

COMMON ERRORS IN STUDENTS' SPELLING ON THE REQUIRED WORDS FOR THE SEVENTH GRADERS

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Abstract

The beginner level students often make mistakes and errors in producing L2 (second language). The errors in students' writing may occur in paragraphs, punctuations, articles, spellings, and conjunctions. Therefore it is not rare when L2 learners write words freely as they heard, for example, a student might write "*Spel it rait*" for "*Spell it right*" or "*Shi is my techer*" for "*She is my teacher*". Based on such phenomenon, this study investigated the spelling errors commonly made by the students in writing the required words for the 7th grade. The design of this study was descriptive qualitative. The analysis was based on the errors analysis theory. The data were the students writing on the required words and the result of interview with the students. The respondents of this study were eight students that were categorized as novice low students. The data were analyzed to know the types of errors that the students commonly made and the factors that underlay the errors.

The result of this study showed that the errors related to the interference of Bahasa Indonesia into English. Spelling errors for all respondents were highly concentrated in *unrecognizable* and *substitution*. Students' spelling errors in unrecognizable were 141, substitutions 79, omission 50, addition 24 and segmentation 11 words. The factors contributing to the errors were *markedness* and *language distance*. The errors made by the students regarding to interference are most contributing the errors as well because some elements in L2 (English) are pertained more marked compared to those in L1 (Bahasa Indonesian). The linguistic difference between L1 and L2 also brings difficulties in the acquisition of L2. The language system in both language families is fundamentally different.

The important results of this research is that the difference between L1 and L2 spelling systems result in errors of spelling in the L2. An understanding of the structure of L1 spelling and the mistakes made in the spelling of the word of L2, as well as an understanding of the level of knowledge the learners have about the structure of L1 and L2 spelling systems, will help the course of teaching and learning. In consequence, giving more *practice and drilling* on the required words that were frequently written incorrectly will be very useful in teaching process.

Keywords: L1 interference, Markedness, Novice low

A. BACKGROUND

The beginner level students often make mistakes and errors in producing English language (L2 (second language)) (Fanani, 2012), including in writing. The errors in students' writing may occur in paragraphs, punctuations, articles, spellings, and conjunctions. Therefore, it is not rare when L2 learners write words freely as they heard, for example, a student might write "*Spel it rait*" for "*Spell it right*" or "*Shi is my techer*" for "*She is my teacher*". Here, the students are likely to use their knowledge of their first language in learning to read, to write, and to spell in their second language (Figueredo in Allaith, 2009). In the study of second language acquisition, such phenomenon is called the interference of the first language into second language (negative interlingual transfer). Interference generally leads to the errors (Krashen in Fanani, 2012).

This study is aimed at uncovering the students' difficulty of writing the required words for 7 graders of SMP. The required words here refer to the words stated in the English syllabus of the 7 graders that must be mastered by the students. Further the study would like to know whether the interference of L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) does occur in their L2 production. Such identification of errors and their factor (interference of L1) will be very useful as the basis for developing a good syllabus or teaching material (Richards in Sofendi 2010).

This study took the seventh-grader learners as the subject of study. They were categorized as novice low students who were, prone to make spelling errors. As novice low, they were able to copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases and form letters in alphabetic system, and copy and produce isolated, basic strokes in languages that use syllabic characters, they could reproduce from memory a very

limited number of isolated words or familiar phrases, but errors are expected (Actfl proficiency guidelines –writing 2012).

This study described the common errors made by the seventh-grade students in their English spelling on the required words based on seventh grade's syllabus. Error analysis is an important means for the teachers of English to understand and master the teaching in the future. By using errors analysis, the teacher will be able to know how far their students have come and what they must still learn (Corder in Sofendi, 2010). It means that the English teachers will be able to determine which parts of the teaching materials should be remedied and which parts should not. Therefore, the English teachers have to understand the concept of error analysis and how to apply it in their teaching.

Besides, this study reveals the linguistic factors that may contribute to the students' errors (markedness and language distance). The identification of the factors was important to understand why they made errors, which in turn can be used as the basis for formulating the teaching strategies that is suitable for them.

The required words were classified into part of speech. That is an appropriate way to made easier to analyzing the spelling errors and to help teacher in teaching spelling. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, "If the teacher assigns a spelling word such as auspicious then tells the student to look up the definition and part of speech, the teacher's making sure the student has a basic knowledge of the word and the student may or may not remember it, depending on how well they can memorize or understand it". It means that classifying the parts of speech of required words can help students remember, understand and apply their new list of words.

In this study, some problems related to the students' spelling errors were described and discussed. They were the common spelling errors on the required words done by the students of the 7th grade in their English writing tasks as a result of L1 interference, the linguistic factors contribute to the errors, and the impacts of the errors identified on the teaching strategies.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study applied descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the spelling errors made by 7th-grade students in their writing on the required words. This study described how the students made errors caused by L1 interference. Besides, this study described and explained the factors (the linguistic factors) that contributed to the errors. The description and analysis of errors were used as the basis for formulating the suitable teaching strategies for the 7th-grade students.

C. SOURCES OF THE DATA

There were two kinds of data in this study, the first data were the words spelt incorrectly by the students. The data of the spelling errors were taken from the spelling test assigned to the respondents.

The second data were the result of interview with the respondents in order to find out why the students made spelling errors on their written task and what factors that might contribute to the errors.

D. RESPONDENTS

There were eight students chosen as respondents of this study. The respondents were chosen based on the characteristics required (purposive sampling). First, the respondents were the seventh grade students. Second, they were categorized as novice students who were, therefore, prone to make spelling errors.

As novice low, they were able to copy or transcribe familiar words or

phrases, form letters in alphabetic system, and copy and produce isolated, basic strokes in languages that use syllabic characters, they can reproduce from memory a very limited number of isolated words or familiar phrases, but errors are to be expected (Actfl proficiency guidelines – writing 2012).

E. INSTRUMENTS

There were two instruments in this study that were used to gather the data. The first instrument was the spelling test. The spelling test was written tasks which must be done by the respondents. The test was used to find out the common spelling errors the students made. The tests were in form of Word Dictation (the students were required to write down what they heard). The word dictation was in form of recorder. The recorder was using an application “*Bolabolka*”, an application that produces voice or sound like English native voice. There were 155 words in the test and all were about the required words for the 7th-grade students. The test used had been checked for its validation by an expert. The expert was Fahrudin, an English teacher as well as a lecturer. He validated the content of the test.

The second instrument (observation/interview notes) was used to gather the data about the students' errors. The data contained the information about the factors contributing to the students' errors. The questions below were interviewed to the respondents in order to find out the causes of the spelling errors in their written task, they are:

1. Why did you write the words like ... (e.g 'chus' for 'choose')?
2. What kind of language do you mainly use daily?

F. TECHNIQUE OF DATA COLLECTION

a. Steps of collecting the first data (the spelling errors)

- In collecting the first data, the following steps were taken:
1. Observing the syllabus to find out the required words for the 7th-grade students.
 2. Constructing the test consisting of the required words (There were 155 required words in the syllabus).
 3. Consulting the test to an expert in order to find out the validity of the test. The expert here was Fahrudin, a teacher of phonetics and phonology. He validated the content of the test.
 4. Administering the test to the seventh grade students of SMP Islam AL-ISHLAH Mojokerto. The recorder was played based on the spelling task enumeration, while the respondent wrote those words, each word was repeated twice.
 5. Collecting the students' written works. All works were collected back after the students finished it.

b. Steps of collecting the second data (the result of interview) In collecting the second data, the following steps were taken:

1. Constructing the interview items focusing on the reasons why the students made errors.
2. Note-taking the students' answers.

G. TECHNIQUE OF DATA ANALYSIS

After the data were collected, they were analyzed through the following steps:

1. Identifying the errors as a result of L1 interference
2. Explaining how the students made errors (finding out the types of errors made)
3. The explanation were made based on the part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.). The classification was due to the fact that in teaching vocabularies teachers' commonly focus on class of words or part of speech.

4. Explaining the linguistic factors (e.g. markedness, etc) that underlay the errors.
5. Explaining the impacts of the errors analysis on the development of teaching strategies.
6. Concluding.

H. FINDINGS

a. The Students' Spelling Common Errors on Substitution

Out of 155 words that should be mastered by the students in the 7th grade, those words categorized as nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Based on the 155 words that were written by the respondents, most of the students seemed to have problems in most of them. In the data collection it can be seen that most of the respondents had difficulty in writing most of the words correctly.

In the data collected, the substitution occurred almost in all of the words. The errors related to the interference of Bahasa Indonesia into English in noun category can be classified as substitution, for example, for the word 'butter', some respondents substituted the 'a' for the 'u' ('batter') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the substitution is on the word 'map'. Here some respondents tended to substitute the 'e' for the 'a' (mep). The substitution did not only occur on vowels but also consonants. In writing the word 'pond', for example, the respondents substituted the 's' for the 'd' in 'pond' (pons).

The substitution in adjectives category, for example, for the word 'bossy', some respondents substituted the 'p' and 'a' for the 'b' and 'o' ('passy') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the substitution is on the word 'curly'. Here the some respondents tended to substitute the 'k' and 'e' for the 'c' and 'u' (kerly). In writing the word 'generous', for example, the respondents substituted the 'j' for the 'g' (jenerous).

Many students' spelling contained substitutions in verb category. For example, for the word 'submit', some respondents substituted the 't' and 'p' for the 'b' and 't' ('satmip') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the substitution is on the word 'stay up'. Here the some respondents tended to substitute the 'a' for the 'u' (stay ap). In writing the word 'nod', for example, the respondents substituted the 't' for the 'd' (not). The substitution also occurred in adverbs. For example, for the word 'forward', some respondents substituted the 'e' for the 'a' ('fowerd) resulting in error of spelling.

This spelling error seemed to occur because of the carelessness. The students did not know aware about the spelling of the word, therefore the respondents wrote down the words as what they heard. For example, in writing the word 'email', some students substituted the letter 'e' with 'i' and 'ai' with 'e' (imel) because what they heard is ('i'mel) not (e'me'l).

b. The Students' Spelling Common Errors on Omissions

In the data collection it can be seen that most of the respondents had difficulty in writing most of the words correctly.

In the data collected, the omission also occurred almost in all of the words. The errors related to the interference of Bahasa Indonesia into English in noun category can be classified as omission, For example, for the word 'butter', some respondents omitted the 't' ('buter') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the omission is on the word 'mushroom'. Here the some respondents tended to omit the 'h' (musrooms). The omission did not only occur on consonants but also vowels. In writing the word 'note', for example, the respondents omit the 'e' (not).

The omission also occurred in adjectives. For example, for the word

'excellent', some respondents omitted the 'l' and 't' ('excelen') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the omission is on the word 'favorite', the respondents omit the 'e' (favorit).

The omission in verb category, for example, for the word 'shake', some respondents omitted the 'h' ('sake') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the omission is on the word 'steam', the respondents omit the 'a' (stem).

The omission also occurred in several of the words. For example, for the word 'accordingly', some respondents omitted the 'c' and 'g' ('Cortinly') resulting in error of spelling.

The spelling errors appeared to occur because the respondents wrote down the words as the sounds what they heard. For example, in writing the word 'favorite', some students omitted the letter 'e' (favorit) because what they heard is /'feɪ vərət/ not /'feɪ vərəte/.

c. The Students' Spelling Common Errors on Addition

Based on the 155 required words that were written by the respondents, most of the students seemed to have problems in most of them.

In the data collected, the addition moreover did in some of words in all of the words. The errors related to the interference of Bahasa Indonesia into English in noun category can be classified as addition, for example, for the word 'den', some respondents added the 't' ('dent') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the addicted is on the word 'solution'. Here the some respondents inclined to add the 's' (solutions). The addition did not only occur on consonants but also vowels. In writing the word 'map', for example, the respondents add the 'e' (mape).

In the data of adjectives, there were some spelling errors that can be categorized as addition. For example, for the word 'cute', some respondents added the 't' ('cutte') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the added is on the word 'lively', the respondents omit the 'a' (*laively*).

Some respondents also made an addition that resulted in errors in verb category. For example, for the word 'reply', some respondents added the 'a' ('replay') resulting in error of spelling. Another example of the addition is on the word 'bake', the respondents added it with 'ing' (baking).

This spelling error seemed to occur because of the carelessness. The students did not know aware about the spelling of the word, thus the respondents wrote down the words as what they heard. For example, in writing the word 'reply', some students add 'a' (replay), because what they heard is (ri 'plai) not (ri 'ply).

d. The Students' Spelling Common Errors on Segmentation

Some of words in the data also occurred in segmentation. For example, for the word 'barbecue', some respondents segmented the words *barbecue* (*beaber xue*), *submit* (*sap mip*) resulting in error of spelling. Moreover, the segmentation also occurred in adjective category. For example, for the word 'outstanding', some respondents segmented the word *outstanding* (*out standing*) resulting in error of spelling.

e. The Students' Spelling Common Errors on Unrecognizable Words

Unrecognizable includes words that were unrecognized because they were unreadable, such as 'basing', *kernturisteks*, and 'kemting'. Such unreadable words occurred because some students did not

hear well when being dictated and consequently spelled them wrongly.

Unrecognizable words occurred almost in several of words, such as 'cele', 'laueld', and 'taberidt'. Numerous spelling errors of adjectives can be included in this category. As for unrecognizable, the respondents also wrote words of verbs that were unrecognized, such as 'lerfn', 'cekcers', and 'wicse'. Unrecognizable words frequently occurred, such as 'cortinly', 'ecaungtingle', and 'power'. This phenomenon made the students disoriented in writing the adverb. For example in writing the word 'forward', some students unrecognized that word, and wrote them with 'power'.

Spelling errors in writing those words occurred caused of the respondents does not know those word. Therefore they tried to imitate the sound of those words. Moreover the respondents wrote those words by using the spelling system of Bahasa Indonesia, for example in writing the word 'forward', they wrote 'fowerd' because its sound is /'fɔ:wəd/.

G. GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research provides views and an indication of the type of language produced by second language learners in spelling. Research results provide evidence of L1 interference on L2 acquisition as shown in the analysis of the respondent's spelling. It looks clear that the respondents use L1 sound system to help them spelling the words in L2, which indicating there is a direct interference from L1 on L2, most respondents write the word what they heard, therefore they often made errors.

1. Factor Causing Errors

a. Markedness

According to the Universal Grammar developed by Chomsky, in the

transfer of L1, the 'unmarked' setting (a very abstract nature of grammar which is not too different from one language to another) will be transferred first before marked settings (Fanani, 2014). Therefore linguistic items will not be easily transferred when L1 has marked settings. The errors made by the students regarding to interference are most because some elements in L2 (English) pertained more marked compared to what in L1 (Bahasa Indonesia). Although Bahasa Indonesia and English have the same alphabets, but the spelling system is different.

The respondents in this study had mastered Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese language as their L1 and mother tongue. Therefore the spelling system of Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese greatly influenced the L2 acquisition. For examples, the respondents write 'second' with 'secon', because in Bahasa Indonesia each letter indicates a distinctive sound. Bahasa Indonesia does not recognize any /nd/ spelling. Therefore the respondents tended to write the last part of the word 'second' with 'n' because the pronunciation of the word is (sekən).

The following are the English spellings that can be categorized as "marked"

setting:

- a. /'sh'/. The /sh/ sounds like /s/ in Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore the respondents were prone to incorrectly write it with /s/.
- b. /'ch'/. The /'ch'/ sounds like /'sh'/ and /'s'/. There is a group of words which English have borrowed from the French. One of them is 'ch' whose sound is like 'sh'. Therefore the respondents might write it with /sh/ or /s/. For example, champagne, brochure, chef, etc.
- c. /'ch'/. It sounds as /'tʃ'/. In Bahasa Indonesia spelling system there is no /'ch'/. The respondents

tended to write it with /'c'/ because the pronunciation is /'tʃ' /.

For example, watch, speech, lunch, etc.

- d. /'dʒe'/. The /'dʒe'/ sounds like /'j'/. The respondents prone to make error on this letter. They often wrote /'j'/ for the /'dʒe'/, because spelling system of Bahasa Indonesia for sound of letter /'dʒe'/ is /'j'/. In English when there is the sound of /'j'/ in the word, use /'g'/ after a long vowel (stage) and /'dʒe'/ after a short vowel (bridge).
- e. /'ph'/. The /'ph'/ sounds like /'f'/. In some words which have a Greek origin, the letters /'p'/ and /'h'/ are put together to make a new sound /'ph'/ which is the same as the sound of the letter /'f'/ in spelling system of Bahasa Indonesia, therefore the respondents frequently made error in spelling letter /'ph'/. They are confused and do not understand what letter should be in that sounds. For example, telephone, photograph, nephew, etc.
- f. /'gh'/. The /'gh'/ sounds like /'f'/, like /'ph'/, the two letters /'gh'/ may also be pronounced /'f'/, but only if the letters /'au'/ or /'ou'/ are in front. For example, cough, laugh, enough, cough, etc. As a result the students wrote the words with /f/.
- g. Doubling the consonant, there are several of doubling the consonants, for example in the word 'butter' (listen to the 'squeezed-up' sounds of the short vowels), another examples are in the word 'repellant'. It also occurred when it comes to adding a vowel suffix, for example, 'travel' (traveler, travelled, travelling), prefer (preferred), etc. Bahasa Indonesia doesn't have a vowel suffix which is comparable to the English. Indonesian doubling

consonant concept is understood by context or by the addition of other words or letters to express the concept of something being "past and continuous".

- h. Silent letters also occurred in this study. Some words are difficult to spell because they contain a letter without a sound. For example, honest, climb, kind, naughty, listen, etc. Bahasa Indonesia has no silent letters, because in Bahasa Indonesia a letter indicates a certain sound.

b. Language Distance

Language distance is the difference between L1 and the target language. It refers to how distant a language is from, in this case, English. Sometimes this is called linguistic distance. It has long been noted that the linguistic difference between L1 and L2 will bring difficulties in the acquisition of L2. In TESOL, it may be an indicator of how difficult it will be for the student to learn English and the amount of interference or transfer that can occur.

As we know, English is categorized as Indo European Language, on the other hand Bahasa Indonesia is categorized as Austronesian language. The language system in both language families is fundamentally different, as in case of the use of spelling system. The phonetics and phonology of English differ between dialects, usually without interfering with mutual communication.

In Bahasa Indonesia, a certain spelling represents certain sound (e.g. 'satu' is spelled (satu) (Fanani, 2011)), while in English a certain spelling does not always represent a distinctive sound (e.g. 'answer' is spelled (/ˈæn t̬ .sə-/)). Therefore, when a student referred to L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) in constructing L2 spelling (English), he or she was prone to make errors. As indicated in the findings of this study, the respondents

used some sound system structures of L1 to produce a response in L2 spelling. Most respondents wrote the word as what they heard. As a result, they often made errors.

H. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, it can be inferred that the interference of L1 spelling (Bahasa Indonesia) into L2 acquisition (English Language) occurred in the students' spelling on the required words. Out of 155 seventh grade required words, nearly all respondents made spelling errors. Spelling errors for all respondents were highly concentrated in *unrecognizable* and *substitution*. Students' spelling errors in unrecognizable 141, substitutions 79, omission 50, addition 24 and segmentation 11 words. One of the causes of the error is because respondents does not know those word. Therefore they tried to imitate the sound of those words. Moreover the respondents wrote those words by using the spelling system of Bahasa Indonesia, for example in writing the word 'forward', they wrote 'fowerd' because its sound is /'fɔ:wəd/.

The respondents wrote the required words as what they heard. They were prone to refer to L1 sounds system in writing the words. Just a few of words which is the respondents wrote those word correctly. Spelling error as have done by the respondents are when they wrote distinctively. There are several letters in English spellings what to concern with the respondents, the letters which uncommon with Bahasa Indonesia, that are: /'sh'/, /'ch'/, /'dge'/, /'ph'/, /'gh'/, Doubling the consonant and silent letters.

The important result in this study is the differences between L1 and L2 spelling contribute to the error in L2 production. An understanding of the L2 spelling structure and the level of students' proficiency in spelling skill will help the learning process.

The teacher would be able to predict the students' possible errors on the target language and formulate the appropriate way to solve it. In consequence, giving more practice and drilling on the required words that were frequently written incorrectly will be very useful in teaching process. That is the one of the necessary ways to improve the students spelling.

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