

Surface Strategy Taxonomy on EFL Learners' Oral Presentation: A Study of Grammatical Error Analysis

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Abstract

Many Indonesian learners continue to struggle with learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and frequently produce errors in grammatical aspects when speaking English spontaneously. This may be influenced by several factors. Hence, this research reports on a study aimed at investigating and examining the errors produced by Indonesian learners in their oral presentations and the sources of the errors. In conducting this study, the error analysis procedures and a descriptive qualitative study were used. The data were collected from sixteen college students' oral presentations of the non-English department. To gather the data, the students' presentations were video-typed and the utterances were transcribed. In analysing the data, a theory of error classification proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) namely a surface strategy taxonomy was employed. The findings reveal that four types of errors based on the surface strategy taxonomy namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors are found in the students' productions in their oral presentation. The frequent errors made by the learners are omission, followed by misformation, addition, and misordering. Meanwhile, two major causes driving learners to make numerous mistakes are intra-lingual and inter-lingual interference. However, from both factors, the largest cause is intra-lingual interference. Thus, the students' L1 interference affects their mastery of the target language. Finally, this study is expected to contribute to the improvement of EFL teaching and learning.

Keywords: EFL learners, error analysis, oral presentation, surface strategy taxonomy

1. Introduction

Errors are inevitable sequences that language learners cannot deny when learning a language, particularly in second or foreign language acquisition. Second language learners often have difficulty and thus commit mistakes, especially when dealing with grammatical components. It is due to each language has its unique grammar. Recently, somehow errors are considered as part of a learning process that may provide valuable insight, it is also becoming a problem that should be decreased as soon as possible. Therefore, the present research on errors is motivated by some rational backgrounds.

Error analysis in second language acquisition has been popular among language practitioners since its introduction in the 1970s when it provided feedback to Contrastive Analysis

theory (CA), which stressed native language (L1) interference as the primary cause of errors in second language learning. It is because the study of errors brings many advantages to language learning. As asserted by Corder (1974) in Saad and Sawalmeh (2014), knowledge of errors produced by learners can provide a picture of the linguistic development of the learners themselves. For language teachers, furthermore, it can lead and provide references in creating and designing more effective language learning materials. Corder further points out that evaluating learners' errors provides language teachers with an idea of how far the students make progress and whether or not they are ready to go on to the next step of the learning process. Broadly speaking, the analysis of errors made by learners, especially in speaking English has become a crucial aspect of the language learning process and has benefits for both learners and teachers.

In addition, as the effect of globalization, English mastery becomes a crucial requirement in almost all of the work fields (Sari, 2011). This issue demands the Indonesian people to learn and master English. Even, as an effort of that, many Indonesian people go to English courses to enhance their English skills. They mostly come from different backgrounds, motivations, objectives, and reasons. They may go to take the English course to continue their study, to get a better job, or to meet the job demands. Thus, many English learners start learning English even when they are adults.

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, students are expected to be communicatively competent in speaking since speaking competency is a key indicator of language learning success. Speaking belongs to an essential aspect of human communication and takes part of a pivotal role in human's daily lives (Firharmawan et al., 2023). This is why the objective of teaching English is to enable students to communicate in English fluently, properly, and meaningfully. The fact, on the other hand, is that it is not easy to realize the goal. As a second or foreign language student finds it difficult to communicate in English than in their original language (Safrida & Kasim, 2016). Many Indonesian students are afraid to speak English as they are worried about making mistakes and they think of some aspects like grammar, pronunciation, fluency, etc. Moreover, each language has its unique set of grammatical rules which can make learning more challenging. For example, Bahasa Indonesia and English have distinct grammatical standards, which led to many EFL learners making mistakes when speaking.

Looking at the frequent errors produced by the learners, two major error sources might impact the second language (L2) system e.g. interlingual and intralingual errors (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Interlingual interference refers to the mistakes caused by the influence of the learners' first language (L1). The learners are unaware that their L1 structure differs from the target language. On the other hand, intralingual errors are those that arise only because of the target language, with no effect from the native language.

Dealing with the study of error analysis and the sources, there have been a number of scholars concerning on studies attempting to analyze the learners' errors by employing surface strategy taxonomy in spoken production, including Wiannastiti (2014), Saad and Salwameh (2014), Simbolon (2015), Safrida and Kasim (2016), Herlina (2017), Chania and Amri (2019), Viandari (2019), Kamlasi (2019), Karisma and Bulan (2022), Prawiti et al. (2022), and Sahan et al. (2023). These studies looked at the errors produced by students when speaking and the causes of the problems. Most of these research findings revealed that the categories of errors produced by students, as stated by Dulay et al. (1982), include omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Of the categories of errors, omission is the most prevalent error happened. On the

other hand, a study by Ruminar (2018) found that the most frequent error produce by students when speaking was misformation. Looking at the fact, hence, the researchers recommend that teachers and students make efforts to decrease speaking errors, such as grammar drills and error correction.

Considering that English is a foreign language for Indonesians and is exclusively taught at schools, the learners may often produce errors in their spoken production spontaneously. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating the errors produced by Indonesian students from different educational backgrounds as EFL learners during their oral presentations and to examine the causes of errors. As the research objectives stated, this study limits the focus of the study on the errors produced by EFL learners' speech during their oral presentation and the causes of the errors.

Error Analysis

Errors in the EFL learning context, are unavoidable and difficult to prevent. Learners made mistakes because they did not yet understand the linguistic system of the target language. Nevertheless, the errors may be identified using *Error Analysis* (EA) (Ellis, 1994). Following this, Myles and Mitchell (2014) define error analysis as the study of second or foreign language acquisition that examines the errors made by language learners.

Dealing with error analysis, Corder (1974, in Ellis, 1994) proposes various procedures for doing error analysis, including 1) collecting a sample, 2) identifying errors, 3) describing errors, 4) explaining errors, and 5) evaluating errors. The first step in EA is to decide which samples of language learners to analyze. Based on the sample size, we can distinguish three basic categories of EA. The data are then gathered from the chosen individual. Second, data are derived from comparing the target language's acceptable form to the form utterances made by learners. Third, the description of errors includes a comparison of the learner's idiosyncratic utterances to a reconstruction of those utterances in the target language. The errors are characterized using the taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). The errors are then evaluated and explained in order to determine their causes. This study categorizes errors as intra-lingual and inter-lingual. Finally, errors are assessed to discover how significant they are.

Surface Strategy Taxonomy

The second theory employed in this study is based on Dulay et al.'s (1982) surface strategy taxonomy for error types. The categories include four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. First, Omission is the lack of an essential item in an utterance, such as 'I studying English at school'. In this utterance, an item of a verb is omitted. Second, addition is adding a needless component in an utterance, for example, '*I am is a new student*'. In that example, the auxiliary verb 'is' is added that indicates an error. Third, misformation is applying morpheme or structure incorrectly in an utterance. For instance, '*I study English last night*'. This sentence indicates an error called misformation because it should be said in the past tense because the context of the speech shows a past occurrence denoted by the adverb of time "last night". Thus, the past form (studied) must be used instead of the present form (study). The last, misordering, which happens when morphemes or words are wrongly placed. For example, 'What you are doing?'. The sentence should be '*What are you doing?*'.

Sources of Errors

Related to the issue of sources of errors, Gass and Slinker (2008) categorise errors that might affect the L2 system into two: Inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors. *Inter-lingual interference* errors refer to the mistakes induced by the influence of L1. The learners are unaware that their L1 structure differs from the target language (L2). On the other hand, intra-lingual errors are those that arise only because of the target language itself, with no effect from the native language. This type is the consequence of learners' perceptions of the target language as a result of their unfamiliarity with it. In other words, the mistakes are not caused by the L1 structure, but by the learners' limited knowledge of the target language.

All the previous studies and literature adjust the researchers' understanding in conducting the current study. Those studies help us comprehend things in a variety of ways. Hence, from the review, the researchers notice that this study brings a novelty since it investigated adult EFL students from various backgrounds as samples, whereas most previous studies focused on students from the same group.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. As it is an error analysis study, the current study the procedures in EA proposed by Corder (1974, in Ellis, 1994), namely 1) collecting the sample of the subjects, 2) identifying errors, 3) describing errors, 4) explaining errors, and 5) evaluating errors. The participants of this study were sixteen college students who were studying in a University in Central Java, majoring non-English department. They came from different majors or educational backgrounds and were joining an English Community at that university. The data were taken from the students' oral presentation through direct observation. Then, the students' performance during the presentation was video-recorded. The video recordings were then transcribed and evaluated in several steps. The students' words spoken during their presentation served as the unit of analysis. The data were evaluated by 1) tabulating the errors referring to the taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982); 2) categorizing the errors; 3) calculating the errors to determine the occurrences; and 4) analysing the errors to determine the causes.

3. Findings and Discussion

Using Dulay et al.'s (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, the findings reveal that the student's oral presentation performances contain four types of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Meanwhile, two major causes driving students to commit numerous mistakes are intra-lingual and inter-lingual interference.

3.1 Errors produced by the students

Based on the analysis, the student's oral presentation performances contain four types of errors defined by Dulay et al. (1982): omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The total errors produced by the students

No	Types of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission	32	47.06
2.	Addition	10	14.71
3.	Misformation	23	33.82
4.	Misordering	3	4.41
Total		68	100

Table 1 shows that omission takes the highest percentage (32 or 47.06% of 68 total errors), followed by misformation (23 of 68 total errors or 33.82%), addition (10 of 68 total errors 14.71%), and the last is misordering (4 of 68 total errors 4.41%).

3.1.1 Omission

Omission errors result from the absence of a necessary component in an utterance. According to Dulay (1982), omission occurs when learners omitted the important element that should appear to construct a good utterance in their target language. In this study, this mistake frequently came up when the students omitted the auxiliary verb (to be) in their speech. The distributions of omission errors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Omission

No	Types of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission of auxiliary verb (to be)	15	46.88
2.	Omission of article (-the)	7	21.89
3.	Omission of preposition	4	12.50
4.	Omission of head noun	1	3.12
5.	Omission of phrase	2	6.25
6.	Omission of morpheme	1	3.12
7.	Omission of verb	1	3.12
8.	Omission of subject pronoun	1	3.12
Total		32	100

Table 2 illustrates the frequent occurrence of omission errors is the exclusion of an auxiliary verb (to be) with 15 of 32 omission errors or 46.88%. Meanwhile, there are four lowest-level omissions including the omission of the head noun, the omission of morpheme, the omission of verb, and the omission of subject pronoun. Those four omission errors are only identified once, hence the proportion is 3.12% for each or one of 32 omission errors. Extract 1 (EA) is an example of omission errors made by the students throughout their presentation.

E1: "The food from Japan." (*Datum 1*)

E1 shows that the student ignored the auxiliary verb (-is) so the sentence is not well-formed. The correct utterance is "The food is from Japan."

3.1.2 Addition

Addition is the opposite of omission. This sort of mistake arises when an unnecessary item is added to an utterance. The distribution of addition errors is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Addition

No	Types of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Addition of word	2	20
2.	Addition of preposition	2	20
3.	Addition of conjunction	1	10
4.	Addition of article (-the)	3	30
5.	Addition of phrase	2	20
Total		10	100

Table 3 displays that the most common type of addition error is the addition of article (-the). The Extract 2 (E2) provides an example of students' addition error.

E2: "You can see the many trees." (*Datum 4*)

The utterance is incorrect because the student adds the before the quantifier "the" which should not happen. Thus, the correct one is "You can see many trees".

3.1.3 Misformation

Misformation error is the misuse of morpheme or structure in a sentence or an utterance. This error renders an ungrammatical sentence. Table 4 shows the occurrence of misformation errors.

Table 4. Misformation

No	Types of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misformation of preposition	6	26.09
2.	Misformation of word	4	17.39
3.	Misformation of plural form	5	21.73
4.	Misformation of auxiliary verb (to be)	2	8.70
5.	Misformation of verb	1	4.35
6.	Misformation of morpheme	4	17.39
7.	Misformation of quantifier	1	4.35
Total		23	100

Table 4 illustrates that the students created seven types of misformation errors. The highest misformation error is misformation of preposition which occurred six times of 23 errors or 26.09%. This issue occurred because the students did not properly use the preposition. The example below is derived from the students' utterances.

E3: "Rendang is typical food *in* Indonesia." (Datum 1)

The placement of the preposition 'in' is incorrect. The word 'typical' should be followed by the preposition 'of'. Thus, the correct utterance is "Rendang is a typical food of Indonesia."

3.1.4 Misordering

This error occurs when morphemes or words are arranged incorrectly. There were four subtypes of misordering errors found in this study as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Misordering

No	Types of error	Number of errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misordering of direct object	1	33.33
2.	Misordering of clause	1	33.33
3.	Misordering of adverb	1	33.33
Total		3	100

Table 5 clearly presents that there are only three sorts of misordering errors made by the students throughout their presentations. Each type of misordering error occurred equally that is only once with the same percentage (33.33%).

E4: "The weather in Klaten is very nice." (*Datum 1*)

In the example above the student placed the adverb "in Klaten" incorrectly. It should be "The weather is nice in Klaten."

To obtain a more detailed explanation of the findings, the error of each type is expounded on for each type. The first category comes from auxiliary. The errors produced by the students are mostly about auxiliary. It is found omission and misformation of auxiliary verb (to be). The students often omitted the auxiliary "is" in the present tense when they were talking about subjects followed by noun phrases or adjectives. As we can see the example E1 above, stating "The food from Japan", the students omitted the auxiliary "is" after the subject. The correct utterance is "The food is from Japan." This may be because the students literally translated the Indonesian or Bahasa Indonesia they had in their mind, "Makanan tersebut dari Jepang". This finding seems to be consistent with the research found by Safrida and Kasim (2016), Chania and Amri (2019), and Viandari (2019). Moreover, misformation about using the auxiliary verb (is) was also found in the following utterance

E8: "These is traditional market and modern market."

In that extract, the student misused the auxiliary verb "is". This case shows intra-lingual interference since the students got confused about employing the auxiliaries.

The second type includes the use of article (the). This is classified as intra-lingual error since the students did not fully learn the target language rules. As a result, the students produced omission errors in article (the) in their speaking. The following examples demonstrate errors caused by omitting the article "the":

E9: "First floor is for receptionist." (*Datum 1*)

E10: "Rendang is typical food in Indonesia." (*Datum 1*)

In those extracts, the students omitted the article "the". The correct ones are "The first floor is for receptionist." and "Rendang is the typical food of Indonesia." This finding of error omission of article "the" is in line with the study by Safrida and Kasim (2016) and Pratiwi et al. (2022). Otherwise, they also omitted the necessary article in the utterance, as in the example E2 mentioned earlier in the finding that the students added the article "the" incorrectly. E2: "You can see the many trees". These errors in using the article "the" are considered inter-lingual errors because they got confused about using "the" in their speech. This finding is consistent with the research done by Simbolon (2015).

The next category is prepositions. Errors in utilizing prepositions are grouped into three types: omission, addition, and misformation. Meanwhile, none of misordering of the preposition is found. This denotes that the error is affected by intra-lingual interference, which occurs when

learners misuse English prepositions. Both in their L1 and English have the same rule of using prepositions. The examples of errors in prepositions in the three categories are as follows.

- E11 : "I'd like to present *(about)* my restaurant." (omission)
E12 : "This is *for* the food list in my restaurant." (addition)
E13 : "Rendang is the typical food *from* Semarang." (Misformation)

Those extracts show that the students made errors in applying prepositions. This result supports the findings of Safrida and Kasim (2016) and Kamlasi (2019). They also discovered that prepositions are an issue for EFL learners. Due to the complexity of English prepositional use, these errors are classified into intra-lingual interference.

The last type of error that is mostly produced is in terms of plurality marker. The students also omitted plurality markers or misformation of plural form such as "*many school and university*" and "*many market*". Those mistakes are categorized into interlingual interference since there is no pluralization of nouns in Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese. However, the plural forms of Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese are by repeating the words e.g. *Bapak-bapak, buku-buku anak-anak*, etc. In English, the plural form is indicated by adding "s" after the noun, such as books, shops, and so on. This distinction is one of the error sources made by the students namely inter-lingual interference.

Otherwise, misordering errors are the least found in this research. It is because the students' L1 (Javanese) and the students' target language (English) have many similarities in terms of sentence rules, but they have differences in some rules. An example of misordering that is found in the students' utterances is misordering of direct objects.

- E14 : I'd like to present you diamond restaurant.

The proper form of the utterance is "I'd like to present 'diamond restaurant' to you."

In short, the finding on the most frequent error produced by students corroborate to the most previous studies that omission was the highest error made (Wiannastiti, 2014; Saad & Salwameh, 2014; Simbolon, 2015; Safrida & Kasim, 2016; Herlina, 2017; Chania & Amri, 2019; Viandari, 2019; Kamlasi, 2019; Karisma & Bulan, 2022; Prawiti et al., 2022; and Sahan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, this study is in contrast with Ruminar (2018) that she figured out misformation as the highest. Lastly, the outcomes of this study reveal that the four categories of errors identified by Dulay et al. (1982) - omission, addition, misformation, and misordering - are prevalent in the students' oral presentations.

3.2 The sources of errors produced by the students

Another finding of this study is the sources of errors made by the students. The sources which caused the students' errors found in the students' presentation are intra-lingual interference and inter-lingual interference. It is in line with Gass and Slinker (2008) stating that intralingual interference is impacted by learners' insufficient knowledge of the target language. Whereas, interlingual interference is affected by learners' first language (L1) transfer.

3.2.1 Intra-lingual interference

This source took part as the majority of errors made by the students. It implies that the errors arose as a result of the students' insufficient knowledge. The examples were previously shown in Extract 5 (E5) and Extract 6 (E6).

E5: "The food from Japan." (*Datum 1*)

E6: "This food made from rice and egg and shrimp." (*Datum 2*)

Those excerpts show that the students did not put auxiliary to be (is) after subjects followed by an adjective or prepositional phrase in the present tense. Moreover, the students also misused the preposition "from" (E6). It indicates that the students still have insufficient understanding of the grammatical rules of the target language, English.

3.2.2 Inter-lingual interference

Errors in the students' oral presentation were also discovered due to the interlingual, that the students were impacted by the L1 structure. It also happened in small cases, such as the article's omission, misformation of plural form, and misordering. For instance:

E7: "Klaten have many eee... favourite school and university."

In Extract 7, the students ignored the plural marker nouns or misformation about using the plural form. This is affected by the negative transfer, as there are no plural markers in Bahasa Indonesia and/or Javanese. The errors produced can potentially be attributed to inter-lingual inference of L1 or the negative transfer of L1. To sum up, the findings on the sources of learners' speaking performance errors were caused by both intra-lingual and inter-lingual interference.

4. Conclusion

This current study concludes that the students' oral presentations contain the four categories of errors identified by the surface strategy taxonomy namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The most frequent errors produced are omissions. Most students ignored the auxiliary verb (to be – is) and the article 'the'. The next is misformation, followed by addition and finally, misordering. Meanwhile, two major factors driving the students to make numerous errors are intralingual and interlingual interference. In both cases, however, intralingual interference is the most common source of errors.

Considering the findings, it is proposed that EFL teacher pay greater attention to their students' errors in speaking in English and provide feedback. EFL teachers are required to place a strong emphasis on providing additional explanations and activities for common mistakes. To reduce errors, students need to improve their English proficiency and performance through extensive practice. These should all contribute to the improvement of EFL teaching and learning.

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