

# INTERLANGUAGE ANALYSIS: A RESEARCH ON ESL-SPEAKER'S STAGE OF ACQUISITION BASED ON THE PROCESSABILITY THEORY

## ANALISIS ANTARBAHASA: SEBUAH PENELITIAN TENTANG TAHAPAN AKUISISI PENUTUR BAHASA INGGRIS-SEBAGAI BAHASA-ASING BERDASARKAN PADA TEORI PROSESABILITAS

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### Abstract

The research was conducted to find out the language acquisition of a person who learnt English as the second language. The research was done by using quantitative design. The subject of this research was a Korean who came to an English speaking country, Australia. The subject was first learned English when the subject was in junior high school. The data was displayed in the form of number with description in analysis part. The theory used was Processability Theory by Piennemann. The theory stated that at any stage of development, the learner can produce and comprehend only those second language linguistic forms that the current state of processors can handle. There are 6 stages of language acquisition proposed by Piennemann regarding the morphological aspect of language learners. The result showed that the subject was on the stage 5 of the Processability Theory. It meant that the subject was able to produce the third person singular (-s). This stage decision is based on the stages of acquisition of nominal and verbal morphology in ESL by Piennemann (2007) and Johnston and Brindley (1988).

**Keywords:** language acquisition, processability theory

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilaksanakan untuk mengetahui akuisisi bahasa dari orang yang belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan menggunakan desain kuantitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah seseorang berkewarganegaraan Korea yang datang ke negara dengan bahasa nasional bahasa Inggris, yaitu Australia. Subjek pertama kali belajar Bahasa Inggris ketika dia duduk di bangku SMP. Data disajikan dalam format angka dengan deskripsi di bagian analisis. Teori yang digunakan adalah Teori Prosesabilitas oleh Piennemann. Teori ini menyatakan bahwa pada tiap tahapan perkembangan, seorang pelajar dapat memproduksi dan memahami hanya format linguistik bahasa kedua yang bisa diterima oleh organ yang

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*memproses bahasa. Terdapat 6 tahapan akuisisi bahasa yang disajikan Piennemann terkait dengan aspek morfologi dari pembelajar bahasa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa subjek berada pada tahapan 5 dari Teori Prosesabilitas. Hal ini berarti subjek dapat memproduksi struktur untuk orang ketiga tunggal (penambahan akhiran -s pada kata kerja). Keputusan pemosisian tahapan ini didasarkan pada tahapan-tahapan akuisisi morfologi nominal dan verbal pada ESL oleh by Pienemann (2007) dan Johnston dan Brindley (1988).*

**Kata kunci:** akuisisi bahasa, teori prosesabilitas

## I. INTRODUCTION

A research was conducted on interlanguage which Selinker (1972) defined as the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language norm. In this research one second language learner was selected to be the subject of this research.

Larry Selinker defined that learners' developing second language knowledge is Interlanguage (1972). Interlanguage is systematic and continually evolves as learners receive more input and revise their strategies about the second language. In most Interlanguage systems, researchers have noticed that there are similar features in second language acquisition as researchers can see some developmental sequences for English child language acquisition of grammatical morphemes, negation, and questions (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The researcher conducted a research in terms of grammatical morphemes out of other two other features in second language acquisition.

The purpose of this research is to determine the stage of development in morphology of the subject or the subject in second language acquisition at one specific point in time from the research. The subject of this research was expected to follow the processability theory of second language acquisition.

The goal of this research was to determine the stage of development in morphology reached by one learner of English as a second language at one specific point in time. The researchers uses processability theory by

Pienemann (2007) and Johnston and Brindley's processability theory on stages of acquisition of nominal and verbal morphology in ESL (1988).

## II. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Dulay and Burt (1974) were interested in discovering universal regularities in child second language acquisition (SLA) and concluded the sequences of acquisition of first language (L1) functors for Spanish and Chinese children are virtually the same. This finding provided natural sequences, that is, universal strategies for child language acquisition. After Dulay and Burt, Balley, Madden and Krashen (1974) researched about adults from different backgrounds. They concluded that relative accuracy in adults is quite similar to the accuracies shown by children learning English as a second language for the same factors. After then, two more theories about developmental sequences in SLA were presented. One is multidimensional model by ZISA groups (1991) and the other is processability theory by Pienemann (2007).

Processability theory (Pienemann, 1998) is that at any stage of development, the learner can produce and comprehend only those second language linguistic forms that the current state of processors can handle. This enables one to predict the course of development second language (L2) linguistic forms in language production and comprehension across languages. Based on the theory of processability theory by Pienemann, the researcher can determine the stage

of the subject in second language acquisition in terms of grammatical morpheme more clearly than other theories of developmental sequences in second language acquisition.

The processability theory is relevant with this research in a way that it tells about how to decide which skill or stage that has been acquired by the learner during the learner's development in learning a second language.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

The research was a quantitative research with description in elaborating the result of data analysis.

#### B. Research Instrument

Interview recording is used to gather the instrument with a set of prepared questions made by the researcher. There was also a set of picture that was used in the recording session.

#### C. Data and Source of Data

The data of this research was a transcription of two recording session. One is a recorded interview and two is a recording on the picture task. The source of data was a recording session of two parts: an interview and a picture task.

#### D. Data Collection

The data collection was done in several steps as formulated below:

1. find the subject;  
To find the subject of this research, the researcher set several criteria. First, the subject must not a native speaker of the target language that is English. Second, the subject must have an experience of learning English. The third, the subject must use English as the second language.
2. make a brief description of the subjects;

3. do the recording of interview and picture task; and

The recording was done in two separated parts. Part one was for interviewing the subject. Part two was for checking the morphology feature of the subject through two pictures and the subject was asked to tell the difference between the two pictures.

4. make the transcription of the two parts of recording, the interview and the picture task.

The transcription was made separately. Thus there were two transcripts: one was the interview transcript and one was the picture task transcript.

#### E. The Subject

The subject is female, 41 years old and Korean. She is a graduate student majoring in Customs Law and has been living in Australia for 3 months. She has never been to the countries where English is spoken in order to study English. However, she speaks English quite well because she has been studying English since she was twelve years old. She used to work for a foreign company in Korea for a long time and was a customs-broker back in Korea just before coming to Australia, which requires her to keep using English. So, it is expected the English level of the subject to be high intermediate.

#### F. The Recording

**Interview recording.** In this recording part, the subject was asked about their second language learning process, their background, and their life. The purpose of this recording part is to gain the information about the production of third person singular (-s) and production of the regular past tense (-ed). This recording is about fifteen minutes long.

**Picture task recording.** In this recording part, the subject was given a picture, the researcher were also had the picture but with

some differences. First, the subject was asked to describe the picture, what the subject saw in the picture: the things, the animals, the people, and the activities. Second, the subject and the researcher talked about the differences of the picture that they each held. The purpose of this task is to identify the production of plural (-s). This recording is also about fifteen minutes long.

### **G. Make The Transcription**

After the researchers had the recording, with the total about thirty minutes length duration, the next step was to make the transcript of the recording. The intention of making the transcription is so that the researchers are able to make observation and counting that was required for the data analysis. The transcription was made for each recording: the interview part and the picture task-park scene part. The transcription then is numbered for each turn of the conversation. This number aimed to help in identifying the obligatory context and also make it easier in referencing the result.

### **H. Data Analysis**

Data analysis is one process of the research where the researchers have to decide which transcription and which subject that will be used as a data of the research. After the researchers had decided the chosen data, the researchers' next step was analysing the data. In analysing the data the researchers did several steps.

The first step was numbering the turns of the transcript. The second step was analysing the suppliance in obligatory context. There are three linguistic categories of obligatory context that was investigated in this data analysis. They are plural (-s), third person singular (-s), and regular past tense (-ed). For each category, the researchers looked for the supplied, not supplied, or over supplied context. After the researchers had done with

this, the third step was made a raw and percentage scores. The raw scores is the number of the contexts that was found, the number of the cases of supplied, not supplied, and over supplied of the three linguistic categories. For the percentage score the researchers calculated the percentage of the suppliance. The fourth step was making a table for the raw and percentage scores of the suppliance found (see appendix 5). The table was based on linguistic category that was analysed. The researchers made a table the three obligatory contexts. The table consists of the number of supplied, not supplied, and over supplied context found in the transcription, and also the turn number(s) where the obligatory context was found. The fourth step was decided the stage of the subject in terms of the subject's L2 English morphology. In deciding the stage, the researchers use processability theory from Pienemann et al (1988).

## **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher analyzed the context and made a table that shows about the subject stage. According to Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley's processability theory table (Table 2), and then the researcher generated the stages of the chosen subject.

Table 1 A-Interview

Morphology	Raw Scores							Percentage of Suppliance
	Obliga-tory Context	Supplied (+)		Oversupplied (>)		Not Supplied (-)		
		Total	Turn Number	Total	Turn Number	Total	Turn Number	
PAST TENSE (-ED)	29	24	6, 8, 10 (2), 12, 16, 28 (2), 30 (2), 34, 36, 38 (2), 70, 74 (4), 82 (2), 86, 88 (2)	0	-	5	8, 36 (2), 68, 82	79,3%
THIRD PERSON SINGULAR (-S)	10	6	56 (2), 66, 76, 92 (2)	0	-	4	62, 90 (3)	60%

Table 1 B-Park Scene

Morphology	Raw Scores							Percentage of Suppliance
	Obliga-tory Context	Supplied (+)		Oversupplied (>)		Not Supplied (-)		
		Total	Turn Number	Total	Turn Number	Total	Turn Number	
PLURAL (-S)	10	20	2, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 22, 26 (7), 28 (2), 32, 36, 72, 82	0	-	0	-	100%

Table 1 C Total Turn Number

Task	Total Turn
INTERVIEW	93
PICTURE TASK - PARK SCENE	118

From the tables there are several things that describe the subject's position in the language acquisition:

1. She knows how to produce plural (-s) (see appendix 5 Table 1B) which means she passes stage 2 (see Table 2).
2. She knows third person singular (-s) (see appendix 5 table 1A) which means she is at stage 5 (see Table 2).

3. She knows how to make regular past tense (-ed) (see appendix 5 table 1A) which means she passes stage 3 (see Table 2).

The conclusion is that the subject is at stage 5 of processability theory since the subject is able to produce the third person singular (-s). This stage decision is based on the stages of acquisition of nominal and verbal morphology in ESL by Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley (1988)

Stage	Morphology	+	>	-
		(Supplied)	(Oversupplied)	(not supplied in Obligatory context)
6				
5	3 pers. Singular -s Adverb -ly	He eats run slowly	he is eats fastly	he eat run slow
4	possessive -s plural -s	pat's cat two cats	he saw pat's a cats	pat cat two cat
3	past -ed -ing	she played going	she goed shop wenting	yesterday she go -----
2	generic plural -s	cats are nice	-----	cat is nice
1	single word, formulae	hello - central		

Table 2. Stages of Acquisition of Nominal and Verbal Morphology in ESL  
(After Pieneman, Johnston and Brindley 1988)

## V. CONCLUSION

Selinker's Interlanguage is the system of implicit L2 knowledge that learner develops and systematically amends over time. This research on interlanguage analysis is conducted in terms of the grammatical morphemes out of those developmental sequences in second language acquisition. The purpose of the research is to determine the stage of development in morphology of the subject in second language acquisition at one specific point in time from the research. The researcher

expected the subject to follow the processability theory of second language acquisition.

The goal of the research is to determine the stage of development in morphology reached by one learner of English as a second language at one specific point in time, and The researcher use processability theory by Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley's processability theory stages of acquisition of nominal and verbal morphology in ESL. From using Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley's processability theory stages of

acquisition of nominal and verbal morphology in ESL (1988), the researcher could identify the subject's stage of development of morphology of present time.

There is a question that has not yet got the answer, that is whether the learner will continue to develop the stage that the subject has gained, or the subject will stop at a certain stage. The answer to this question, however, needs a deeper and longer research and more literature reviews.

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