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# Acquisition Sequences by Students in Essay Writing Classes

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*Abstract: English language skills are divided into two big categories, receptive skills, (i.e., listening and reading) and productive skills, i.e., (speaking and writing). Every language skills is connected. This study explore the acquisition of obligatory grammatical elements, those are verb-ing, plural, articles, and subject-verb agreement. It is an exploratory study, it aims at finding to find whether natural acquisition orders in students writing exist or not. According to data from academic affairs In Essay writing class there are 163 students. This research has sixty-three subjects. The technique that is used is obligatory occasion analysis. The result shows that 97% are able to use Verb-ing. Plural form mastery level is 98%, of accuracy. Article is 96, 2 % for accuracy levels. The last, subject verb agreement 94,1%. It may caused by avoiding or errors. The errors caused by overextension of analogy and or developmental. Those errors caused by language gab. It is supported by Nemser (1971) as quoted in Ellis (1986) there is a gap in language knowledge between L1 and L2, the differences in L1 and L2 in language system, and the differences between learners are too wide.*

*Keywords: English Language Teaching, Obligatory Occasion Analysis, Critical Analysis.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After that learner plays with his or her friends, he or she adapts a language that is used by the environment. Language acquisition devices (LAD) theory stated that humankind has creativity to construct their language. Ellis (1995) explains learners have capabilities to absorb and modify competences that are commonly used in first language (L1) environment. The knowledge of competences that learners get in L1 environment will be adopted in learning second language (L2), it is sources of systematically mistakes.

Ellis (2015:182) stated that errors are classified into four big categories: omission, the absent from an item; addition, when a learner adds an item; miss information, wrong form of morpheme or structure; disordering, when a learner has incorrect placement of a morpheme.



“She looking for you” rather, than “she looks for you” or “she is looking for you” are the example of omission. The model of addition is “he did go to school,” not “he went to school” to explain, “go” in the past. The model of miss information, is the man ate fried chicken rather than the man ate fried chicken. The form of disordering is “what is my mommy doing?”

When first language learners try to acquire a second language, they are going to have problems that are called errors. According to Ellis (1995), explains errors are caused by several factors. First error is caused by overextension of analogy. Overextension of analogy happens when L1 language feature is shared to L2. Secondly, error caused by intralingua, when L1 doesn't have language features that target language has. Third, L2 learners shared structure from their L1. The last one, developmental, it happens when second language learners try to build a hypothesis based on their limited experience.

As the consequences, when L2 uses their productive skills in their second language, they make different expression with L1. When L2 of English language in Indonesia have to write an expression in the form of past tense, it is possible, their knowledge in Bahasa Indonesia impacted their English. The differences error that they make could be in expressions, grammar, and diction. It other words, L2 learners will vary their second language from first language. There are some possibilities in error: on grammar (I eat fried rice yesterday), vocabulary (I am searching you) Idiomatic expression (They are different, like oil and water). Writing is the production of the written word that results in a text but the text must be read and comprehended in order to take place. In the first approach, writing is viewed as a much more decontextualized an absent reader-audience to his ir her ideas .

Writing is often believed to be the most complex one compared to the three other skills, i.e., listening, speaking, and reading (Cahyono &Widiati, 2011).When an author develops a composition, the writer should consider discourse, grammar, strategies, and social-context. Those considerations should be done series not independent. Developing writing abilities in a second language involves a broad range of competencies and skills associated with linguistic, sociolinguistic, and connected-discourse.

Linguistics competences, as a part of language competences has been acquiring in split from other competences. Linguistics competence are acquiring by drill. It is based on one of structuralism point of views that language is a set habit. Other competences, sociolinguistics, discourse and pragmatics, are based on authentic experiences in society, considering one of communicative theory arguments that language is creativities.

It is important for learners to master linguistic competences to develop their written ideas, constructed from sociolinguistics, discourse and pragmatics competences. In learning to write at second language, their linguistics competences transferred from L1. It becomes a problem if the transfers are negative transfer. Learning to write means studying how to integrate knowledge of language structure and communicative abilities. Thus, there are some previous study.



## **2. RELATED WORKS RESEARCH**

Huda (1984) conducts research in English Department at IKIP Malang to investigate whether natural order exists in verbal communication in English speakers at foreign language settings. The methods, 13 morphemes were isolated then classified into rank ordering. The technique in analyzing data is using ranking order of acquisition. As a result, natural orders existed in oral production, whether monitored or unmonitored.

Ellis (2008) explains, studies focus on finding correlation, whether conditioned environment useful to improve students writing or not. Methodology that is used is experimental group. To measure the accomplishment, that researcher use obligatory occasion analysis. Result in that research, students with conditioned environment have better achievement than students in unconditioned environment.

Bitchener, Young and Cameron (1995) conduct a study to improve students writing using feedback. Methodology in their study is classroom action research. Technique in analyzing the progress of subjects in grammar is obligatory occasion analysis. Result in their study is student's accuracy are improved.

Chen (2004) studies about morphemes' mastery levels for Chinese ESL learners in Portland, U.S. According to Chen (2004:5) The researcher examines learner's interactive language over a period of 20 months. Methodology in that research is bilingual syntax measurement. The technique in analyzing samples is using obligatory occasion analysis. Result, morphemes' mastery levels improve greatly This study is focus on obligatory grammatical elements in students in two Essay writing class. The methodology in this research is isolating four obligatory grammatical elements, verb-ing, plural, articles, and subject-verb agreement then classified it into rank ordering. In analyzing their grammatical problems, the researcher uses an obligatory occasion analysis as a technique. This study takes position as a clarification whether acquisition orders in students writing exist or not.

### **Research Purposes**

In general, this research will explore the acquisition of obligatory grammatical elements, those are verb-ing, plural, articles, and subject-verb agreement. In specific there are two purposes. First, Students mastery levels of verb-ing, plural, articles, and subject-verb agreement. Secondly, students' obligatory grammatical elements acquisition orders as reflected in their writing.

### **Significance of the Research**

The finding of this research will be significant for English lecturer, stakeholders, and researchers. For English lecturer, they have data in students' morpheme acquisitions; it is useful to design teaching and learning process in classroom. Stakeholders will have basic data to design curriculum for essay writing. For researcher, there are two benefits, first to set up knowledge in second language acquisition theory and improve teaching methods and approach for better teaching and learning in classroom. For stakeholders this research purposed to give basic knowledge in developing curriculum.



### **3. METHODS IN ANALYZING ERRORS**

#### **Method**

This research method chapter discusses several topics. Those topics are research design, subjects in this study, research instrument, data collection and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

There are five reasons why researcher takes subjects using third semester English department students in essay writing class. The first one, they have appropriate knowledge of obligatory grammar, subjects have passed paragraph-writing class, In essay writing class one of objectives is students have an ability to develop their own essay, this research needs subjects that has an ability to think critically, subjects should be able to develop ideas to be able to reach target five hundreds words.

When data collection is done, researcher finds that subjects have an ability to develop five hundred words essay. Means, they are match with those criteria. It makes sources of data becomes enough to be analyzed.

#### **Research Instrument**

This research uses writing prompt as an instrument. In writing prompt, there is a problematic question, which one is the best, native teachers or non-native teachers. In developing writing prompt, researcher analyzed issues in English language teaching in The Jakarta Post and The Jakarta Globe. Researcher decides to analyze The Jakarta Post and The Jakarta Globe since they are English newspapers, which are published daily in Indonesia.

The prompt is titled by native teacher or non native teacher. In this prompt, I give an introduction about the topic. Nowadays, English language is a global language around the world. In some urban societies in Indonesia, using English is an obligatory in their daily activities. Besides that, English becomes a perquisite to go to higher education or to apply jobs. That is why many Indonesian schools think that they have to teach English as their primary subject. To stratify the parents, it needs the best English teachers. In Indonesia, there are two kinds of English teachers; native teachers and non-native teachers. The question is raised, which one is the best English teachers? Native speakers of English (NT) or Non-native speakers of English (NNT)?

In this writing task, you have to state your opinion about the best English teachers, NT or NNT. Explain it not less than 400 words and not more than 500 words. The validation of writing prompt does by the experts. It is tested directly to students. Researcher prefers to assess it without field validation. The data directly appears in the first class fourteen students' composition. Data also appears in second and third class (see Appendices 2).

The result, researcher finds that there is an issue about the best English teacher in Indonesia, native teachers or non-native teachers. It makes debates in readers comment on websites. After finding the key issue, researcher develops writing prompt. In writing prompt, researcher



adds a key point of debate, the better English teacher in Indonesia native teachers on non-native teachers.

### **Data Collection**

Data that is needed in this research is students 400—500 words composition. In collecting data, researcher does three steps.

1. Developing instrument by analyzing issue in English language teaching at Indonesia on The Jakarta Post and The Jakarta Globe.
2. Collecting data by asking 63 students to compose an essay consist of 400 –500 words, by asking permit from the lecturer.
3. Analyzing data that has been collecting using obligatory occasion analysis to determine orders of acquisition of obligatory grammatical elements.

### **Data Analysis**

This study does five steps in analyzing the data:

1. Classify the sentences into four categories, those are: verb-ing, plural, articles, and subject-verb agreement.
2. The researcher develops criteria about grammatically accurate sentences.
3. After it is classified, researcher divided the classified data into two big categories, error and accurate sentences.
4. The researcher gives argument why those sentences are error while others are accurate.
5. The researcher gives theoretical explanation about errors and accuracy.

In analyzing the accuracy, researcher modify the steps from Ellis (1987)

1. Researcher decides the target morpheme.
2. Go to the target data and identify obligatory occasion. Then count the total number of obligatory occasion.
3. Count the number of correct morpheme that is supplied to context.
4. Calculate the percentage by :
5. Repeat the same procedure to other obligatory targets.

$$100\% \times \frac{\text{Accuracy}}{\text{Total Obligatory Context}}$$

In ordering of acquisition, researcher prefers to include the overuses, repetition of mistakes. The reason is the authors bring different argument. It means they carry special message. The same pattern mistake it doesn't means they don't understand how to use obligatory grammatical elements. They are able to use target obligatory elements, in other hand they could not correlate an issue in writing prompt and grammatical features that they should be used.



#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, researcher talks about (1) acquisition orders of grammatical elements, (2) theoretical perspective of the results, (3) comparison with previous study, (4) implications in teaching English as foreign language in Indonesia, and (5) problems for future researchers.

##### **Acquisition Orders of Grammatical Elements**

The result shows that 97% are able to use Verb-ing. Plural form mastery level is 98%, of accuracy. Article is 96, 2 % for accuracy levels. The last, subject verb agreement 94,1%.

Based on the result above, singular and plural form mastery level is the first position in the hierarchy of acquisition. The second in the hierarchy is the use of Verb-ing, the use of article is the third in the hierarchy and the last subject verb-agreement in the last hierarchy of acquisition.

##### **Theoretical Perspective of the Results**

###### **Verb-Ing**

There are three general rules according to Azzar and Hagen (2011) to determine whether the use of Verb-ing accurate or not. Those rules are (a) to be (is, am, are and be) should be followed by V-Ing; and (b) gerund is verb-ing in the beginning of sentence, considered as subject.

The example of accurate sentences will show bellow.

1. Learning English could be more interesting and faster if we enjoy the learning process.
2. Although they are mastering in English, they never underestimated us in English.
3. Another noticeable reason is that the ability in delivering the English concepts.

The example number (1) is gerund. Verb-ing functioned as a noun. It uses to explain subject as a verb. The example number (2) is an example of progressive form. Verb-ing uses to explain something that is still going on now. The example number (3) is an example the uses of gerund in compound sentences.

The authors understand how to use Verb-ing. There are arguments; first, the prompt that is used is an event that is happening. Discourse in the text is common issues in English teaching in Indonesia. It is happening now in some international standard school. That is why the popularity of issue makes students think they have to use verb-ing to argue.

The errors in verb-ing, author could not recognize to be + Verb-ing. The examples of errors are three. It has two big patterns. The first one is “to be” not followed by “verb 1”. The second pattern is “to be” is followed by uncountable nouns.

The example of errors sentences will show bellow.

1. English is important to be learn because it will help communicating with foreign people easily.
2. I am once have an English course when I was in senior high school and they are really relax.





3. They are understanding the meaning, clear explanation, good pronunciation, understandable speaking style, and mastering grammar.

The example number (4) and (5) are errors on be + verb 1. Azzar and Hagen (2011) states that be should be followed by verb-ing in progressive form. In contrast the author use be + bare infinitive (verb 1). The example number (6) the author do an error on be + uncountable nouns. The “to be” works in verb, not in uncountable noun.

The examples number (4), (5) and (6) are caused by developmental errors. Ellis (1995) states that developmental errors caused by learners trial and errors. They try to make sentence, since the knowledge limitation they could not. Those errors caused by negative transfer from Bahasa into English.

Bahasa did not recognize to be and suffix on the other hand, the learners have been comprehending rules in using Verb-ing. The Bahasa Indonesia in explaining events that is happening prefers to add adverb of time in sentences. She is walking in the campus if we would like to explain it in Bahasa Indonesia, we use Dia berjalan di kampus sekarang. Besides, Bahasa also adds modifier in the verb. Another example He is driving to library. In Bahasa Indonesia native speakers, they are using Dia sedang mengemudi ke perpustakaan.

### **Plural**

Based on the results, plural form also has fewer errors than accurate one in text that is written by students. There are three general rules according to Azzar and Hagen (2011): (a) plural nouns are followed by to be (plural) are or were, and (b) plural nouns should be added by s/es.

The examples of accurate sentences will show bellow.

1. Motivation to be like he or she, and from it I have a spirit to learn about English proficiency.
2. Native speaker will be highly appreciated in university learning, because this students of university have already a good basic English from their previous education.
3. Native teacher came to my class and tried to speak with my friends and me, we did not hear clearly, what he said, and we did not understand, because we just studied English about two weeks.

The authors know that the issue involving people in Indonesia. Schools, starting from paly group till university teaches English using native teachers of English occasionally. In compositions, some of authors feel the experiences to be taught by native teachers and non-native teachers of English.

There are five examples in explaining errors.

1. I think non native teachers is the best for myself.
2. Native teachers is less attraction.
3. A non-native teachers, who speak not too fast, give a chance for us to do it.
4. As we know, almost all non-native English teacher give pressure to us.



5. Both of them have a good qualities in English language and there are three differences between native speakers and non native teachers.

In the sentence number (10) , the subject is plural form, the to be is for singular form. In sentence number (11) the subject is plural form, the “to be” is for singular form. In the sentence number (12), the word “most” is used to determine plural nouns in contrast the word “Student” is singular noun. The sentence number (13) are “All” is considered as whole population, that is why “All” should followed by plural noun. The sentence number (14) is “A” is an article to modify plural countable noun. “quality” is uncountable noun.

The reasons, Bahasa Indonesia is not recognize plural form by suffix, in other hand authors of text understand that they have to use plural form to explain the phenomena in writing prompt has been involving many persons in Indonesia.

Bahasa, in explaining plural prefers to reduplicate words. Mobil–mobil for explaining cars, pepohonan to explain trees, berakit-rakit for boating and luntang-lantung to explain repeated movements for a person who doesn't have a final goal in his or her life.

The authors know that the issue involving people in Indonesia. Schools, starting from paly group till university teaches English using native teachers of English occasionally. In compositions, some of authors feel the experiences to be taught by native teachers and non-native teachers of English.

### **Articles**

Based on the results, article form also has fewer errors than accurate one in text that is written by students. There are three general rules of article according to Azzar and Hagen (2011): (a) “The” is used when facing definite and indefinite nouns, whether it is singular or plural. (b) “A” is used to modify definite singular noun with consonant sound in the beginning of words.(c)“An” is used to modify definite singular noun with Vowel sound in the beginning of words.

The examples of accurate sentences will show bellow.

1. Moreover, they have different appearance, so, absolutely the students will be interested in them” is the example of accurate sentences in the use of articles.
2. On the other hand, native teachers may have a higher skill to teach their students, but they needs more times to adapt with the situation where they teach.
3. It means, they comprehend the subjects of the issue. The issue in writing prompt focuses on specific subjects, native teachers of English or non native teachers of English. It implies their schemata that they should uses articles to point spesific things, NT or NNT.
4. There are two examples in explaining errors.
5. “A native speaker will be highly appreciated in an university learning, because this students of university have already a good basic English from their previous education”
6. The second example, English is used to make an equality students to improve their ability in communicating using English.





In the sentence number (17) and number (18) the errors caused by negative transfer. Bahasa Indonesia prefers to add phrases, modifiers and redub words to explain specific points. For the example, dia, yang duduk di sana, selalu terdiam waktu kelas Syntax.

The person who is sitting there always keep quiet during syntax classes. Ada sekelompok orang yang berniat membantu kita in English there is a group of people who want to help us. the last one, orang-orang sabang bangga akan tanah kelahirannya, The Sabangs proud of their land. The issue in writing prompt focuses on specific subjects, native teachers of English or non native teachers of English. It implies their schemata that they should use articles to point specific things, NT or NNT.

### **Subject-Verb Agreement**

The general rules in determining accurate sentences of subject verb-agreement is final s/es is added when subject is a singular noun in the form of simple present and (b) the plural form .

The examples of accurate sentences will show bellow.

1. “A motivation to be like he or she, and from it I have a spirit to learn about English proficiency.” is the example for accurate sentences. The next example,
2. According to myself, I prefer to choose non-native teachers because when we learn with non native teacher there is a motivation.” it means, they have ability to analyze when they have to use subject-verb agreement
3. The use of subject-verb agreement is important to explain that the events happen nowadays. It means, the subject does activity in present time. For this case, this issue is a habitual event, happening from past, present and in the future. It has same meaning with sunrises rises from the east.
4. The example of errors in subject verb agreement show bellow.
5. After that, when the teacher explain what the students ask they will explain but actually it is not match with the student question” is the example of error.
6. As we that the native speaker of English confuse also it we do not speak in English well.”

The errors number (21) and (22) in subject-verb agreement caused by negative transfer from Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia does not recognize affix – suffix to relate verb with subjects. English recognize that functions. The result shows that subjects have comprehend the target obligatory subject-verb agreement. Some of them still are transferring negative errors from Bahasa Indonesia.

### **Comparison with Previous Study**

The result of this study is compared with study in IKIP Malang, English Department in 1982. Huda (1984) explains monitored oral productive skills activities gives best result rather than unmonitored activities. It means, students when they have time to outline their spoken composition, they will have accuracy in target morpheme.

This study confirm a study relates in , confirm the result from previous study. Students have an outline in their schemata. They have background knowledge of issues in writing prompt.



That is why it is easier for them to develop systematic essay with accurate grammatical elements.

### **Implication to Teaching English as Foreign Language in Indonesia.**

There one significant contribution in Teaching English as Foreign Language in Indonesia. Teaching English in Indonesia based on theme, which is popular among students, will make student have ideas how to use appropriate obligatory grammatical elements. Theme is important to make students have capability in developing outline. Popular theme will construct schemata for students.

### **Problems for Future Researchers**

There are two questions to be answered for future researcher. The first, which one is easier and makes students develops coherence essay; developing composition based on theme that they are familiar with or developing essay based on subject-matters that they are learnt. Secondly, future researcher should answer the correlation between using writing prompt with familiar issue and writing prompt with un-familiar issue for students.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION**

In this chapter, researcher talks about conclusions and suggestions. The conclusion in this research talks about summary of research and the implication for teaching English in Indonesia. Suggestions talk how to apply the findings into teaching learning activities.

### **Conclusions**

In developing a written composition, students have an ability to use accurate grammatical elements since they have an ability to correlate the theme and grammatical knowledge.

### **General Conclusion**

The language competences in specific issue, linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and strategies to build discourse have influenced positively to their productive skills, in this study is writing. It is proven by lowest rank in orders of acquisition is 94%. The issue is familiar since it is blowing up in English language mass media in Indonesia.

It contributes the theory that teaching of English in Indonesia should be based on issue in students' live. The future researcher needs to clarify this finding. Since, this study does not have data comparison data to compare whether writing with familiar issue will make students easier to construct their grammar rather than writing with un-familiar discourse.

### **Specific Conclusion**

1. Students make an error in verb-ing since they have no idea about differences and similarities between English and Bahasa Indonesia. It means they still get negative transfer.
2. Students could not do plural form since they don't know differences between Singular plural form and Subject verb agreement. They have misleading concept because of negative transfer from Bahasa Indonesia.



3. Students get negative fact about article, between Bahasa Indonesia and English. Bahasa Indonesia is not recognizing article. In contrast English recognize it. The item differences give an opportunity to make errors
4. Students' doesn't have knowledge about the time when they use Subject Verb Agreement when they use Plural form. They have limitation of knowledge. It needs to upgrade student knowledge.

### **Suggestions**

In applying these findings, the English teachers should use the materials based on theme around the students to teach grammar. It will develop the students' interest of learning. At the end, they have an ability to correlate the grammatical knowledge and their writing skills.

### **General Suggestion**

The researcher believes that language competences have correlation with language skills. Teachers suggest using it as basic theory to teach English. Language skills and competences will affect each other's.

### **Specific Suggestion**

1. In teaching Verb-Ing it is suggested to English teacher to contrast between English and Bahasa Indonesia. Students will have an ability to change their language perspective. I think it is better for them to realize it before they are ready to use that form.
2. Before using plural, students have to realize the difference between singular plural form and subject verb agreement. They have to make list sentence example in grammatical function between Plural form and subject verb agreement.
3. When teaching plural form, students have to correct their own errors in written composition. It is important, since some problems comes not because of the author are understand the concept. Problems come since they have no idea to make differences since negative transfer from Bahasa Indonesia.
4. Teacher should asked students to develop a list about Subject verb agreement. They have to find the appropriate time in using subject verb agreement. It would help students to minimize their errors.

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