



## EFL Interlanguage Experiences in Learning to Write Recount Text

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### Abstract

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In Indonesia, interlanguage words are still very foreign, many second language students do not know the definition of these words. Interlanguage is a system of language that learners develop during L2 acquisition. Interlanguage is affected by the learner's native language as they use their native language knowledge to understand and organize the second language or to compensate for existing competency gaps. The purpose of this research is to find out the interlanguage experience that occurs when students write recount text. The research method uses a qualitative approach with narrative inquiry. As a result, there are three indicators that are the focus in examining students' experiences in writing recount text, as follows: L1 interference, overgeneralization, and simplification.

**Keywords:** Interlanguage, Recount text, Experiences, Writing

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## INTRODUCTION

The errors that occur when first language learners learn a second language, Selinker (1972) refers to this phenomenon as 'interlanguage'. A developmental process that involves "the learner's systematic approximations toward the target language" "the systematic approximations toward the target language" (Davies, 1989: 448)." Interlanguage is influenced by native language learners when they use knowledge of their native language to understand and manage a second language or to compensate for a wealth of existing competencies. Selinker notes that many L2 students (perhaps as many as 95 percent) fail to achieve target language competency. The phenomenon mentioned above lead us to consider the reasons why the majority of L2 learners atrophy in their acquisition of the target language.

The most obvious approach to analyzing between languages, according to Brown, (1987) is to study the speech and writing of learners. This shows that this aspect is very fundamental. This opinion is supported by Brown (2001) that writing is a thinking process. In Indonesia, several genres are introduced in the school syllabus, students begin to learn several short functional texts, such as: description, recount, narrative, procedure, and report. Among the types of text, this research focuses on recount text. According to Djuharie (2008), Recount is a reconstruction of something which happened in the past. Anderson & Anderson (2003), recount text is a text that retells past events and usually in the order in which they occurred. The generic structures are orientation, record of event and reorientation. Orientation refers to students' ideas or statements about a topic or information that want to be share with the readers. The present study was intended



to contribute study that focuses on Indonesian students' interlanguage. It is necessary to acknowledge how far the students' interlanguage exists, and their interlanguage process/experience in second language learning. This study focuses on writing skills because this skill is the last skill that must be mastered by students. However, the students face difficulties in generating their ideas in writing skills. Concerning this matter, the writer chooses recount text as a teaching material in teaching English because it mostly tells about past events. Recount text facilitates students when they begin to learn how to write expressively and systematically.

The previous researches were conducted study on analyzing interlanguage features and English learning (Wang & Fan, 2020), analyzing the interlanguage and socio-pragmatic features, analyzing and describing the interlanguage produced by EFL students in recount text (Atamturk & Atamturk 2016). While, the researcher decided to carry out research that focused on EFL interlanguage experiences in learning to write recount text which further find out their interlanguage experiences during their learning in writing recount text in the English classroom. The research questions is "How do student experience interlanguage in writing recount text". Thus, this research was differ from the previous studies on its focus.

## **METHODS**

This study used a qualitative approach with narrative inquiry as the research design. The researcher chose narrative inquiry which focuses on studying students' personal experiences because narrative inquiry is an essential approach that strive to conceive how student think and experience through an event (Kim, 2016). This research design allowed researcher to explore experiences between students in writing recount texts. The instrument used a semi-structured interview and reflective journal to collect the data. The researcher also carried out a reflective journal activity where the researcher asked each participant to write a recount text which later analyzed on the indicator of interlanguage experienced. The setting of this research is in an environment where the phenomenon under study has never been done in that location. The participants of this study were 4 college students in Karawang majoring in English education. Even the number of participants was small, it covers the majority of the EFL department; however, the outcomes cannot be generalized.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### **1. EFL student's experience interlanguage in writing recount text**

##### **a) The used of mother tongue structure on learning second language.**

The participant 1 stated that she mixed vocabulary and structure from two languages, mother tongue and second language. She will use her mother tongue to complete the missing sentences and used the grammatical structure of her mother tongue (SPOK) in composing sentences in her second language, when she does not know some of the vocabulary and structure of second language.

*Sometimes if i don't know the vocabulary and structure of the target language when i'm going to write, so i use the vocabulary with the structure of my mother tongue.*

Participant 1 (Interview)

Same as participant 1, participant 2 stated that he used the role of his mother tongue to compose the words or sentences he wanted to convey when writing, before converting them into a second language. She uses the existing grammatical arrangements in her mother tongue first (SPOK) and translates it into a second language.

*Usually when i write English, i don't immediately use that language but my mother tongue according to its structure first. If it is in the form of a sentence, then i will change the writing to English.*

Participant 2 (Interview)

Then, participant 3 she stated that she mixed her mother tongue with her second language according to her needs and purpose. In fact, she often writes using a second language directly.

*Sometimes i mix my mother tongue (Indonesian) with the target language i want to use, but not infrequently i immediately use the target language without mixing it with my mother tongue. Depending on the needs and depending on the purpose.*

Participant 3 (Interview)

On the other hand, participant 4 stated that he did not use his mother tongue in writing a second language. When she has difficulty writing, whether it's structure or vocabulary, she will find a solution.

*I'm not use my mother tongue in writing English. I usually look for the correct word if i don't know some of words.*

Participant 4 (Interview)

Based on the statements of 4 participants, 3 participant of them stated that they involved the structure or vocabulary of their mother tongue when writing a recount text in second language. Meanwhile, 1 other participant did not use his mother tongue when writing a recount text in second language.

#### **b) Students use inappropriate grammar in different contexts.**

The participant 1 admitted that it was not uncommon for her to use grammar with different concepts, because she had not fully mastered grammar. She often ignores tenses and second verbs according to proper grammar rules.

*I use the grammar with the structure, but i often ignore the tenses or second verb that should be used. Because i don't mastery a grammar.*

Participant 1 (Interview)

When the participant 2 stated that she was not good at writing a second language directly, it was because she lacked confidence and had doubts about grammar that she had not mastered yet. So, when writing according to grammar, she always writes used the structure of her mother tongue first, then translated and adjusts to the grammar of the second language she previously understood. But of course the results are not always correct, whether it's the wrong tenses or the arrangement may not be in accordance with the concept.

*So far, i am not good at writing foreign languages directly, especially English. It's because i have doubts about grammar which i'm not very good at. i write sentences using the correct grammar of my mother, then i translate them, and check again, whether they are in accordance with the grammar that i understand or not. Sometimes the results are wrong.*

Participant 2 (Interview)

Then according to participant 3, before writing she always considers the purpose of the text she is going to write. Is the text for formal or informal needs. If it is for formal needs such as academic writing, she will use a helper application to confirm that the grammar she uses is appropriate to the context. Meanwhile, if the text is for informal needs, she only uses her understanding of grammar.

*Usually i first make sure what it's needed for. If it's only for friends, i usually use the knowledge that i know, but if the purpose of writing is for something more formal, i will confirm the grammar and words with the help of a helper application.*

Participant 3 (Interview)

### c) **Students use simple target language in learning.**

The participant 2 stated that when writing a second language directly she would only focus on what she wanted to write, without thinking about things that made it difficult.

*When writing directly in the target language, i try to focus on what i will write.*

Participant 2 (Interview)

Similar to participant 2, the participant 4 stated that in writing a second language, she often wrote directly whatever came to her mind without paying attention to the existing grammar rules.

*I often write the target language without paying attention at the grammar, i just wrote whatever comes into my head.*

Participant 4 (Interview)

## 2. **Recltife Journal**

Reflective journals are carried out to support student statements during previous interviews. The results of this reflective journal focus on knowing the factors contributing of interlanguage experienced by students. There are three factors that affect the production of interlanguage variations, L1 interference, overgeneralization and simplification.

Table 3 Factors Contributing to interlanguage experience learner in writing recount text

L1 Interference	Using verb 1 (infinitive) to describe past tense Wrong order of adjective and noun to form noun-phrase Using adverb to replace adjective Using subject pronoun to replace object pronoun
Overgeneralization	Using verb-ing to describe activity Using auxiliary verbs (am, are, is) in simple past tense

Simplification	Omission of preposition
	Omission of -s in possessive
	Omission of auxiliary in negative form of Simple present tense
	Omission of -s ending in simple present tense

#### a) L1 Interference

As found in one of the recount texts (participant 1), there are a sentence "My clothes are all wet" or "I bring a change of clothes" instead of "I brought another clothes". All of these mistakes are caused by negative interlingual transfer. Negative transfer phenomena occur in past tense and the formulation of noun phrase (N-phrase), student also adopted L1 rules to put adjective (Adj) and noun (N) in order to form noun phrase (N-phrase). In English, adjective precedes noun in forming noun phrase. At the opposite, noun is positioned before adjective to form noun phrase in Indonesian language. The L1 students do not recognize tenses and L2 grammatical arrangements, students also do not change the form of verbs into verb 2 to talk about their daily routines. Consequently, verbs do not change in format as tenses change. Meanwhile in English there is a time signal which is the only indicator that determines the time an action occurred.

#### b) Overgeneralization

In this study, students consistently apply the rules of the present continuous tense to describe actions; they use Verb-ing (V-ing) whenever they describe their routine or are asked to retell their past experiences. Occurred in such utterances as the 3<sup>rd</sup> participant stated "We stayed up until midnight with talking, playing games, cooking, and eating together". Another case of overgeneralization takes place when the young learners use helping verbs (am, are, is) with verbs 2 in simple present tense, occurred in such utterances as "One of them are (were) trip to Bandung at my birthday" or "I have (had) three classes a day". There is a possibility that students treated auxiliary verbs 1 similarly to auxiliary verbs 2, they think auxiliary verbs can be paired with any tense without grammar rules. The misconceptions lead to the production of interlanguage variations by student.

#### c) Simplification

In this case it was found that the students finished their utterances by eliminating prepositions, -s ending with possessive, addition in the negative form of simple present tense, to-be and -s ending with simple present tense. Furthermore, the omission of the -possessive joint can manifest back into pairs of possessive adjectives and nouns to form the possessive. The -s ending does not appear when adjectives and nouns are possessive; on the other hand, one must end with -s to indicate ownership if the noun is paired with a noun (eg my friend versus my sister's friend). The simple present tense with its different components may take time for young learners to fully understand. So, they missed some of the components; namely -s which ends with the simple present tense and the auxiliary in the negative form of the simple present tense. The take-s end with him pointing to me as an example. Student think they have conveyed a message to them about who is doing what activity; The -s ending or without the -s ending makes no

difference. This data is empirical evidence that English tenses are a concept that is quite difficult for ESL and EFL student.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings reveal that Indonesian learners had problems with grammatical usage. This indicate that the students have not comprehended the concept of verb change along with different uses of tenses. The findings also reveal L1 interference, overgeneralization and simplification as factors contributing to student's interlanguage experience variations.

1.L1 Interference: The used of mother tongue structure on learning second language.

In this part, the researcher asked to participants about the use of mother tongue when students wrote recount texts in a second language, how did they adapt it. Also how did they behave when there were several words in the second language that they did not know. It was fundamentally aimed to discover the starting point of the interlanguage phenomenon during the process of second language learning. The finding shows that 3 from 4 students still use mother tongue consciously, whether it's the writing structure or the vocabulary. The students utilized the mother tongue when facing difficulties in writing. They used the structure of the mother tongue when they do not know the grammar rules of the second language, or used some of the vocabulary from the mother tongue when they do not know the vocabulary to be used. In fact, there are students who write recount text used the structure and vocabulary of their mother tongue first, then translate it into a second language with the application helper. This is because they do not recognize a second language. The lack of vocabulary they have, or a lack of understanding of grammar certainly confuses students. Consenqntly, it is not uncommon for them to adapt their mother tongue into a second language or combine the two languages.

2.Overgeneralization: Students used inappropriate grammar in different contexts.

In this part, the researcher asked to participants about the use of grammar in different contexts in writing, asking what to do when they are unsure about the grammar of a sentence for the second language when writing texts. This question was vitally asked to forth excavate student's interlanguage experience. The occurrence of overgeneralization reflects the basic permeability of students' interlanguage. The findings explain that students often used grammar with different concepts because they lack confidence and doubt about grammar they have not mastered. Therefore, some students used translator tools to make structured second language sentences. But the results are not necessarily in accordance with the existing grammar rules, it is not uncommon for sentences to be produced using different grammatical contexts while students are not aware of these errors. As for students who admit that they often ignore tenses and second verbs according to proper grammar rules, because they have not mastered grammar thoroughly. Overgeneralization means that students make errors in a grammar rule or a word that has been learned before to another language context.

This error occurs because the student still in the processing phase of the newly recognized grammar.

3.Simplification : Students used simple target language in learning.

In the last part, the researcher asked about expressing a second language in writing, then how did students overcome difficulties when expressing a second language. This finding shows that to overcome difficulties in expressing a second language students will ask someone who is more proficient in a second language and use the internet to find a solution. The students expressing a second language with simply write what comes to their mind. Students only focus on what they want to write without thinking about difficult things. They express a second language regardless of grammatical structures. Therefore, there is an interlanguage phenomenon with simplification indicators. The attempt to simplify learning tasks through interlanguage transfers can result in the insertion of excessive linguistic elements as well as the omission of necessary elements, including types of errors (substitutions and misorders). In this case it was found that students completed their utterances by eliminating certain prepositions and tenses concepts in their second language, students thought that this tended not to change the meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The experience of interlanguage phenomena often occurs in second language learners. Students build an abstract rule system in the second language that refers to the rules of the first language, which underlies the incomplete and unstable understanding of the grammar. Adapting the mother tongue in the second language, where students use the arrangement of the mother tongue (SPOK) when writing the second language. The use of grammatical rules with concepts that are not in accordance with the sentences written. Simplification through interlanguage transfer results in the insertion of linguistic elements and the omission of necessary elements. Students consciously or unconsciously experience interlanguage phenomena in the second language learning process in writing recount texts. Furthermore, to overcome difficulties in the occurrence of interlanguage, students will ask for help from second language experts, they also use the internet to learn more about the understanding of mastering a second language.

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