

## **EXPLORING INSTRUCTION'S IMPACTS ON A STUDENT'S GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN INTERNET-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

Since its appearance in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by Selinker in 1972, massive studies of interlanguage have been carried out in numerous EFL/ESL classrooms as it is worth researching to gain plausible factors which either facilitate the TL learning or making it suffers. Therefore, this study tries to see the impact of English course instruction toward a student's interlanguage. The data are grammatical errors made by the student during internet-mediated texting which are later on analyzed qualitatively. The result shows that structurally all the errors caused by direct translation from the student's native language, Indonesian, to English. This phenomenon seems to be predictable as during the instruction the student is provided barely with English sentences which differ from Indonesian structure. Therefore, it is expected that the teachers as well as the institution redesign the content of learning to expose students to English which might be different from Indonesian yet will be very crucial to establish satisfying communicative competence.

Keywords: interlanguage; grammatical errors; instruction

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The emergence of communication-oriented language teaching methodology has been apprehended by educators and scholars. Consequently, instruction has to address a range of L2 skills simultaneously, all of which are requisite in communication (Hinkel, 2006). Language learners are expected to be able to produce language in either written or oral form as a means of communication within or beyond the classroom. This is so because in a more global era, they are demanded to be able to convey messages with global society, either through traditional communication (face-to-face communication) or mediated-communication (through phones, emails, or social-media).

Mediated communication is a process by which a message or communication is transmitted via some means (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004); in this case, one of internet-based messengers is BBM (Blackberry Messenger). It is interesting to investigate this case in terms of its relevance to the nature of language as a means of communication. Additionally, a basic goal of English language teaching is that students will apply outside the classroom what they have learnt inside the classroom (James in Harmer, 2007).

Positioning communicative competence as the learning goal entails an approach which brings linguistic skills and communicative abilities into close association (Moghadam & Adel, 2011). This kind of approach has been put into practice by ESL educators and in EFL classrooms throughout the world, including Indonesia. So, it is hoped that students are able to communicate in the target language both with other language learners and even its native speakers as the message is formed accurately.

Communicative competence also becomes the primary goal of an English course in Bandung. Two third of the whole session of each meeting in this course is invested to drill students' speaking skill, and a third of the time is used to build their linguistic competence through grammar class. One of the students is chosen as the respondent for this study as he shows no hesitation to speak in English, and even his interlanguage is detected, which sometimes raises unclear message delivery. Hence, this study tries to describe this phenomenon by referring to the instruction he gets in the English course he attends from which he experiences more English than at school. This is so because he learns English at school

for only 90 minutes a week, while his English learning time in the course is nine hours a week.

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the phenomenon of interlanguage in students' second language learning. Fauziati (2011) conducted research to determine grammatical errors made by 30 secondary school students in four free compositions. The finding shows that the learners made a significant number of grammatical errors, which could be classified. However, as the study also investigated the classroom activities, it was concluded that some classroom events were believed to have contribution to the error destabilization, since these classroom activities could be seen as language learning or language acquisition opportunities.

Another research report written by Wang (2011) attempted to review many theories and research reports in respect to the role of second language classroom on the interlanguage fossilization. It was concluded that at least there are three major sources of constraints on classroom learning: input (from teacher talk, teaching materials and peer talk), teaching strategies (teaching objective, teaching procedures), and practice opportunities. Also, it is proposed that the quantity and quality of language input are very important. In language teaching, we have to guarantee the amount of target language input to make sure that learners can attain a proficiency of target language. At the same time, we have to lay emphasis on the quantity of language input as well.

Looking at these two research reports, the present study tries to combine both of the previous studies and contribute new perspective into the existing studies.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the English course instruction provided to the student?
2. What kinds of grammatical errors are committed by the student in internet-mediated communication?

By conducting this study, two major advantages are aimed to be obtained. Firstly, the study will enrich the literature on student's systematic interlanguage errors in having communication in English. Secondly, the determined students' errors may show possible negative factors coming from the instruction can hopefully make the student more aware of them and avoid making the same errors. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will give contribution to the policies, at least in the institution where the participant regularly learns English, regarding learning activities that will maximize students' English language skills development. Lastly, suggestions for the improvement of the learning experiences provided in the English course are elaborated in the later section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Classroom Instruction and Interlanguage

Input indeed plays a significant role in both native language and second language development as it provides information required to produce the language being learnt. The existence of input is necessary along with other facilitating conditions such as feedback, aptitude, motivation, and instruction (see figure 1).

2.2 First vs. second language development	
L1	L2
<b>INITIAL STATE</b>	
Innate capacity	Innate capacity? L1 knowledge World knowledge Interaction skills
<b>INTERMEDIATE STATES</b>	
Child grammar	Learner language
<i>Basic processes</i>	
Maturation	Transfer
<i>Necessary conditions</i>	
Input Reciprocal interaction	Input
<i>Facilitating conditions</i>	
	Feedback Aptitude Motivation Instruction .....
<b>FINAL STATE</b>	
Native competence	Multilingual competence

(Saville-troike, 2006, p. 17).

Classroom instruction serves as one of input sources of the target language for language learners. "When input is understood and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided" (Saville-troike, 2006, p. 45). The amount of meaningful input is of crucial importance in the acquisition process (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005). On the other hand, when the input is not sufficient and or it is not well perceived, improper learner's language utterances are inevitable. This condition is what Larry Selinker (1972) classified as interlanguage (IL).

Interlanguage (IL) is "a provisional state where the target language has not fully acquired yet by the language learners. It refers to the intermediate states of a learner's language as it moves toward the target language" (Saville-troike, 2006, p.40). Therefore, IL is characterized by the appearance of inappropriate utterances which result from learners' lack of the target language knowledge. Similarly, IL is considered as a separate linguistic system meaning that it is thought to be distinct from both the learner's native language as well as the target language. IL is prominently characterized by the existence of errors (Fauziati, 2011).

IL does not need to be seen solely as negative matter, but rather it can be seen as "creative process, driven by inner forces in interaction with the environmental factors, and influenced both by L1 and

by input from the target language” (Saville-troike, 2006, p.41). The result of an amount of second language research along with the language teachers’ experiences indicates that classroom instruction yields a significant difference both in the speed and success with which students proceed through interlanguage stages of development (Brown, 2001).

Another positive response toward the relationship between classroom instruction and interlanguage has been elaborated that there is a wide conviction among second language researchers and instructors that second language instruction will help learners progress more rapidly through developmental stages, and it can destabilize interlanguage grammars that have fossilized (Ellis, 1999, in Wang, 2011).

All in all, classroom instruction in which input and exposure of the target language are provided clearly contributes to learners’ language development before reaching fully acquisition the target language. Yet, there are some criteria are suggested in aiding the input to be more optimally studied.

The input is not available for processing unless learners actually notice it (Saville-troike, 2006). Input should be noticed by learners (Nation, 1996). The degree of noticing or awareness can be influenced through the frequency of encounter with target language items, perceptual saliency of the items, instructional strategies that can direct learner attention, readiness to notice particular items, and the nature of activity the learner is engaged in (Schmidt, 1990, in Saville-troike, 2006).

As the input holds paramount role in second language acquisition, this study seeks to describe classroom instruction in an English course comprising input from teacher talk, teaching materials and peer talk, teaching strategies (teaching procedures), and practice opportunities (Wang, 2011). As well, this study aims at comparing classroom instruction on grammatical errors committed by the student in internet-mediated communication.

### **Internet-mediated communication**

One’s language ability can be recognized from one’s speaking and writing. What people talk and write stems from the knowledge they have read and listened, and classroom instruction may be one of the knowledge sources. Through this study, language ability, specifically grammatical knowledge, of the respondent is trying to be revealed by analyzing his language in internet-mediated communication.

In general, mediated communication refers to “a way of communication via some means” (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004, p. 5). Mediated-communication is beneficial for EFL learners to master their language skills as well as their social interaction skills (Chun, 1994, in Rezaee and Ahmadzadeh, 2012). Later, this term is specified regarding specific means applied. One of the most well-known terms is computer-mediated communication.

The term internet-mediated communication proposed in this study is adopted from Hiltz and Turoff (1978, in Rezaee and Ahmadzadeh, 2012) who coined the term of computer-mediated communication (CMC). It is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers (Herring, 1996, cited in Cárdenas-Claros & Isharyanti, 2009). Yet, nowadays communication is not necessarily mediated by computer but instead by cell phone. So it is not relevant if CMC is used in this study. As a result, adapting definition of CMC we can infer that internet-mediated communication requires internet connection to deliver the message to the receiver.

Therefore, by analyzing data from mediated-communication we can get the information related to one’s language skill including second language skill in a more natural setting compared to paper-based test which barely cater the real ability of student. Specifically, it can determine the development of his/her acquisition of the second language which mainly characterized by the appearance of errors from which what students need to improve can be better determined.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

As the research is intended to describe the implementation of curriculum at schools, thus, qualitative descriptive approach corresponds well to the objective of this research. Descriptive study is used to describe condition, phenomenon, event, activity, and so on in which the result will be explained in the form of report (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Specifically, this research aims to explore the impact of communicative approach-based instruction employed by an English course on student’ interlanguage in internet-mediated communication.

### **The Site and Respondent**

An English course in Bandung was chosen as the site of this study due to the uniqueness of the program offered there. When other courses provide comfortable seats and noiseless classroom atmosphere, this course obliges the students to be actively engaged in conversation both in pairs and in groups as well. It expects the students to be able to use English as a means of communication, yet, without neglecting the importance of grammar.

Accordingly, conversation sessions and grammar class become the main focus of the program. Each student attends the course for three days in a week and each meeting lasts for three hours. The learning time is broken down into three activities: practicing the dialogue in pairs, grammar class, and group discussion.

The respondent of this study was a male second grade student of one of vocational high schools in Bandung who also attended the English course chosen as the site of this present study. He was selected for his active participation to learn English both in the course and outside the class. Another

consideration was his willingness to be interviewed from which the data of his speaking skill will be analyzed.

### **Instrumentation**

Earlier, it has been mentioned that this study is similar to computer-mediated communication (CMC) concept, but the only difference relies on the means used. CMC is considered as one of data collection techniques. It is a text-based medium that may amplify opportunities for students to pay attention to linguistic form as well as providing a less stressful environment for second language practice and production (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Specifically, the data were gathered through individual chatting in BBM (Blackberry Messenger) which serves as empirical data from which student's grammatical errors were investigated. Besides, respondent interview was also included to depict the information of how the instruction is established in the course he attends.

### **Procedure**

In general this study comprises three steps, which are selecting the participant, collecting data, and analyzing the data. To get the respondent for this research, the researcher came to one of vocational high schools in Bandung in which some of the students attended the English course under investigation. Then, when having light conversation with some of students there, one student seemed to be standing out and attentive compared to other students. He responded to every English question posed bravely, even though his English was not really good. Also, he had access to BBM and was willing to have conversation in that communication medium with the researcher.

To collect the data, the researcher undertook two interviews. The first interview was conducted to get the picture of the instruction the respondent experienced. The second one is an individual online interview facilitated by BBM (Blackberry Messenger) from which the respondent's utterances would be gathered to be later on analyzed.

### **Data analysis**

The analysis was carried out through three steps: data reduction through coding, checking hypotheses and theories, and description (Malik & Hamied, 2016). In data reduction, the respondent's utterances were classified as free of grammatical errors or grammatical errors. The grammatical errors were confirmed by relevant theories and supporting research report. Then, all of them were described qualitatively in the findings section.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Within this part, the answers to research questions number one and two will be presented along with supporting theories proposed by experts, respectively. Additionally, in the following part, there is discussion

sub heading in which critical discussion in respect to the subject being investigated is presented.

### **How is the English course instruction provided to the student?**

According to the information given by the respondent, the lesson is divided up into three activities: practicing the dialogue in pairs, grammar class, and group discussion. Each activity is discussed below along with description of the instruction, including teacher talk, teaching materials and peer talk, teaching strategies (teaching procedures), and practice opportunities (Wang, 2011).

In the first activity, students are given time, more or less an hour, to read the dialogue provided. They need to go out of the class and seek a partner with whom they are going to rehearse the dialogue. Then, they take turn to be the first and the second speaker (who acts as the first speaker in the first reading will be the second speaker in the second reading, and vice versa). After that, each of them memorizes all the dialogue on their own.

This activity is categorized as imitative speaking as the student practices "an intonation contour" (Brown, 2001, p. 272). Yet, it is crystal clear that the teacher does not involve much in the activity. At the moment, the teacher lets the student to produce English sentences, makes sure that everyone is participating, and provides assistance when students ask him to demonstrate how to pronounce certain words they do not know how to. However, this activity is very accommodating peer talk as well as giving students practice opportunity to produce the language.

From the activity at least two benefits are noticed. Firstly, it enables students to speak English even those whose English vocabulary and grammar mastery are limited. Another benefit is that through reading dialogue activity new information can be drawn upon such as vocabularies, grammatical patterns, and language expressions. In a word, this activity provides input of the target language.

Later, in the second hour, every student goes back to his/her seat to get grammar class. What makes it interesting is that the teacher teaches grammar based on students' needs. Students are asked what topic they want to learn by voting among the topics listed, what is wanted by most students is what will be discussed. This grammar class will focus on single case of linguistic aspects such as articles, noun phrases, or a certain tenses.

This second activity is as the same as learning in the regular English classrooms at school. In the beginning of the session the teachers present the formulas and explanation of a certain topic. Later, students are asked to make their own sentences under the guidelines formulas given previously. After that, a few of students' work is discussed whether it is accomplished satisfactorily or it needs some corrections.

Contrary to the first activity, this one requires so much teacher talk time as he/she becomes the

information source who provide knowledge demanded by students. She/he also disseminates copied notes of the topic being discussed. Consequently, it violates time for peer talk as this traditional approach puts students as passive recipients of the lecture-recitation (Posner, 1992).

Finally, in the last hour, the students together with students from other classes come out from the classes. In the open space yard students are required to make groups consisting of five or six students with at least one student from a higher level of the members of the group, called as the guide. Then, for an hour they have to maintain conversation with all members discussing whatever they like.

When this activity takes place, the teachers stay closely to them to make sure that everyone is participated in the discussion. Also, they serve as helpers when students have no idea in expressing their messages and or when they do not know certain vocabularies. In this activity the teacher serves five roles out of six proposed by Harmer (2001, 2007) that will be facilitating students to develop: As controller, the teacher is in charge of the class and leads the activities; as prompter, the teacher helps and encourages students to work creatively not patronizing; as participant, the teacher joins student's activities, such as in a discussion and role play; as resource, means teachers being helpful and available for students; and as tutor, the teacher helps and guides students in a more intimate relationship, for example staying briefly with a particular small group or individual.

#### What kinds of grammatical errors are committed by the student?

Out of thirty four messages, fifteen of them are considered as non-English utterances as follows:

1. I have your job miss.  
\*I have done your task, miss.
2. About English voice with sir Rio.  
\*About having English conversation with Mister Rio.
3. Okey miss, when you will come to student police place?  
\*Okey, miss. When will you come to the student police place?
4. I think only me being miss you, *hehehe*  
\*I think it is only me who is missing you, *hehehe*.
5. Do you didn't want to come?  
\*Don't you want to come?
6. *Oalah* hahaha, maybe not disturb, please give me your time.  
\**Oalah* hahaha, maybe not be disturbing, please give me your time.
7. If you have so much time don't forget to give me or give us take English learn, okay. (structure)  
\*If you have free time, don't forget to give me or give us English lesson, okay.

8. Hello, I'm sorry miss, I seldom touch my phone.  
\*Hello, I'm sorry miss, I seldom keep the phone in my hand.
9. Yeah, when I have phone and on the data (internet), yeah, I think, I am always play my phone and that's make me not focus with my study.  
\* Yeah, when I have phone with me and the data (internet) is available, yeah, I think, I always play my phone and that makes me not focus with my study.
10. Oh, *insya allah* miss, my schedule is Friday.  
\* Oh, *insya allah* miss, my schedule is on Friday.
11. Maybe tomorrow I shall take picture about that.  
\* Maybe tomorrow I shall take picture of it.
12. I must permission first to head master.  
\*I must ask for the permission first from the head master.
13. Can you look the picture?  
\*Can you see the picture?
14. Do you look my job from my teacher, about English?  
\*Do you see my task from my teacher, English task?
15. I am sorry miss, I have find my job in my bag.  
\* I am sorry miss, I have found my task in my bag.

The rest of them are well-formed utterances, including expressions of greeting (hello, good night miss), apologizing (I'm sorry, miss), agreement (okay, please, miss), and certainty (yes of course). Also, the respondent is able to produce free error sentences which have the same pattern as his native language such as 'I remember that', 'Yeah we can learn English together', and 'I must go to my course'.

All the well-constructed sentences allow the structure appropriate in both languages (Saville-troike, 2006), in this case Indonesian and English. When we produce L1/ NL structure and it is applicable in TL it is called positive transfer (Saville-troike, 2006; de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005). This positive attitude is indeed helpful for the students, yet the students should be also exposed to other structures which are essential or at least used more frequent in daily conversation.

There is a possibility that the respondent's interlanguage is influenced by the instruction provided in the English course. Earlier, it is found that he tend to produce English by implementing Indonesian structure which is his native language. Moreover, mostly what he learns at the course also presents English expressions that correspond to Indonesian structure. Some of the examples include:

**Target language:** "Okey miss, when you will come to student police place?"

**Native language:** "Okey, bu. Kapan Ibu akan datang ke tempat polisi siswa?"  
and

**Target language:** "Do you didn't want to come?"

**Native language:** "Apa kamu tidak mau untuk datang?"

The committed errors are explicable as development of target language involves progression undergone through a dynamic interlanguage system (Saville-troike, 2006). Also, IL is conceived as the product of interaction between two linguistic systems, the NL and the TL (Gass & Selinker, 1994 in Fauziati, 2011).

In regard to the instruction which is mostly realized in a natural setting, this phenomenon is predictable. A learner in a naturalistic setting will most probably attend more to meaning and real communication rather than form (Lightbown & Spada, 1989). It may not be difficult for the learner to acquire a high degree of fluency, but a high degree of accuracy in the L2 may be possible only if the learner also focuses her attention on forms (de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor, 2005).

It is also revealed that the student is provided with grammar class in each meeting, but still his grammar is not quite good. Another possibility comes from the materials. It is found that the dialogues are somehow not contextual in the target language setting even in the native language setting. Thus, it will be hard for students to produce sentences they have never been exposed to.

### Discussion

The role of instruction is undoubtedly paramount as it serves as input which aids second language acquisition. Although language input is essential for acquisition, input alone is insufficient (Gass & Selinker, 2001, in Ertürk, 2009), another necessity for successful acquisition to occur is interaction (Ellis, 1994, Long, 1983, Swain, 1985, in Zainil, 2013). Social interaction facilitates second language acquisition because of its contribution to the accessibility of input for mental processing (Saville-troike, 2006). Learning with exposure to naturalistic input is still essential to the development of L2 competence (Wang, 2011).

In addition, interactions are important because learners can improve their language through interaction as they listen to their teachers, and they can use all they have learned for communication. This kind of activity is seen as promoting their language development which will lead to comprehensible output (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, in Zainil, 2013).

The question then, what kind of input should be provided?. The input should be abundance in number and it should be high quality. The more input is seen and listened, the more English is acquired, noticed, or learnt (Harmer, 2007). Input should be noticed by learners (Nation, 1996), since it is not available for processing unless learners actually notice it (Saville-troike, 2006). But, if the input noticed is not qualified, it will be difficult to expect students to have good second language acquisition.

### CONCLUSIONS

The quantity and quality of language input provided in the instruction are very important to be put in balance. To overcome student's interlanguage there are, at least, two things to be considered comprising teacher roles and materials. Previously it is found that the teacher is more active during grammar class, it is suggested that he/she should be active when students are having conversation. At first, the teacher may let students articulate the conversation as they want but at the same time acts as an assessor who offers feedback on the students' performance. In the second time, he/she can provide them native voice speaker pronouncing some difficult words (according to his/her observation and assessment) and practice them all together.

Besides, the teacher and the institution should work together to provide more contextual material by giving the reality-based illustration or pictures on which certain language expressions should be used instead by giving a list of separated expressions. Therefore, communicative competence is expected to be easier to achieve.

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