INVESTIGATING THE ERROR UTTERANCES PRODUCED BY EFL STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study deals with the analysis of utterances produced by boarding school students who frequently attempt to communicate directly using English. Speaking English outside the classroom context is fascinating to investigate as these students are assumed to be good at speaking as they are exposed to English more compared to those in public schools. Though so, frequency of language usage does not always reflect the competencies of the language. This research is considered as a case study since it provides an investigation of errors occurrence in the surrounding of Nurul Falah Boarding School. The researchers followed the procedures of Error analysis (EA) to obtain some authentic information by collecting the data through interviewing and observing the students, identifying the sentences or corpus produced to find the errors, and classifying the errors—to what aspect a definite error found belongs. Finally, after analyzing the data collected, it was found that most students of Dayah Nurul Falah Meulaboh committed all the types of error (Omission, Insertion, Substitution, Misinformation, and Misordering), and the most common type they produced was Substitution Error. Those findings might be a good reference for teachers, especially in boarding school to emphasize their teaching in those language aspects before applying a regulation of speaking English daily in their community.

Keywords: error, error analysis, utterances, EFL learners.

INTRODUCTION

The mastery of the four English skills becomes the focus of English teaching learning in schools in Indonesia. As a result, in the current Competency Based
Investigating the error utterances produced by EFL students of Islamic Boarding School by Rizki Fajrita, Chairina & Bukhari Daud

Curriculum (KTSP) 2006, the skills are taught separately, so that the students will acquire each skill equally. The uniformity in the process and purpose of language learning in most schools does not guarantee that the student’s mastery in English become satisfactory. This circumstance leads to the development and changes in teaching methods and aids in some education institutions such as in boarding schools. The teachers attempt harder to make the students competent in the receptive and productive skills. Consequently, the English class hours are modified and added as much as needed. Moreover, they try to create a new learning atmosphere where the students regularly do their activities in the dormitory such as the obligation of talking in English with friends and also with the supervisors.

The effort of the stakeholders in some boarding schools toward these rules brings about positive influence. Therefore, their students are more active in using English rather than those in state schools. In fact, those pupils get more knowledge of the language since they are more active English speakers rather than the ones who are encouraged only when the English class takes place. However, despite of the achievements, these pupils are still making errors while talking in English. That boarding school pupils speak English frequently does not guarantee they get the higher stage of English acquisition. It was clearly the situation in Dayah Nurul Falah Meulaboh as a conversation held with the students and some errors were indicated such as (1) “I not come to University”, (2) “I am sick influenza”, (3) “We don’t studying history this week”, (4) “He talk about his family in each page” and (5) “I can to swim.”

Such case is similar to the one revealed by El-Sayed (1982) in his research in Saudi Arabia, revealing some common errors produced by the students in composing an essay in terms of linguistic aspect, such as pronoun, noun, adjective, articles, and preposition (grammar). Speaking target language regularly might lead the students to closer distance of English mastery, but it will be distinctive if the sentences or expressions produced are incorrect. The error committed might spread along the students’ community if no one corrects it. This kind of problem can obstruct the development of students’ ability in the language; even if they keep communicating in English, they still apply unsuitable language rules. Furthermore, in order to overcome this problem, the systematic way namely Error Analysis (EA) will help them to identify the problem. Error Analysis itself is an investigation of production of language in form of spoken and written to enlighten the level of language of the learners (Ellis, 2008). This investigation has some working procedures used by the researchers starting with data collection, error identification, and evaluation.

Based on the explanation above, it is crucial to analyze more utterances and expressions produced by the students of Dayah Nurul Falah Meulaboh by addressing a question “What are the common anomalous utterances produced by the students of Islamic Boarding School (Dayah Nurul Falah) Meulaboh?”

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error and Its Significance

Ellis (2008) pointed error as the deviation emerges as a consequence of learners’ lack of knowledge. Errors are speech or writing of the students which take
part in the conversation diverged from the definite norm and rules of language performance which also represent the stage of language acquisition of the learner. It means that the type of error itself has to be recognized in order to determine the extent. Errors need to be corrected directly or indirectly by the teacher since the students might not be aware that they have committed one of them.

Error is defined as some “idiosyncratic” or un-native like, production of language uttered regularly and systematically by a language learner (Chanier, et al., 1992). The term idiosyncratic means the stage of competence that is definite to the students, while un-native like means incorrect use of the language learnt by students. The expressions of the learners that contain error might resemble the ones produced by the native speakers, but there is however, some particular distinction linguistic form or combination of form which is not produced by those counterparts even though the context is similar (Lennon, 1991).

Before the late 1960s, some people still judged the existence of error negatively, and it was forbidden to make and considered as the failure in language learning (Corder, 1967). However, for some, errors can be the positive step in language learning. Jaramaz (2014) made a clarification about how important the learners’ error was and how crucial to appreciate the role of those errors. She stated that, error provides suggestions to the teachers for their teaching learning process since it can represent the level of students’ achievement indication and progression. Then, the error committed can be condition for the researchers for what students have understood and it is the reference of language aspects taught. It also can be the strategy used by learners in learning and acquiring language.

Nowadays, learning strategies preferred by the language learner is “avoidance” (Yu, 2013) rather than making error itself. It means that it is more convenient for them to prevent committing errors by avoiding any topic or language rules that they are unknowledgeable about. There are still, some students who might feel ashamed of making errors. Furthermore, it is the duty of the teacher to provide the students with the opportunity to express their capability without being pressured by committing the errors. Mitchell and Myles (2004) claimed that errors studied could reveal a developing system of the students’ target language and this system is dynamic and opened to changes as long as the process is also systematic. This view was supported by Stark (2001) who also explained that teachers have to view students’ errors positively and should not consider them as the learners’ failure to grasp the rules and structures but view the errors as process of learning. He subscribed to the view that errors are normal and harmless features of learning.

**Error Analysis**

Error analysis (EA) is an investigation of Linguistic which focuses on the errors committed by the target language learners. Analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need development and emphasis in teaching (Corder, 1974). Error analysis 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 that Target Language itself. He also added that those errors are “crucial in and of themselves.” For learners themselves, errors are
Investigating the error utterances produced by EFL students of Islamic Boarding School by Rizki Fajrita, Chairina & Bukhari Daud

indispensable, since the production of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Hence, these scientific procedures called EA should take an essential part of the recognition of those errors produced by the pupils. Systematically analyzing errors will benefit the reinforcement in teaching. In addition, the word “systematic” contributes to the stages and steps of EA as elaborated below:

1. Collecting data; this step is obtaining some sentences uttered by the learner and make a uniform documentation.
2. Identification; the samples are identified by the researcher by comparing the sentences learners produced with what seem to be the normal or correct form in the target language which correspond with them (Ellis, 2008)
3. Describing the errors; once the errors have been identified, the researcher can classify and describe in types such as grammar category, word choice, and semantics.
4. Explaining the errors; explaining the error likely becomes the fascinating part of the analysis since the activity is attempting to find out the causes and the source of the errors.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a case study which clarifies the natural circumstance and also problems appear in community. It gives an explanation about “what”, “how”, “why” something happen (Yin, 2003). For this case, the researchers intend to analyze the data about the example of error occurrences (what) of errors committed by Boarding School Students at Dayah Nurul Falah Meulaboh. The source of data was the utterances produced by the students and they were converted from the spoken into written form.

The primary and solely tool utilized in gathering the data was a tape recorder which was used in the interview process. Interview is a conversation with a purpose; it is a preferred instrument in qualitative research, and numerous data could be gathered quickly (Cohen, 2007). Cohen added that it also bonds a close relationship between the researcher and the interviewee since the process was not stiff. The technique of gathering data used in this research was interviewing the students by using semi-structured interview. This kind of interview was used to gather data from the participants with a casual and ordinary conversation. The researchers asked some questions to each participant by involving in the activity they are doing. The researchers preferred to use this technique because it seemed easier to conduct a certain study by collecting the data without any pressure for both of the researcher and the participants. The duty of the researchers toward this technique was to ensure the questions and the answer focus on the topic.

There were four steps of analyzing the data after recording the speech of students. The researchers adopted the procedures of EA which suggested by Ellis (2008) for classifying the items of errors. The steps were data reduction; in which the researchers drew the main, crucial thing on the record, identification; the data obtained was identified by comparing the sentences produced by the students to the possible normal pattern that is usually used in the target language by the native
speaker, description; explanation to which language aspects the errors grouped (Omission, insertion, substitution, misinformation, misordering), and explanation; giving narrative clarification about the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research revealed that the participants committed 133 errors. After dividing them into 5 categories (omission, insertion, substitution, and misordering), it was evidence that all of them committed all kinds of error. The summary of the types of error committed by the students along with the percentage of each kind of error is tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Insertion</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Misinformation</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Misordering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researchers found that there were 29 (21.80%) omission errors. They varied in the omission of the Subject, verb, preposition, and even the object of their sentences. Some students also committed 26 (19.54%) errors in inserting unnecessary item in their sentence, such as adding double verb, adding preposition in inappropriate place, and even adding unnecessary word.

The substitution errors were the big deal, since most of the participants committed them. The total number of this type was 46 (34.58%). Misinformation errors were committed mostly in the use of incorrect tense. However, the occurrence of these errors was not as much as the previous type. It was committed 24 times (18.04%) from the total 133 errors. The last was misordering errors which the students committed rarely. This kind of errors was the smallest occurrence as it only emerged 8 times (9.01%).

Below are some samples of error categorized along with the explanation and the reconstruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Reconstruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>Miss Fatan, I feel not good. I’m don’t like because…</td>
<td>the auxiliary verb was omitted omitting a part of complete sentence (object)</td>
<td>Miss Fatan, I am not feeling well. I don’t like it because…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Insertion</td>
<td>We say “we are kind sick.” After that we go to mosque for praying Zuhur.</td>
<td>adding an unnecessary item “kind” adding an unnecessary item (double verb)</td>
<td>We say, “we are sick”. After that we go to the mosque for praying Zuhur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigating the error utterances produced by EFL students of Islamic Boarding School by Rizki Fajrita, Chairina & Bukhari Daud

Table 2 continued...

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>I spend my day with so much activity. ... to make our homework</td>
<td>the incorrect use of noun phrasal word the wrong word use (improper word choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Misinformation</td>
<td>I swim with my family in there because the water is so fresh.</td>
<td>the wrong use of sentence construction (in this case, the question asked was about their last holiday, yet they answered it by using present tense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Misordering</td>
<td>I talk about status Facebook We have class memorize.</td>
<td>the wrong order of noun phrase the wrong order of noun phrase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

Omission

Students committed omission errors varied to the omission of the subject, verb, preposition, and even the object of their sentences. The students commonly produced omission errors in terms of omitting the verb before the gerund in the present continuous sentences. Oshima and Hogue (1991, 1999), cited in Ananda, Gani and Sahardin (2014) pointed out missing “subject or verb” commonly occurred in a sentence of EFL (English as Foreign Language) students. Both of omitted subject and verb reflect the stage of students’ competency in target language since the quantity of this error production shows the quantity of “Negative Transfer” from ESL and EFL mother tongue (O’Grady, 2006).

In this case, the participants did not only produce error in omitting the verb or the subject, but they also made incomplete sentences in term of putting off the preposition like “with”, “to” and “for”, and the object in some transitive sentences. That finding led to the conclusion that omission error was not merely caused by the negative transfer from student’s mother tongue, but they were also distracted by the complexity of the target language rules.

Insertion

While some students tended to produce incomplete sentences, the others were surprisingly stuck with forming a bizarre sentence in which an unnecessary item was found. They varied in adding double verb, adding preposition in inappropriate place, and even adding unnecessary word. However, the most typical insertion error they made was adding another verb in the sentences where there had been one existed.

Such case of insertion errors occurrence was also found by Sutomo (2013) who only specialized its kind to “Singular/ Plural Subject- Incorrect be- verb agreement” where the student still put one more “verb” before an action verb. He added that the students of L2 considered that the use of “be (is, am, are)” was not as verb. It was likely to be something “obligated” to put in a sentence although there had been another “verb”.

163
Substitution
The substitution type was a big scope to which errors might belong. The most frequent kind of substitution error they produced was “we make our homework”. This pattern seemed to be a “behavior and style” (Ellis, 2008) in talking in the community. One might have considered the word “make” was unsuitable for the sentence although the sentence was correct in grammatical aspect. However, if the word “make” was replaced with “do”, the sentence would have been correct both from grammatical aspect and semantics (meaning). Another typical kind of substitution that made this type numerous was when the students were assigned to put a gerund of verb in the sentences; they preferred to use a simple form of the verb.

Misinformation
According to Thompson and Martinet (1986), as cited in Herlinawati (2011), when forming a sentence about an event happened in the past, if the time is mentioned or implied past tense is usually used. However, the reality in this case was the students formed a past tense sentence when they meant to tell about the event happens regularly such as their daily activities. This deviation showed that the students had not understood the concept of choosing target language formations and rules (White, 2003).

Misordering
The students might have understood that the pattern of noun phrase in English was Adj + noun, but they still committed error in misordering sometimes like “status Facebook” and “class memorize”. The researchers once considered those anomalies as mistakes (Harlow, 1998), but then after confirming what the students actually meant; it is positive that those anomalies were errors in misordering.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
Based on the finding and the discussion related to the clarification about the errors committed by the learners of Dayah Nurul Falah Meulaboh, it was concluded that there were 133 error occurrences included in the type of Omission, Insertion, Substitution, Misinformation, and Misordering. Each student produced all kinds of errors, and most of them were alike. For instance, the 8 subjects who were interviewed began with the same expression “I spend my day with so much activity”. Almost all of them ignored the rule to form a noun phrase.

On the other hand, there were few expressions for Misordering errors, and almost all the participants did not commit such errors frequently. They only made those errors for the noun phrase that they usually say in Bahasa Indonesia, as the rule in constructing a noun phrase, is the “adjective” follows “noun” (adj + noun) such as “Prayer Shubuh”, “Class Memorize”, “I feel not so good” and so on.

It is suggested to conduct future studies in other aspects of language acquisition in order to see the variant of error students committed. It is suggested to include both of female and male subjects in order to see the differences. By referring from
the result of this study, EFL teachers are expected to emphasize their teaching into some language aspects in which students have difficulty the most.

REFERENCES