

REDESIGNING THE COURSE OF MORPHOSYNTAX FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract: Morphosyntax is inseparable from the aspect of applied linguistics. The theory of morphological processes such as affixation, word order, and rewriting rules are unconsciously employed by English teachers to develop students' reading and writing skills. However, the understanding that Morphosyntax entails to English proficiency is not widely known by some English teachers, since the terminology of Morphosyntax tends to be associated to diachronic linguistics research. It affects to the perception that the course of Morphosyntax is designed to be more linguistics, although the students are the English language education ones. Whereas, the needs of English language education students revolve more on vocabulary mastering and sentence pattern to support their English proficiency skills. This paper proposes the course-redesigning products of Morphosyntax based on Corder's concept of lexical and skill-based syllabus design. The elements of Morphosyntax course-redesigning discussed in this paper consists of the basic competencies, materials, references, course description, concept map, course objectives, competencies and achievement indicators, timeline, assessment, and teaching strategies.

Keywords: *Morphosyntax, syllabus, course outline, applied linguistics*

At the first time I was occupied to teach Morphosyntax in higher education, I adapted my lecturer's syllabus when I was in undergraduate degree of English literature. The whole course was designed almost eighty percent the same as what I got. The classes seemed well-managed since my students took the same department as mine. However, things went different when I taught the same course for English language teaching students, it was the time that I got uncountable protests for the course was difficult to understand. Therefore, I rechecked my syllabus and course outline of Morphosyntax to redesign it based on the needs analysis of the students. This paper is going to answer what elements does the course need to be redesigned.

The previous designed course covered course profile, course description, concept map, course objectives, competencies and achievement indicators, timeline, and references. It was described as the course which introduces morphological process and phenomena in order to have a clearer understanding in English morphology. The focuses were on word formation, the hierarchal constituent sentence structure and transformations. In the end, the students are to conduct an observation of morphological and syntactic phenomena as part of their final mini research. The timeline of the course were constructed as follow; 1) the development of morphology, 2) categories in Syntax, 3) morphological process, such as types of affixes, compound, reduplication, 4) morphophonemic & internal modification, 5) morphological phenomenon, such as blending, conversion, clitics, acronyms, onomatopes, 6) word tree, 7) aspects of syntactic structure, 8) grammatical relations, 9) dependency relations, 10) constituent structure, 11) grammar and lexicon, 12) theories of syntax 13) comparative analysis of Morphosyntax in different languages, 14) error analysis. The achievement indicators were the students able to describe morphological process and phenomenon English. In short, the course outline was lack of theoretical foundation of language learning and teaching, syllabus, and applied linguistics. Therefore, this paper is aimed at justifying the redesigning process based on Corder's perspectives. It is to explain what makes the course design different to ESP and English literature.

Needs Analysis Of The Students

Corder (1973: 204) implies that the syllabus of which the teacher produces must assign to the students' functional needs. To assess the needs of the students, it is important to consider three points, which are the curriculum as the core system and the students' learning motivation as the external system. The Ministry of Education suggests Indonesian universities to uphold competence-based curriculum in this recent updates (The Decision of the National Ministry of Education Number 232/U/2000 about the Guidelines of Curriculum Organization in Higher Education and the Assessment, and The Decision of the National Ministry of Education Number 045/U/2002 about the Core Curriculum of Higher Education). The suggested version is appreciated as the suitable one in order to accommodate both soft skills and hard skills for the sake of the students' future career as a teacher.

As designed by the university, the competence standard of Morphosyntax course are the ability to master theories of linguistics and apply them through English language teaching and ELT researches, the ability to widen the knowledge of applying ICT through the teaching-learning process, and to have an awareness of

Indonesian culture, archipelago, and international on the ELT research context. It is shortly mentioned that Morphosyntax to be applied in language teaching and ELT researches. Therefore, as an initial assumption, it is unnecessary to include theoretical linguistics, or historical comparative linguistics.

The next reference is about the perspective of the students. As the user of Morphosyntax course, the students in this case are teaching students. They are going to be English teachers who must be able to deal with the 'what to teach and the how to teach'. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the motivation. Gardner and Lambert in Corder (1973: 202) there are three degrees of positiveness in attitudes to foreign language learning that corresponds to learners' motivation. Those are the functions that the learner will require of the language, the domains and purposes of why the learner needs the language, and the social group or language communities that the learner will operate including his/her roles in these communities.

Answering the three questions before, in the matter of language function, the students are demanded to have a good ability to apply and use the theory of linguistics that they have got in the classroom. Corder (1973: 48) describes that syllabuses for language teaching operations have tended to be expressed in terms of a list of linguistic forms to be learned. This kind of syllabus gets frequent complaints from teachers that learners seem to be able to cope with the language while in the classroom, yet they fail to use it satisfyingly outside. This is what happened to the firstly designed syllabus, that the students could not understand its application to English skills. Therefore, it is necessary to redesign the course objectives into more applicable instead of theoretical introduction.

The students are going to implement the course to two domains, which are to their individual English proficiency, and to their teaching environment. As a form of individual improvement, the students have to deal with Morphosyntactic strategies as adapted from the performance analysis, especially about morphological development conducted by Henzl (1973), Meisel (1975), Ferguson and DeBose, and Katz (1977) which are simplified comprehensively by Els, et.al (1984: 96) that the first strategy of Morphosyntactic development is avoiding subordinate/embedded clauses, passive constructions, SV-inversion in interrogatives. The next ones are omit function words like articles, preposition, auxiliaries, personal pronoun, and simplify category systems like system of negation and pronominal system by introducing inflectional noun/verb system. It is also necessary to produce well-formed utterances by avoiding unfinished sentences. It is implied that error analysis has not yet to be introduced. The last one is make discontinuous elements continuous. In this step, I prefer to interpret this strategy as the introduction of conjunctions to make coordinate and subordinate sentences. In the end, the students are supervised to produce short sentences by considering the strategies. On the other side, Fromkin and Robert (1993: 78) concludes that the grammaticality of sentences, the word order, structural ambiguity, the meaning relations between words in a sentence, the similarity of meaning of sentences with different structures, and the creative ability to comprehend and produce an infinite set of possible sentences are the syntactic rules in a grammar of a language.

The Redesigned Course

To redesign the course, it is necessary to touch some points, such as the basic competencies, materials, references, course description, concept map, course objectives, competencies and achievement indicators, timeline, assessment, and teaching strategies. Corder (1973: 156) explains the ordered applications of linguistics in a form of figure. It helps the writer to decide at what stage should the ELT students practice Morphosyntax.

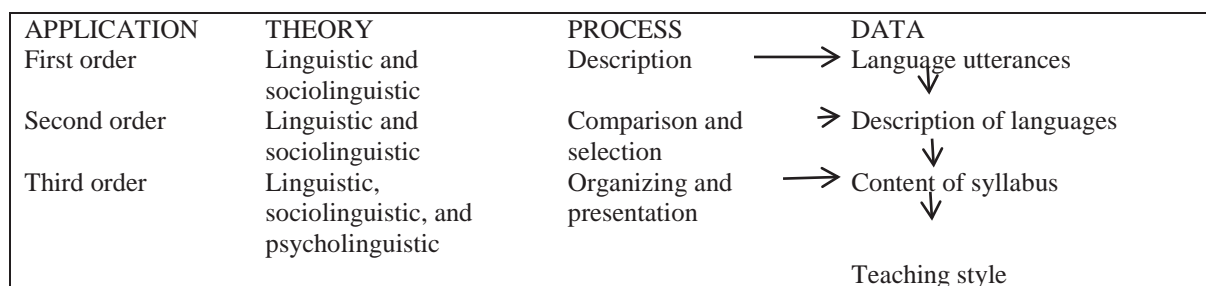


Figure 1. The ordered applications of linguistics

Based on the Corder's suggestion, it is obvious that Morphosyntax is the second order of the order of linguistics applications. The learners are expected to be proficient to describe a language, in my case is English. The process of learning is through comparison and selection. Therefore, introducing comparison is important, moreover their future career as an English teacher requires a good ability of explaining sentence formation. The students will have clearer understanding on the distinctions of their mother tongue and the second language. Thus, the recommended teaching strategy in this part is Grammar Translation Method. As Corder (1973: 148)

also suggests that there are two types of comparison. The intralingual one focuses on the comparison of dialects and varieties of the language to be taught, for instance the Old English to Middle English. In different part, it is also recommended to have audiolingual method in the form of drilling which is integrated to task-based method.

Referring to Els, et.al. simplified description about Morphosyntactic strategies and Fromkin and Robert description about syntactic rules, the course description of Morphosyntax course is the bridge of language description to basic writing skill. The use of lexical syllabus as told by Corder (1973: 316) that lexical syllabus accomodates language description by considering phonological up to semantic level of description. However, as ELT students are going to apply the theory of language description, it is necessary for them to be brought into the function of learning language description. Since this course is set in the first semester, it is understandable that a combination of lexical and skill-based syllabus, especially basic writing, is applicable to the course. The materials covered in this course, by adapting the Morphosyntax strategies by Els.et.al., and the syntactic rules of Fromkin and Robert, the materials redesigned in this course focus strengthening the morpology understanding as the base in order to reasoning on how learning to make a sentence is nonsense without learning the morphology. It includes the differences of morpheme and words which is covered in affixes. Secondly, it is important to introduce morphological process such as inflection, derivation, and zero morpheme to improve students' vocabulary building. Therefore, the learning outcome is to enrich students' vocabulary mastering by part-of-speech introduction. The next focus is to introduce the differences of function words and content words. In this case, Fromkin and Robert syntactic structures are more acceptable to apply instead of the ones from Els,et.al. The function words are indeed become one of many students' complains for its difficulties. However, the function words in this course is going to be auxiliaries, especially verbs auxiliary, and prepositions. The next important thing is dealing with phrases and compounds in one meeting since it is only to make the students familiar to morphological phenomena which are in the form of idioms, blending, clitiques, or clipping. The further steps are about syntax, in which the students learn to describe a short or simple sentences, since the students have already had sufficient stock of words. The first step to describe a simple statement sencece, and then to make it into negation form. It is considered as unnecessary to also describe an interrogative sentence, since the main aim is to bridge language description through sentence structure to create basic writing. It is not about introducing how to put a sentence in a reverse order such as interrogatives and inversions.

After understanding the simple statement and negative sentences, the students are introduced to the use of tree diagram description. It is chosen more than the linear ones for it is easier and clearer. It is closer to deep and surface structure concept constructed by Chomsky. The last three meetings are designed to introduce transformational description, in which function words like conjunctions are highly considerable. Therefore, the students are able to produce simple sentences and transformational sentences. As conclusions, the objectives of this coure are to introduce morphological process, to introduce syntactic structures, to accomodate ELT students apply the linguistic theory to basic writing. Hence, the achievement indicators for each objectives are, the students are able to identify the part of speech, able to master at least 50 vocabularies in various part of speech, able to make a simple sentence in a correct word order based on Chomsky's Generative Grammar, and the last is that the students are able to produce transformative sentences by using correct conjunctions. Since talking about Morphosyntax will always lead to Chomsky's Generative Grammar, therefore it is fair to assess the students' learning outcomes based on the definition of correct by Chomsky in Fromin and Robert (1993: 72) that sentences of the language are in fact characterized by the grammar, and additionally Fromin and Robert (1993: 75) say that grammaticality is the rules acquired or constructed unconsciously since we were children. Thus, in the case of English Morphosyntax, the assessment is based on how British and American people acquired their grammar. This form of assessment take an impact to the chosen references for the students. The recommended sources are selected based on its objective grammaticality of words and sentences. Therefore, the chosen references are Maggie Tallerman's *Understanding Syntax*, and Carstairs-McCharty's *An Introduction to English Morphology: words and their structure*. In short, the redesigned course can be drawn into a concept map below:

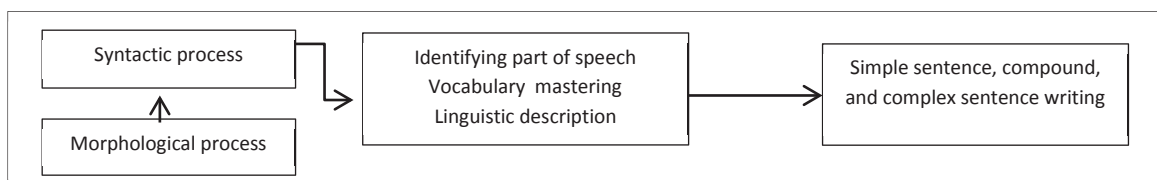


Figure 2. Concept map of the redesigned Morphosyntax course

Conclusions

From the discussions above it can be concluded that:

1. Redesigning a course is justifiable as long as it is in the curriculum track and valid needs analysis from the students.
2. The elements that are redesigned are in the form of combining skill-based and lexical syllabus, emphasizing the course description as the focus which is Morphosyntax as the bridge of linguistic description to basic writing skills, focusing the course objectives into three stages of Morphosyntactic development, determining the achievement indicators in practical use, and using more dynamic teaching strategies.

References

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