



INTERLANGUAGE OF ADJECTIVE PHRASE CONSTRUCTION IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY ON STUDENTS OF SMAN 1 MATAULI PANDAN

by

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Abstract:

This study investigates the types of interlanguage of adjective phrase construction that students made when writing English descriptive text. The errors function as a system and can be used to determine interlanguage. The researcher employed a cross-sectional design and used descriptive qualitative methods. The descriptive texts of the students were collected as primary data at the same time but different levels of proficiency. Thirty tenth-grade students from Matauli Senior High School in Central Tapanuli, North Sumatera, participated in the study. Error Analysis (EA) and Interlanguage theories were central to the data analysis (IL). The findings revealed that students' English production is still interlanguage because their writings contain a wide range of errors regarding adjective phrases. There are 113 errors in total. There are up to 70 items of omission errors (62%), 19 items of misformation errors (17%), 15 items of misordering errors (13%), and 9 items of addition errors (8%). Furthermore, four processes were identified as contributing to students' interlanguage in this study, with the student's native language having the greatest influence on their English production (Language transfer (71%), second language learning strategies (14%), false concepts hypothesized (9.7%), and overgeneralization (5.3%). The findings also revealed that both interlingual and intralingual sources have caused errors in second language learning. It can be concluded that students' competence at each level is insufficient. Due to their system, they are on the interlanguage continuum, which has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages.

Keywords: *Error Analysis (EA), Adjective Phrase Construction, Interlanguage (IL)*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, four skills should be acquired to maintain the language skills for senior high school students which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Writing as one of the productive skills is a complex skill that needs many aspects such as organization, punctuation, correct grammar, coherence, and cohesion. In producing writing, students often face problems in grammatical aspects (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). Since it is the basic in mastering writing skills, students continuously fail to apply the target language rules completely. Thus, when they produce the target language, spoken or written, the productions often contain errors although they have learned it for a long time. In fact, error is considered as part of cognition and it is also the part of students' interlanguage (Ducar & Schocket, 2018). Interlanguage is a transitional system reflecting the learners' current L2 knowledge that literally contains errors. Concerning the source of errors, Mahmood & Murad, (2018) noted that interlanguage (IL) related to special mental grammars constructed by the learners during the course of their development. It is believed that interlanguage is the result of the students' attempt to produce the target language.

One of the grammar rules that people often get errors is adjective phrase. Adjective phrase is phrase with adjective as head, functioning to complete the predicated that takes the form of 'be'. This is a modifier that has grammatical rules. It is often identified by the end of a special derivative or by the modifier of the special adverbs which precedes it. When writing, the right phrase should be considered to make a good sentence. In fact, in some studies describe that the majority of students still get errors in adjective phrase of their writing, one of which is in the descriptive text (Burhanuddin et al., 2018).

One of the objectives in English syllabus curriculum 2013 for senior high school is required students to be able to write a short and simple descriptive text properly including its grammatical features (Mulyaningsih & Yuliana, 2019). Therefore, the adjective phrase construction indicated in students' descriptive text is worth being investigated because Indonesian learners are still confronted with a lot of grammatical problems in their attempt to express the intended meaning in target language system correctly. One senior high school that experiences this situation is SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan. From the writing assignment in the form of descriptive text

given by their teacher, it can be identified that the students make a big number of errors, both in terms of grammatical items and linguistic elements.

Therefore, it is interested to know the interlanguage used in SMAN 1 Matauli students by analyzing it from the adjective phrases' construction in their descriptive text. To reveal the type of error occurred in adjective phrase construction and its frequency, this study uses Error Analysis. Error analysis (EA) is considered as the main tools to prove students' interlanguage. By using EA, some researchers investigate the students' errors in their writings (Denhovska et al., 2016).

Considering theories and prior empirical evident, the researchers have formulated three research questions to guide the investigation.

1. What types of errors are found in the adjective phrase construction of descriptive text written by SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan students ?
2. What types of non-errors are found in the adjective phrase construction of descriptive text written by SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan students ?
3. How is the cognitive process which influences SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan students' adjective phrase construction?

METHOD

Design

In this research, cross sectional design and a descriptive qualitative method are chosen to investigate the interlanguage through adjective phrase construction in SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan. The design used in this research is adopted from Bardovi-Harlig, (2017). The students' work is analyzed to understand the interlanguage aspect of the particular students that use English as their second or foreign language. In this study, the target data is descriptive language text. Through descriptive English text made by students, the researchers discovered the interlanguage of adjective phrase construction on SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan students. The goal of this design is to measure the dependent and independent variable and their distribution. Both variables are measures at the same time. Thus, this study has independent variable that is a test to write descriptive text and dependent variable that is a descriptive English text.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is students of SMA Negeri 1 Matauli students in Central Tapanuli North Sumatera. There are 12 parallel classes of tenth grade in academic year 2020/2021. In this school, the students had been already selected and grouped based on their academic scores and intelligence since the beginning of the academic year. Each of the students had to undergo the entrance test (academic tests) to be accepted in this school. Based on the result on those tests they were grouped into three level; high achiever (group A), middle achiever (group B) and low achiever (group C). The researcher took 10 students from each of the three groups based on their score in English tests which have been documented. So, there were 30 students chosen based on their level of proficiency. Then, these 30 students were made into three group; lower, middle, and higher achievers.

Stratified cluster random sampling was employed in this study. The sample units were chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Georgiadou et al., 2019). For example, they are learners of English as a foreign language, their language productions contain errors although they have learnt it for a long time.

Instrument and data type

The instrument used in this study is a test, specifically, a test of writing descriptive paragraph. The test is used to produce the work, in which then it is used to discover the interlanguage through the adjective construction in the text produced. In producing the text, the students are required to write a descriptive writing based on the given topic which they may choose, such as “The most enjoyable movie I have ever seen” or ”The most unforgettable place I have ever visited”. They were instructed to complete it within a period of 60 minutes and a minimum of 200 – 250 words. The students’ paper sheets of the mid-semester practice test are collected and analyzed.

The data of the study are students' descriptive writings regarding the experience in describing things using adjective/adjectives phrases. However, the output are numerical data converted from language data. As many as 30 writings from 3 groups of students (lower, middle,

and higher achievers) were chosen as the data of the study. They were chosen because they met the criteria of interlanguage (Graves, 2016).

Data Collection Technique

In collecting the data, several steps were taken. Firstly, 30 students from the 3 groups of the tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Matauli are chosen as the participants of the study. Secondly, the study chose students' mid-semester writing practice test in the middle of semester. In the test, the students were required to write a descriptive writing based on the given topic. Lastly, after the test was completed, the data were collected and analyzed by the researcher using error analysis as well as causes of error theory proposed by (Mohajan, 2017) and (Hulland et al., 2018).

The students' written descriptive texts became the data of the study. The collected data were reread carefully and critically. As the focus of the study is to investigate interlanguage regarding adjective phrase construction that appears in students' writing, so that the students' grammatical forms became the focus of the analysis, both the correct and incorrect form were identified and categorized (Yoon & Polio, 2017). An Error Analysis was carried out on their writings to identify linguistic behaviour shared by the students. The study analyzed every student's writing comprehensively. It means that the study did not analyse only the errors but also the accurate or correct ones since the objective of the study is to investigate students' linguistic behaviour shared by the students in terms of interlanguage. These writings constitute the primary data of this study.

Data Analysis Technique

The analysis of the students' errors in their writings was carried out by using the steps suggested by (Parkinson, 2017). The steps are as follows; the first step is to identify errors; in this step, the study acquired data and tried to find out the grammatical errors by underlying the errors and inserting coding. The second step is to describe errors; in this step, the study described or classified the errors into grammatical categories with certain coding such as OM, MF, MO, AD. Categorization of errors based on their specific nature was based on surface strategy Taxonomy: omission (OM), misformation (MF), disorder (MO) and addition (AD) as proposed previously

(Atzori et al., 2016). The last step is to explain errors; in this step, the study explained the problem of students' errors and evaluated them according to the grammatical rule. The study also compared the expressions or sentences that students produce to the accurate expressions in the target language. Finally, the results of the analysis were presented by using the tables and diagram as visual display for the data. Besides, the tables are followed by the description and the interpretation to make the results of the study clearly explained.

After analyzing the students' error and non-error productions, the study concluded whether the students have acquired the target language or not using the acquisition criteria. The study employed the 80 percent acquisition criteria, following study which based on Brown's (cited in (Kolarik et al., 2016)) that a structured is acquired when it is used correctly in 80 percent of the cases. Furthermore, in analyzing how and why (the process and the factors) the adjective phrases are constructed by the students that contribute to students' interlanguage, the study used the five central processes of interlanguage proposed by Selinker (cited in (Aziez, 2018)) and other causes/factors of errors proposed by Richard (1974, In (WU, 2017)).

In analyzing real academic exams, Luna as cited in (Mirzaei et al., 2016)) argues that basic grammatical errors appears where students do not come up in a normal classroom exercise. She confirms that during students' writing process, different cognitive strategies are taking place in their minds. Thus, these conditions are relevant because they stand for the examples of students' interlanguage that show a certain degree of L1 transfer. The whole citation process employed a referencing tool. However, the author used a model of offline Mendeley for desktop called "Offline automatic system by using Mendeley Desktop"(Turmudi, 2020, p. 59).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Types of Error in Students' Adjective Phrase

The first finding to be discussed here is type of grammatical error occurred in the students' descriptive texts. The errors focused on four areas. They are omission, addition, misformation, and

misordering. Table 1 shows that the most frequent error is the omission with 70 occurrences (62%) of the total errors. The second is misformation with 19 occurrences (17%). The third is disorder with 15 occurrences (13%). The last is addition with 9 occurrences (8%).

Table 1
Percentage of Errors in Adjective Phrase Produced by Students

NO	Type of Errors	High	Mid	Low	Total	%
1	Omission	20	24	26	70	62
2	Misformation	6	4	9	19	17
3	Misorder	2	8	5	15	13
4	Addition	3	2	4	9	8
		31	38	44	113	100

The students' erroneous adjective phrases in the table are taken from their written descriptive texts. The examples of errors identified in students' descriptive test are divided into four such as omission, misinformation, disorder, and addition are explained in the following.

First is omission. In omission error of adjective phrase, students usually do not write the complete word or construction. For example, is the sentence "This ship is the long ship in this harbour." It is considered error because in superlative degree form, the word *the long* should be *the longest*; "est" is missing in the sentence. The correction for this sentence is "This ship is the longest ship in this harbour".

Second is misinformation. In misinformation, students usually do not use the correct and appropriate type of word (adj, n, v, or adv). For example, is the sentence "She is quite confidence." It is considered error because the type of word that has to be used after "be" in this sentence is an adjective ending in '-ent' suffix such as *convenient*, *different*, *excellent*, *obedient*, etc. The sentence should be "She is quite confident".

Third is disorder. In disorder of adjective phrase, students usually put the words in adjective phrase in inappropriate order. For example, is the sentence "You'll also get to experience places new and cultures in the tourist spot." It is considered error because "places new" is not in correct order; the correct one is "new places", in which the adjective word comes before the noun to indicate that the place is new for the one who reads the sentence. This sentence should be "You'll also get to experience new places and cultures in the tourist spot".

The last is addition. In addition, error of adjective phrase, students usually use inappropriate additional of (a) word(s). The example is the sentence “In this place, a horse is more usefuller than a car.” It is considered error because in comparative degree form, “usefuller” should be more useful. The correction for this sentence is In this place a horse is more useful than a car”.

To some extent, this research wants to reveal how far students have learnt English by indicating not only their erroneous productions but also the correct ones regarding their adjective construction. For that reason, the percentage of accurate or non-error adjective phrases are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2
Percentage of Non-errors in Adjective Phrase Produced by Students

NO	Type of Errors	High	Mid	Low	Total	%
1	Misorder	30	20	21	71	41
2	Misformation	27	24	11	62	36
3	Omission	14	6	7	27	16
4	Addition	6	7	-	13	7
		77	57	39	173	100

Derived from Tables 1 and 3, the total occurrences of adjectives phrases in the students’ descriptive texts are 286 expressions, 173 of which (60.5%) are accurate or non-error expressions and the rest, 113 (39.5%) are erroneous. Thus, it can be inferred that, according to acquisition criteria (see (Borg & Edmett, 2019); (Leybaert et al., 2015)) in which a structure is acquired when it is used correctly in 80 per cent, all students from all groups generally have not acquired rules of the use of adjective phrases because the correct use attains only 60.5%.

The Cognitive Processes which Influence the Students’ Adjective Phrase Construction

Since error analysis can only provide a partial picture of learner language, the study further traced the findings to the cognitive processes which influence how the students construct the adjective phrases in their written descriptive texts (Candarli, 2021). The erroneous sentences covering adjective phrase influenced by the cognitive processes are derived from the four types of error (omission, misformation, misorder, and addition error). There are four cognitive processes found in the students’ descriptive text: Language transfer (LT), Strategy of L2 Learning (SLL), Overgeneralization (Over) and False Concept Hypothesized (FCH). The finding shows that the

process that most frequently occurs is language transfer (71%), followed by strategy of second language learning (14%), false concepts hypothesized (9.7%), and overgeneralization (5.3%). The findings related to the cognitive processes are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Percentage of Processes of Adjective Phrase Construction in Students' Interlanguage

NO	Type of Errors	LT	SLL	OVER	FCH	TOTAL
1	Omission	70	-	-	-	70
2	Misformation	-	8	-	11	19
3	Misorder	10	5	-	-	15
4	Addition	-	3	6	-	9
Total		80	16	6	11	113
Percentage		71%	14%	5.3%	9.7%	100%

LT = Language transfer, SLL = Strategy of L2 Learning, OVER= Overgeneralization, FCH = False Concepts Hypothesized.

The examples of errors in cognitive process such as language transfer, strategy of L2 learning, overgeneralization, and false concept hypothesized are described in the following.

The first is language transfer. In language transfer, students use their native language rule in which there is no rule of adding article to specific identity known. For example, is in the sentence of “*My Dad said [...] cost of [...] entrance ticket is way too high*” which is considered as omission error. In addition, students also mistakenly placed the words in the adjective phrase. The phrase ‘*places entirely new*’ seems to follow the rule of Indonesian language for ‘*tempat yang sepenuhnya baru*’ which is considered as misorder error.

The second is strategy of L2 learning. In strategy of L2 learning, students actually have already acquired the learning strategy that some adjectives can be formed by adding suffix *-ful* to its root; they simplified this rule, but it cannot be applied to all adjectives. For example, is in the sentence of “*The high waves in this sea can be very dangerous*” which is considered as misformation error. In addition, students apply their learning strategies of L2 learning about the plural form of some nouns by adding *-s* to adjective *beautiful* when it is not required (addition error). Furthermore, students also use English rules of attributive adjective in some kinds of adjectives which should be used only predicatively. For example, is in the sentence of “*It is the afloat vessel and it can be seen from the port*” which is considered as misorder error.

The third is overgeneralization. In overgeneralization, students overgeneralized the use of 'er' and 'most' when it is not required. The expressions seem redundant. For example, is in the sentences of “*In this place a horse is more **usefuler** than a car*” and “*It is one of **the most busies***” which is considered as additional error.

The last is false concept hypothesized. In false concept hypothesized, students cannot complete comprehension about the difference between *confidence* (noun) and *confident* (adj). For the example is in the sentence of “*She is **quite confidence** about her look*” which is considered as misinformation error. In addition, students also failed to understand the concept that both adjective *interesting* and *interested*; the use is not interchangeable. For example, is in the sentence of “*I am **so interested in** watching the movie*” which is considered as misinformation error.

Discussion

The language system of SMAN 1 Matauli Pandan students is still in interlanguage continuum because it contained a big number of grammatical errors and non-errors. The omission error category is the highest occurrence in their writings. It reached 62% of the total error, followed by misformation error (17%), disorder error (13%), and addition error (8%). In non-error, the highest occurrence belongs to disorder reaching 41% followed by misinformation (36%), omission (16%), and addition (7%). In addition, the process of adjective phrase construction, due to interlanguage, is language transfer (71%), strategy of L2 learning (14%), overgeneralization (5%), and false concept hypothesized (9.7%).

Those results indicate that the students, who do not use English as their first language, tend to have various errors. In this context, the errors that students made result from their native language and the difference between L1 and the L2 are the reason for the occurrence of errors. In the process of second language acquisition, there is a tendency of transferring the phonology, syntax, and semantic of L1 into the learning of the second/foreign language. Strategy of L2 learning appears to be one factor or process that contributes to students' interlanguage. When students apply the strategy of simplifying the system, they tend to ignore the rule restriction as well. The study observed that the erroneous production that occurred in students' writings is also influenced by their strategy of L2 learning (Fitriana et al., 2020).

This result is interlinked with the research conducted by (Shin et al., 2018) that defines the L2 learners are still struggling with various errors, in this research is in the term of phrase structure development of the Korean EFL Learners. The errors found in their phrase structure development acquired the basic SVO word order in English with several errors and the transfer of L1 word order was rarely found. This result shows that the learner started from bare VPs in acquiring English phrase structures. This is evidenced more prominently in the acquisition of affirmatives and interrogatives. Third, the learners' English phrase structures shows a tendency to develop from VP to IP and CP successively. Last, the learners' phrase structure development showed some distinctive characteristics compared with L1 learners in a natural setting.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis revealed that their target language seems to be partly influenced by their native language. In processing problems which the students had to confront, the influence of native language is obviously detected. A further contribution seems to be the students' internal processes in the form of their strategy in language learning, false concept hypothesized and some error caused by overgeneralization. The students' interlanguage realization may provide a more comprehensive way of dealing with students' errors. It is evidenced by the result that shows the omission error category is three-fifth occurrence in their writings, followed by misformation error with less than one-fifth occurrence, disorder error with more than one-tenth occurrence, and addition error with less than one-tenth occurrence. In addition, the disorder reaches two-fifth of occurrence, followed by misinformation with one-third, omission with less than one-fifth occurrence, and addition with less than one-tenth occurrence. It is also found that the interlanguage level comprises of language transfer with more than three-third, strategy of L2 learning with less than one-fifth, overgeneralization with one-twentieth, and false concept hypothesized with almost one-tenth of total.

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