learner’s mother tongue is related to the principles of the ‘universal grammar’.” Thus this study intends to find out whether the students go through the phase of interlanguage in their attempt to acquire second language and whether their interlanguage forms similar system as postulated by linguists (Krashen).

Keywords: Influence, Inter Language
A. Introduction

Regardless to the facts that English is being taught to Indonesian students starting from early age, many Indonesians are still thriving in acquiring the language. They find it quite troublesome to acquire the language especially up to the level of communicative competence. Wong-Fillmore in Jay (2003, p.391) described learning a second language as a process that consists of learning large chunks of speech that are used for communication purposes. However, Second Language Acquisition has several obstacles for learners to face and yet the successfulness of mastering the language never surmounts to the one of the native speakers. Learners have never been able to acquire the language as any native speakers do. Mistakes are made and inter-language is unavoidable.

Learning a second language is different from acquiring first language in terms that in learning second language learners are already equipped with L1 knowledge. Rueda (2006, p.175) states that adult L2 or FL learners initially rely on L1 transfers to communicate linguistic action in the TL. McNeill in Ellis (1985, p. 44) mentions that “the mentalist views of L1 acquisition hypothesizes the process of acquisition consists of hypothesis-testing, by which means the grammar of the learner’s mother tongue is related to the principles of the ‘UG’ (universal grammar).” Hence although some learners may be more successful than the others, mistakes are made and inter-language is unavoidable. For Selinker (as cited in Tarone, 2006, p.748) acquiring a second language is different from acquiring a first language, so there is no child language (but interlanguage) as the original mechanism for learning (lateralization) are atrophied (fossilization). Selinker (ibid) defines interlanguage as the linguistic system evidenced when an adult second language learner attempts to express meaning in the language being learned. Learner’s interlanguage is considered as a phase a learner goes through in developing his/her competence in L2.

Krashen in Krashen (1982, p.13) presents an average order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes for English as a second language of children and adults as the following:

ING (progressive); PLURAL; COPULA (“to be”) ---> AUXILIARY (progressive, as in “he is going”); ARTICLE (a, the) ---> IRREGULAR PAST ---> REGULAR PAST; III SINGULAR -s; POSSESSIVE –s

This means that L2 learners are more likely to form an interlanguage in respect to this order. In terms of pluralization Bahasa Indonesia case
of pluralization is very different from English, in which Sneddon (2010) states that plurality in Indonesian is indicated by reduplication (p.20), numbers (p.60) and quantifiers (p.136) whereas English has regular form of pluralization which is inflected by morpheme –s/-es and irregular form of pluralization. This may be difficult for some students to master inferring that they are highly influenced by their L1 paradigm. A learner may develop an interlanguage system in which just one of such factors governs a set of form-function associations, which should be described in their own right, regardless of the fact that they yield forms not allowed by L2 rules.

The students of University of Islam Syekh Yusuf Tangerang, faculty of teacher training and education of English major can be said to have fairly poor L2 competence (less than 5% of the students’ TOEFL prediction scores get more than 400, 95% are between 330-400), as being indicated by the entrance test. Therefore this paper intends to find out whether the students go through the phase of interlanguage in their attempt to acquire second language and to find out the patterns of their interlanguage, whether it is highly influence by their L1 or not and if so, to what extent is the influence. This study asks the following questions:
1. Whether the students of FKIP Unis Tangerang of teachers training and education of English go through the phase of interlanguage in their attempt to acquire second language?
2. What are the patterns of their interlanguage?
3. Is it highly influence by their L1?
4. To what extent is the influence of L1 in the production of the students’ English?

The research is focusing in finding out the interlanguage of the students of FKIP Unis Tangerang of teachers training and education of English. This paper will initially be started by obtaining the necessary data to support the writer in conducting the research. Reading and analyzing related theories will be done to support the ground thinking of the study. This present study aims to investigate the interlanguage of the students of FKIP Unis Tangerang of teachers training and education of English. This study is aimed to find the patterns and to see how they influence the second language production.

B. Method

The present study is carried out by giving a structured writing test to students of University of Islam Syekh Yusuf Tangerang, faculty of
teacher training and education of English major. Students are asked to write at least 150 words essay based on the pictures. Students are told that the purpose of the writing is on the flow of the story. This is done so they would not get tense over the grammar accuracy. The result of their writing then will be analyzed focusing on how the students form their pluralization of nouns and after that classification is made based on the pluralization formats.

The material used for the test is taken from Tarone and Swierzbin, *Exploring learner language* (2009, p.163) which is in the form of sequence pictures for narrative task. The task is intended for learners to write an essay based on the pictures (see appendix 1).

C. Research Finding

In writing the narrative essay, the students formed new format of pluralization in which they did not follow rules of the native language or the target language (of English). The thirty students formed 134 times of different format of nouns. The students’ production of the language shows that they formed an interlanguage of pluralization as can be described in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Interlanguage</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC-C</td>
<td>60/143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg-Pl</td>
<td>56/143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl-Sg</td>
<td>20/143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>7/143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The learners formed interlanguages of pluralization which comprise the use of countable form for uncountable nouns, the use of singular form for plural nouns and vice-versa, and double the pluralization forms.

In UC (Uncountable noun - Countable noun), learners formed countable forms of what were supposed to be uncountable in English (L2), for example: a sugar, foods, a bread, a jam, and a food. The learners did this mostly that it reaches 42%. The learners also put the singular nouns into plural forms and vice-versa, for example: a young girls, another things, an old women, some candy, some egg, and many thing. In forming plural for singular nouns, the learners made 56 attempts, that is 39.2% and forming singular for plural nouns for 20x which is 14% of the total interlanguage formed. Besides those items mentioned above, the
learners also construct ‘double pluralization’ such as: a somethings and two childrens but only 7 times out of 143 times.

In structuring sentences, the learners dropped the auxiliary “be” in forming the progressive form as well as “be” as linking verb. They maintain the “be” in structuring NP + VP in which they mistook the noun as verb, as in “conversation” and “chatting”.

Types of interlanguage
Occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deletion of auxiliary “be”</th>
<th>83/487</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun □ verb</td>
<td>58/487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP + Deg+Adj</td>
<td>44/487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal+to inf</td>
<td>25/487</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately each student made this mistake at least twice in their 250-300 words essays which made total number of mistakes 25% of their essays. In the deletion of auxiliary be the learners made 17% mistakes, 11,9% for mistaking noun as verb, 0,9% for constructing noun phrase+deg+adj (e.g. she very pretty), and 0,5% for adding to infinitive after modal.

D. Discussion

In Bahasa Indonesia pluralization forms are not constructed by adding any inflection to the nouns. Reduplication, numbers, and quantifiers are used to form the nouns into plural forms, for example: rumah is singular, but rumah-rumah is plural, dua rumah is plural, and beberapa rumah is also plural. However, the learners formed pluralization forms without following Bahasa Indonesia or English’s rules of pluralization. Take for example when they wrote a sugar. The concept of sugar is also uncountable in Bahasa Indonesia, yet they put it into countable by deliberately placed an ‘a’ as indefinite singular marker. The learners added –s inflection to plural nouns such as children and women too.

The learners seemed to be confused with the concept of numbers which are usually determined by partitives or classifiers in Bahasa.
Indonesia. Sneddon (2010, p.142) writes that partitives indicate a particular amount of something. They precede the head word, which can be either a count or a non-count noun. Count noun can alternatively be preceded by cardinal number or a number plus classifier but non-count nouns cannot. To indicate singular, se- ‘one’ precedes the partitive. Partitives are often mixed up with classifiers. However, there is clear distinction: classifiers group nouns on the basis of some perceived intrinsic characteristics, while partitives group nouns on the basis of how they are measured, assembled, or processed.

The learners formed different format of pluralization, which can be categorized as their interlanguage in their effort to acquiring the TL. The learners’ attempt to describe nouns seems to be affected by the concept of inflection as a generalization of the TL rules of pluralization. In English, regular form of pluralization is marked by adding inflection –s, which made them adding –s to most nouns they wrote. The learners’ production can also be categorized as being influenced by their native language as there is similarity in the forming of the nouns. Considering that Bahasa Indonesia does not classifies nouns into count and non-count, the learners made generalization for most nouns, such as: jam, bread, and food into count noun. Their native language also assists them in term of forming the concept that the noun should be preceded by a determiner in which they got confused between classifier and partitives. This reasoning may be the reason why they put indefinite determiner ‘a’ before uncountable nouns.

In structuring sentences, students tend to form sentences in a structure that is not an L1 structure or L2’s. Sentences such as: “My grandma very happy of feeling”, “because her meet of long friend”, and “she come in the bottle to bag my aunty” are some examples of how learners are forming sentences with structure that is not influenced by L1 (mother tongue) but also not of L2 (target language, in this case, English) structure. Take the first sentence for example, “my grandma very happy of feeling”. This learner may want to say “nenek saya merasa bahagia” in Indonesian which should be put in English as “my grandma feels (very) happy. However the rough idea of the sentence she produced would be somewhat be “nenek saya bahagia dalam perasaan”. This may be a
A CASE STUDY OF NL INFLUENCE IN UNIS FKIP ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
STUDENTS’ INTERLANGUAGE

Irmala Sukendra; Agus Mulyana; Imam Sudarmaji

bit understandable though it is grammatically incorrect and can be said as non-English sentence. Although these occurrences are not significant (sentences which could be categorized as interlanguage), students still produced them which means that in their process of acquiring English, students show that they made those errors. This should further be researched as study shows that errors influenced by L1 and not interfere with meaning may be particularly difficult to be corrected.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that the learners formed interlanguage of pluralization in which they formed count nouns from what the TL rule acknowledges as non-count nouns by adding articles (a/an). They also formed singular nouns into plural form and vice versa which may be caused by the L1 influence of noun concept, for example: repetition in Bahasa Indonesia in the word anak-anak could mean both child/ little boy or girl (singular) or children (plural). This L1 noun concept could influence the learners to transfer the rule into forming TL linguistic material. In forming the pluralization, the learners also overgeneralized TL rule, in which they add inflection –s to nouns which they considered to be plural such as childrens and womans. In sentence structuring, although only some sentences produced by the learners can be categorized as such. The occurrences still show that learners in their process of learning formed an interlanguage in the level of sentence structuring too.

In the case of students of teachers’ training and education program at UNIS Tangerang, they have tendencies to adapt their mother tongue into their production of English. They simply put English translation word per word to their Indonesian sentences or word(s) which created confusion to people who are not aware of the Indonesian way of structuring sentences. Errors that are influenced by the L1 and do not interfere with meaning may be particularly difficult for students to overcome. For example, when a learner says, “She is wearing a skirt red”, the word order does not lead to confusion. If there is no
breakdown in communication, learners may not notice that more proficient speakers of English do not use this word order.

Language acquisition is not a cumulative linear process and it therefore cannot be predicted when a certain form will become learnable for a certain learner. In forming pluralization, the learners applied two of five processes of language learning which lead to the forming of interlanguage, which are native language transfer and overgeneralization of TL linguistic materials. The pluralization forms also consists of characteristics of previously learned languages, features of L2 and general interlanguage characteristics such as omission of function words and grammatical morphemes as the indication of interlanguage phase.

In relation to that, Ruegg (2010, p.253) claims that language learners are in the process of developing their language skills. They are making different types of errors, which is the manifestation of the development of interlanguage. Thus, when the learners made errors in forming the pluralization, they were in the phase of acquiring the TL by forming interlanguage. Interlanguage evolves over time as a result of various strategies that learners use to make sense of the language input and to control the output. Therefore, some elements of the interlanguage may be the result of learners’ specific approach to the language material to be learnt, i.e. their selection of learning strategies.

References


