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EDITORS’ NOTE

This international seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift IV (LAMAS IV for short) is a continuation of the previous international seminar with the same theme conducted by the Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University on 18 November 2014.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the seminar committee for putting together the seminar that gave rise to this collection of papers. Thanks also go to the Head and the Secretary of the Master Program in Linguistics Diponegoro University, without whom the seminar would not have been possible.

The table of contents lists all the papers presented at the seminar: The first four papers are those presented by invited keynote speakers. They are Dr. Sugiyono (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, Jakarta, Indonesia), Dr. Zane Goebel (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia), Prof. Yudha Thianto, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, Illinois, USA), Dr. Deli Nirmala, M.Hum (Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia).

In terms of the topic areas, there are 21 papers in applied linguistics, 20 papers in sociolinguistics, 14 papers in theoretical linguistics, 18 papers in discourse/pragmatics, and 13 papers (miscellaneous).

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	I Nyoman Udayana	INCHOATIVE VERBS IN INDOONESIAN				
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IMPROVING THE LANGUAGE ACCURACY IN WRITING SKILL THROUGH GROUP DISCUSSION AND ERROR ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine English composition written by EAP participants and to try to improve the participants' language accuracy through group discussion and error analysis. The data which were collected from the participants' writing assignments and tests (pre and post-tests). The research results show that the number and frequency of making errors seem to be consistent from the beginning to the end of the course whereas the researcher's expectation is the number or frequency of errors should show the downward trends (decreasing week by week).

Key words : *error analysis, writing skill, language accuracy, EAP*

INTRODUCTION

In globalization era improving English as an international language is quite imperative for human resources of both educational and non educational institutions in Indonesia. In order to have a broader networking with other institutions, especially foreign institutions, the human resources should master both spoken written English. In the last decade, in the spirit of making institutions go international or global, mastering English for the human resources is a must otherwise they will be gradually left behind.

The human resources, especially in educational institutions (university, institute, college) who are plotted to study abroad, they will initially take EAP (English for Academic Purposes) prior to their departure. The EAP programs have been established and developed in various university language centers in Indonesia such as PPB (Pusat Pelayanan Bahasa) UGM, PPB UI, P2B UNS, SEU Undip, etc. Besides training in English as an academic discourse, there have also been considerable research in EAP considering the increasing demand from non-native speakers of English to study abroad especially in the English speaking countries like USA, Great Britain, Australia, etc. Since English is now well established as the world language of research and publication and more and more universities and institutes of learning are using English as the language of instruction, EAP is a truly international phenomenon, linked in with the overall trend towards the globalization of information exchange, communication, and education (Flowerdew, 2002: 1)

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program is one of the channels to improve the language skills especially in the academic setting for the staff members of educational or non-educational institutions. Service English Unit (SEU) as the language center at Undip has conducted an EAP course for the BPOM Staff plotted to study overseas (Australia, England, and Europe) and the course lasted for 8 weeks (10 October – 1 December 2011). As one of the instructors, I taught writing skill for three hours and a half each week focusing on the academic writing. During the course, I tried to apply group discussion and error analysis to improve the participants' language accuracy in writing skill. The reason is that language accuracy is one of the most important aspects in writing skill, besides content and organization. A writing composition with low language accuracy might cause the reader's misunderstanding and confusion.

Writing is a skill which involves some factors. To be a good writer, however, mastering certain grammatical rules (e.g. the use of tenses, voice, clauses, etc.) is not enough, as writing activity involves a number of other skills. For instance, when you start writing, you have to think of how your ideas are organized into sections and paragraphs. At the same time you have to choose appropriate words, phrases and grammatical structures. Using a series of long and complicated sentences throughout the whole paper will baffle the reader; on the other hand, using a stretch of short and simple sentences will be monotonous and boring to the reader. Accordingly, to achieve a high skill of

writing, you need a long practice and a lot of reading. With respect to this, Raimes (1988) states : “ writing is seen as a process and not just as a set of discrete, hierarchical skills that can be learned in a nice order”.

Historically, error treatment in language classroom has been a hot topic. In the days of the Audiolingual method, errors were viewed as phenomena to be avoided by over learning, memorizing, and “getting it right” from the start. Then, some methods (Community Language Learning, the Natural Approach) took a *laissez-faire* approach to error, under the assumption that natural processes within the learner will eventually lead to acquisition. CLT approaches, including task-based instruction, now tend to advocate an optimal balance between attention to form (and errors) and attention to meaning (Brown, 2007 : 273).

According to Corder (1967 : 166) quoted in Johnson (2004 : 25) errors are different from mistakes. Errors are systematic while mistakes are unsystematic – due to memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness and psychological conditions such as strong emotion. Norrish (1983 : 7) classifies different types of anomalous language behavior: the error, the mistake and the lapse. The error can be called a systematic deviation, when a learner has not learnt something and consistently ‘gets it wrong’. In the same way when a learner of English as a second or foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learned the correct form. A common example is using the infinitive with ‘to’ after the verb ‘must’ (e.g. ‘I must to go to the shops’). When the learner is not consistent - he or she sometimes ‘gets it right’ but sometimes he makes a mistake and uses the wrong form is called a mistake. While the term ‘lapse’ is neither a mistake nor an error and can happen to anyone at any time. It may be due to lack of concentration, shortness of memory, fatigue, etc.

In general writing is one the hardest subject for the Indonesian learners. There are several reasons for that. First, English is treated as a foreign language in Indonesia; second, it is quite difficult for the students as they are not accustomed to write journal/diary in English, and fourth, writing is not yet a culture for Indonesian people or eastern people. The aims of this research are (1) to describe the types of language errors made by the EAP participants, (2) to identify the trends of errors during the course (8 weeks) meaning whether the participants’ errors will have upward or downward trends, and (3) to examine whether the participants’ language accuracy in writing skill could be improved by applying the group discussion and error analysis during the teaching-learning process.

RESEARCH METHODS

As the population was only eight participants, the whole population was taken as sample. They were BPOM staff (five females and three males) who were plotted to study abroad (Australian universities) and seen from the pre-test (Toefl, writing and interview) results they could be classified in the advanced level. Their Toefl scores range from 500 – 550.

At the beginning of the course I explained to the participants about the procedures of learning-teaching modes. The main point is the teaching writing skill is focused on the process not product. Therefore, discussion about the errors of their writing assignments and error analysis are necessary. The procedures or steps of groups discussion and error analysis are as follows : First, every assignment was peer-checked before being submitted to the instructor. Peer-checking was intended to improve the participants’ sense of language and team-work spirit. Second, the instructor would only give clues on the grammatical errors by underlining or cycling the errors in the assignments. At this point, there would be group discussion among the participants; they were supposed to identify what kind of mistakes and to correct or revise the sentences and the results were again discussed with the instructor. Third, the participants were required to revise the whole paragraphs or essays and again the revised paragraphs were collected to the instructor for final checking.

Another technique is error analysis. In error analysis, the instructor listed all the grammatical errors made by the participants in their assignments. And then I provided them the list of errors. By using LCD monitor the list was presented in the class room and each participant volunteered came forward to make revision or correction when the correction was considered inappropriate, the teacher would offer another participant to re-correct or to make a further correction so that the final revision (grammatically acceptable) was achieved. The two methods described above were alternately employed during the course.

The data were collected from the pre-test results (writing a short essay), writing assignments (e.g. paragraph level and essay level), and post-test results (writing a short essay). The steps of data

analysis can be explained as follows : First, the language errors in the data were identified and classified according to the error of grammatical types. Second, the classified errors were tallied in a table to see their frequency from the first stage (pre-test) to the last stage (post-test). From each table, therefore, the increase or decrease of the grammatical errors could be identified during the course/training. Since the area of errors in writing skill is quite bulky to cover, the data analysis was limited to certain areas, i.e. major grammatical errors or mistakes. According to Heaton (1975 : 149), the types of language errors can be grouped into two types : major and minor errors. Major errors cover grammatical aspects such as subject-verb-agreement, tense uses, voice, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, etc. while minor errors may include mechanical aspects, i.e. spelling, punctuations, capital letters. The increase or decrease of the grammatical errors were scrutinized from two levels: as the whole class (8 participants) and as the individual; accordingly, both holistic and specific understandings about the grammatical errors could be obtained. For ease of references, the participants were coded as participants 1, 2, 3, 4,5 etc. abbreviated as (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, etc.) Each type of errors from one assignment to another was displayed in a table from the whole class or the individual level so that the decrease or increase of the errors could be found out. In addition, whether or not certain types of grammatical errors were kept repeating would be revealed by tight monitoring of the grammatical errors made by the participants.

The increase or decrease of such errors were also affected by both internal and external factors. The internal factors may include motivation, commitment since the crucial moment for writing class is discussion session of the assignments, i.e. discussing the assignments especially the grammatical errors among the participants (first level) and with the instructor (second level), not on the production session (writing the assignments). For instance, if a participant were always/often absent during the discussion sessions, he or she might keep repeating the same errors. In this case, the instructor always kept reminding the participants not to repeat the previous errors and they should keep the revised ones and check with them when doing new assignments. As an instructor, I also always reminded the participants that making errors or mistakes are unavoidable and it is a part of the learning process. The point is "don't repeat it and making the new ones is natural."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Error occurrence for the whole class

Types of error	Pre-test	A1	A2	A3	Mid-test	A4	A5	Post-test	Total
S-V-A	5	6	2	1	13	12	12	7	58
Sing/Pl	11	3	3	2	10	14	6	11	60
C/U	-	1	-	-	1	15	2	1	20
Verb Tense	3	-	3	2	4	6	2	2	22
Verb Pattern	12	3	3	10	17	15	12	10	82
Prep	10	-	2	7	6	9	6	4	44
Art	9	2	5	2	2	18	-	2	40
Word form	6	1	2	-	3	4	1	9	36
Word choice	5	-	-	-	-	6	-	12	23
Conj	5	3	-	-	4	3	-	2	17
Voice	3	1	6	4	6	8	8	7	43
Total	69	20	26	26	66	110	49	67	

Notes :

- Types of Error

S-V-A (Subject-Verb-Agreement); Sing/Pl (Singular/Plural); C/U (Count/Uncount); Prep (Preposition); Art (Articles : definite : the/indefinite : a or an); Conj (Conjunction); Voice (Passive or Active).

- Assignments and Tests

Pretest (Essay writing)

Mid-test (Paragraph Writing)

Post-test (Essay Writing)

- A1 (Assignment 1 : Paragraph Development – Week 2)
- A2 (Assignment 2 : Process Description - Week 3)
- A3 (Assignment 3 : Comparison and Contrast – Week 4)
- A4 (Assignment 4 : Essay Writing - Week 6)
- A5 (Assignment 5 : Summary Writing – Week 7)

In the Table above it can be seen that certain grammatical errors consistently occur from the beginning to the end of the course. For instance, types of error such as s-v-a, singular/plural forms, verb patterns, voice, etc consistently occur during the course, while other types of errors such as countable/uncountable nouns, word choice, conjunctions do not occur consistently. In terms of number or frequency of the errors, verb pattern is the highest (82) and conjunction is the lowest (22). The types of assignment may also affect the number or frequency of errors. For instance, the participants would make more errors when they were given essay writing which is longer and more complicated as can be seen in Table above : Pre-test (69), Assignment 4 (110), and Post-test (67). On the other hand, when writing in paragraph level (Assignment 1), Process description (Assignment 2), Comparison and Contrast (Assignment 3), they tend to make fewer errors ranging from 20 to 26.

In order to get a whole picture about the types of error made by the participants, some are illustrated briefly. First, S-V-A (Subject-Verb-Agreement) means a subject in a sentence should agree with its verb. For instance, if the subject is singular, we should add morphemes -s or -es after the verb in a simple present tense (‘She goes to school every day’). Consider the following extracts :

1. It consist of nutritious elements ... (A1)
2. ... people loves to eat spinach ... (A2)
3. Moreover, breast milk also contain antibodies ... (A3)

In sentences 1 and 3 above, the subject is singular so we should add –s for its verb (consist and contain) while in sentence 2 we should delete -s after the verb ‘loves’ since the subject is plural (people).

Second, Singular/Plural forms here means we should add –s or –es after the noun, e.g. several students, two boys, etc. Consider the following extracts :

1. ... every stages of baby’s growth development. (A1)
2. ... you will find more vocabulary in this dictionary .. (A3)
3. In other word, ... (A3)

In sentences 1 we should eliminate –s after the noun ‘stages’ since the word ‘stage’ is preceded by a qualifier ‘every’ meaning singular. On the other hand, in sentences 2 and 3 we should add –s or –es after the nouns ‘vocabulary’ and ‘word’ (vocabularies and words). Word, stage, and vocabulary belong to countable nouns so we should put s or es after the plural nouns.

Third, the English Verb Pattern is more complicated to learn since the verb patterns in English (L2) are different from Indonesian (L1). As EFL learners (i.e. EAP participants), they sometimes use a translation method when writing an English composition : They think in Indonesian sentence patterns first and then they will translate those patterns into English sentence sentences. As a result, their English composition will sound more Indonesian in sentence patterns; it is called First Language Interference. In other words, they will make grammatical errors. Consider the following extracts :

1. ... I suggest you to buy LDCE. (A3)
2. It will be discussed about the effects of global warming. (A4)

In sentences 1 and 2 the participants do not use the English pattern. In the English patterns, the verb ‘suggest’ should be followed by the word ‘that’. Thus, the first sentence should run as follows : “I suggest that you buy LDCE.” In sentence 2, the first language interference (i.e. Indonesian) is quite succinct. It is quite common for us to say “Dalam seminar ini, akan dibahas tentang pengaruh pemanasan global” and such a pattern is then transferred into English pattern. The correct pattern is “The effect of global warming will be discussed”

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined a number of English compositions by the EAP participants which focus on the language accuracy. In this study, the researcher (the trainer) tried to improve the participants' language accuracy in their compositions by utilizing group discussion and error analysis. The results seem to be against the researcher's expectation. The expectation is the number or frequency of making errors should show downward trends or decrease week by week but from the table it can be seen that the number or frequency of making errors seem stable from one assignment to another. It means the group discussion and error analysis do not seem to affect the participants' awareness of language accuracy. These may be due to several factors such as commitment, degree of involvement in writing class, motivation, etc.

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