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AN ANALYSIS OF AN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNER COMPETENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this studi was to examine and discuss a foreign language learner's language competence. The learner's two language competencies, linguistics (phonology, lexis, and grammar) and pragmatics, were investigated. The participant in this study was an Indonesian master's student at the University of Leeds' School of Media and Communication. The data was gathered through interviews. The results show that, despite some errors, M's overall pronunciation was clear and understandable from a linguistics standpoint. She was able to correctly pronounce the majority of the words. She did, however, need to work on articulating some sounds, particularly those that aren't found in her native tongue. She demonstrated good lexis skills, but it was clear that she was still having difficulty with English grammar. Finally, her previous habit seemed to influence how she spoke in English, as she tended to use informal rather than formal utterances to perform the target language, according to pragmatics competence.

Key words: language competence, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence

INTRODUCTION

Learners may face difficulties in acquiring and learning a second or foreign language. This is due to the fact that learning a new language is quite difficult. They must master the linguistic features of the target language, in this case English, as well as the discourse, in order for the learners to communicate in the target language.

There are numerous theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and second language learning (SLL) that explain how second language learners learn the target language as well as why some learners are more successful than others in mastering it (Dörnyei, 2014; Ellis, 1997, 2015; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Ellis & Ellis, 1994; Horwitz, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2019). It is expected that by understanding SLA and SLL theories, second language learners will be able to identify the sources of their difficulties in mastering the target language, which will be beneficial to their language development. (Dongyu et al., 2013).

There are two fundamental reasons why it is important to understand how the second language learners acquire and learn the target language (L2) (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015; Ellis & Ellis, 1994; Mitchell et al., 2019). Firstly because it has the potential to contribute to a broader knowledge of the nature of language, human learning, and intercultural communication, as well as its correlations and effects on one another (Mitchell et al., 2019). Secondly, "the knowledge will be useful" especially to understand some aspects which influence the learners to be successful or fail in learning the target language (Ellis, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2019).

The purpose of this paper is to examine and discuss a foreign language learner's language competence. The learner's two language competencies, linguistics (phonology, lexis, and grammar) and pragmatics, will be evaluated.

To begin, some SLA theories related to the learner's language analysis will be discussed, followed by an analysis and discussion of the learner's language competence, and finally, some implications of the analysis toward the development of language teaching and the development of the learner's language will be presented.

Second language acquisition (sla)

Second Language Acquisition is the study of how people learn another language after they have mastered their first. This could be a second, third, or foreign language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). English is regarded as a foreign language in Indonesia because it is not used as the primary language of communication in both formal and informal situations. However, Mitchell et al. (2019) do not believe it is necessary to distinguish between the terms second and foreign language. They believe that learning the target language is more likely to be similar, despite the fact that

the goal and circumstances may differ. As a result, the theory of second language acquisition could be applied to the study of Indonesian language development.

In support of this theory, (Aljumah, 2020; Ellis & Ellis, 1994) identify two purposes of SLA: "description," which is concerned with how learners' linguistic competence develops, and "explanation," which is concerned with the external and internal factors that may become the reasons "why the learners acquire the language the way they do." SLA's objectives are to "describe how learners acquire their second language" and "to explain this process," as well as to explain why some students are more successful than others (Ellis, 2015).

Contrastive analysis (first language theory)

Contrastive Analysis (First Language Theory) is basically in line with behaviourism theory which believes that "learning is a question of habit formation" (James, 1980; Jaszczolt, 2011; Johnson et al., 2020). In behaviourism theory, it is explained that the learners' prior habit will affect them in learning a new habit (Budiman, 2017; Horwitz, 2014; Johnson et al., 2020). Similarly, first language theory holds that difficulties in learning a second language are primarily caused by the learners' first language (L1) (Horwitz, 2008). Moreover, according to this theory, the degree of similarity between L1 and L2 is critical because two different speakers from two different countries may have different difficulties learning the target language (Horwitz, 2014). For instance, Spanish speakers may find it easier to learn English than Chinese speakers, as Spanish and English share a lot more similar grammar, vocabulary, and sound system than Chinese and English do. (Ellis, 1997; Horwitz, 2014).

Learners' first language, on the other hand, may have an impact on them negatively (or positively) during the process of mastering the language (Johnson et al., 2020). This effect is known as "the study of transfer" in psychology (Johnson et al., 2020; Murphy, 2003). It is classified into two types based on its effect: positive transfer and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when L1 and L2 share similar aspects, such that L1 assists learners in learning L2, whereas negative transfer occurs when L1 and L2 do not share similar aspects, such that L1 interferes with learners in learning L2, also known as L1 interference (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015; Lekova, 2010).

Error analysis

Error analysis then can be used as the alternative method for "identifying, describing, and explaining learner errors" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Richards, 2015). However, to analyse the learners' language errors, it is necessary to understand which ones should be identified as errors error occurs when learners do not produce language forms in the same way that native speakers do. Some of the second learners' errors cannot be explained by using contrastive analysis, one of the examples is "Did she wanted?" (Johnson et al., 2020). These errors are referred to as "intralingual errors" by Richard, which refer to errors that occur "within language itself", he also uses the term

"developmental" to describe these types of errors (Richards, 2015). The opposite of intralingual error is 'interlingual error', which derives from "the differences between L1 and FL" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Richards, 2015).

In relation to interlingual errors, the effects of "transfer" and "borrowing" have to be distinguished (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Transfer happens when the learners' L1 forms have an effect on their use of the second language, whereas borrowing occurs when learners utilize their L1 form briefly as a communication tactic but does not result in the form being incorporated into the interlanguage system (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

Significances of errors in sla

There are some significances of errors in SLA according to Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005). Firstly, the they can assist the teachers in determining what the students have learned and what they have yet to master for pedagogical purposes. Second, they provide evidence of how languages are learned for the purpose of research. Finally, they serve as a tool for learning purposes, allowing students to investigate the rules of the target language.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive method. The researcher collected the data by interviewing the participant using English. The interview was recorded and then transcribed. The data gathered was then analyzed to investigate the participant's English language competence.

During the interview session with the participant, three topics with varying degrees of difficulty were discussed. The first discussion focused on the participant's motivation for attending the University of Leeds and what she found interesting and annoying during her time there. The second topic was a description of a film or television show she had seen. Finally, she talked about recent news that she had read or seen. The interview was recorded and then transcribed in order to analyze the learners' ability to use English as a foreign language.

PARTICIPANT

The participant in this language analysis was an Indonesian master's student at the University of Leeds' School of Media and Communication. Maya is her name (pseudonym).

She communicates with her family and friends in Indonesia by speaking Indonesian. However, because she lives in Bandung, West Java, her first language is influenced by her native tongue, "Sundanese," as locals in her hometown frequently communicate in their native tongue and only use the national language in formal situations or when speaking to people who do not speak it.

The participant was asked how she learned English after the interview session. The participant stated that she began learning English in elementary school but had never used it to communicate with others. She also admitted that in her spare time, she enjoys watching western movies and listening to English music. She stated that she learned new vocabulary as well as how to pronounce the words correctly as a result of this activity. She had to take an IELTS preparation course before going to Leeds because she realized she wasn't very good at writing in English. Her overall IELTS score was 7.0, but her speaking score was only 6.0, indicating that she had done well in her preparation. She believes it is due to the fact that she rarely speaks English and only uses it frequently during her studies in Leeds, where she was the only Indonesian in her class. She also lived with an Indian who required her to communicate in English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistics competence
Phonology

When using the language, the participant made a few phonological errors. It became clear when she attempted to pronounce the words which consists of interdental fricatives, they are /θ/ and /ð/. She also had a habit of mispronouncing these two sounds. Examples of errors of /θ/ sound are "thing", "think", "nothing", and "with". Examples of errors of /ð/ sound are "though", "the", "they". These are L1 negative transfer errors because the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ do not exist in Indonesian, and she is likely unaware of how to articulate these sounds correctly. Indonesian will simply articulate /θ/ sound the same as /t/ sound and /ð/ sound the same as /d/ sound without any phonological knowledge.

Another instance was discovered when "M" uttered the words "think" and "thing." She omitted the /k/ sound when articulating "think," making the word "think" sound similar to "thing." As a result, if we don't pay attention to the context, we won't be able to distinguish between the two words' sounds. The cause of this error is not L1 interference, because many Indonesians add the /k/ sound to some words that should not have one, such as "ibu," which is frequently articulated as /ibuk/. As a result, the cause of this error could be a lack of understanding of how to pronounce consonant clusters correctly.

When "M" attempted to say "tongue," she made a mispronunciation. The word should be pronounced /tʌŋ/, but she said /tong/. The cause of this error could be L1 negative transfer, as Indonesian words beginning with the letter "o" can only be articulated in two ways: /o/ in "shop" and /o/ in "lump."

The final case was the errors that are related to word stress. "M" was unable to utter the word "money" and "consider" in a correct stress. The fact that "money" was articulated incorrectly (/mʌˈni/ instead of /ˈmʌn.i/) was surprising enough as this word is very familiar and "M" should have heard this word many times. However, if this case was linked to the complexity of the question, the cause of the error might be because "M" was under pressure causing her to lose her ability to pronounce the familiar word correctly (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). While her failure in articulating "consider" (/ˈkənsid.ər/ instead of /kənˈsɪd.ər/) correctly appears to be a "intralingual error," or she may have no idea how to articulate the word correctly.

Despite a few mispronunciations, the participant's overall pronunciation was clear and understandable. She was able to correctly pronounce the majority of the words. She does, however, need to work on articulating some sounds, particularly those that aren't found in her native tongue.

Lexis

There were also some lexical errors discovered. To begin, it was discovered that "M" was occasionally confused when using the words "Chinese" in "from Chinese" and "Indian" in "from Indian." It is assumed that she was aware of when to use the two words because she could also correctly convey the words, such as "from China" and "from India." As a result, the cause of this error is determined to be intralingual.

On a few occasions, "M" also failed to use the correct collocation. For example, "different" is supposed to go with "from," but she used other words to go with "different," such as "different with" and "different in." It's presumed that L1 interference was to blame, as "M" translated "word for word" from her L1 (Krashen, 1981).

There were also some offensive words to be found. "Admit" and "receive," for example. It was assumed that she was attempting to say "accept." Furthermore, she frequently said "back" when she meant "when I was." The reason for these errors was that the participant most likely couldn't think of a better word to use when uttering the sentences, so she relied on communication strategy to assist her in performing the language. As a result, these are not interlingual errors.

In terms of lexis, the participant has demonstrated a high level of proficiency. She could also use some unfamiliar words, such as "slapstick." Even though there were some errors caused by L1 negative transfer, it appears that her L1 did not really interfere with her mastering English vocabulary.

Grammar

When "M" used the target language, there were numerous grammatical errors to be found. To begin with, she frequently forgot to use past tense when discussing her reasons for attending Leeds University. "I choose," for example, rather than "I choose". The cause of this error is not L1 negative transfer because she could also use past form correctly, such as "as I said" and "lecturers taught us". Therefore, this error is classified as an intralingual error.

The second, errors in bound morphology were discovered, such as omission of plurals on nouns,

adjective-noun agreement (Krashen, 1981). For example, "two public relation major", "... many free time", "I'm a fans", "other foreign language", "all the book". However, because she could also perform some utterances correctly, such as "my classmates are...", these errors could be both interlingual and intralingual. Besides, because she made these errors so frequently, it also indicated that her L1 has a significant impact on her ability to communicate in the second language.

The third, it was also discovered some errors related to "word for word translations" (Krashen, 1981). For example, instead of saying "they have known each other," she said "they already know each other." Because she followed her L1's word order, this error is classified as an L1 negative transfer.

Finally, the auxiliary verb of this utterance "there so much essay" was omitted. Because there are no auxiliary verbs in Indonesia, it could be caused by L1 interference. She did, however, understood the rules for constructing this utterance. She also frequently made errors in sentence construction, such as "it's requires," "it's still make," "it's still give," and "it's still like entertain." These errors were caused by intralingual interference rather than L1 interference.

Overall, it is clear that "M" was still having difficulty with English Grammar. She made the most grammatical mistakes in the present and past tense. The difficulties in mastering these tenses may be due to L1 interference, as Indonesian does not distinguish between verb and structure forms when expressing events that occur at different times.

Pragmatics competence

The theory of politeness is one of pragmatics' theories. According to this politeness theory, people's "social distance" and "closeness" influence how they communicate (Leech, 2016; Taguchi, 2019). According to this theory, the purpose of saying "sorry" is not only to apologize, but also to request that the interlocutor repeat his or her utterance. She also showed respect by saying "would" rather than "will."

When people in Indonesia speak to someone who isn't close to them, they tend to speak more politely, for example, by using more formal utterances. In Indonesia, when people talk to someone who do not really close to them, they often speak more politely, for example, using more formal utterances. However, it appears that the participant's previous habit has an impact on how she speaks English, as she tended to use informal rather than formal utterances during the interview session. This means, there was L1 interference in mastering this competence.

CONCLUSION

According to Krashen (1981), L1 learners find it more difficult to speak accurately than second language learners because their first language has a strong influence on them (L1). This explains why the learner's English proficiency appeared to be heavily influenced by her first language. It has been proven that L1 negative transfer caused a large number of grammatical errors among learners. It's also possible that she's making intralingual errors because she can speak the language correctly on occasion. This analysis suggests that the participant needs to work harder at learning, particularly grammar, in order to communicate more effectively in the target language.

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