

Language Errors in German Class

Wisma Kurniawati^{1*}, Ajeng Dianing Kartika¹

¹*Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia*

^{*}*Corresponding author: wismakurniawati@unesa.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Language errors generally occur in foreign language learners including German learners at Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Learners make language errors both verbally and in writing, at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, grammatical, and lexical levels. Language error analysis is significant to be carried out in order to support the process of acquiring German which is currently being studied. Mapping the types of errors that learners make can help teachers determine the right learning method for the learning process in the classroom. This study focuses on the analysis of language errors based on the theory put forward by Richard with the aim of mapping the language errors made by students in German 3 class who should be in L1 (intermediate level). The findings reveal that typical errors occur is intralingual errors in the morphosyntactical level.

Keywords: *Language error, intralingual, interlingual, german class*

1. INTRODUCTION

Error analysis is a very important field in the realm of applied linguistics, especially in second language learning (L2) as well as foreign languages. The field of applied linguistics tries to study and treat the process of the occurrence of these errors in order to optimize language acquisition in foreign language learners and to improve the quality of learning through the application of appropriate learning strategies and be able to minimize the occurrence of language errors. Error analysis provides deep insights into understanding the language learning process by seeking to better understand the language acquisition process that has been carried out for a long time [1]

Error analysis plays an important role in teaching second and foreign languages too. The identification of error analysis is to assist teachers in understanding new ways of teaching by providing appropriate feedback based on mistakes made by students. This error identification provides new insights and techniques for teachers in sorting out problems related to language learning.

In the current era of globalization, the demands of being able to speak foreign languages are increasing in society. To be able to understand the global developments that are happening in the modern world, foreign language skills are required. In Indonesia, foreign language learning can be done self-taught, at the course institutions, and also at formal educational institutions. Learning in formal educational institutions, one of which is at the university, is certainly more coordinated and intensive compared to self-taught learning and in course institutions. For example, in the

German Literature study program, Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Learning German as a foreign language requires students to be able to master German well. As for language learning, it is focused on students' responsive and productive abilities which are realized through mastery of 4 competencies, namely listening competence (receptive), speaking competence (productive), reading competence (receptive), and writing competence (productive). Learning German at Universitas Negeri Surabaya starts from 0 in a structured manner starting from the analysis of the German sound structure, the process of forming words, sentences, and up to the process of producing text both orally and in writing.

Learning German starts from the basic which is realized through the *Hören I, Sprechen I, Lesen I, Schreiben I*, and *Struktural I* courses which then continue according to the level of language difficulty until the last level in the *Deutsch III* course. In the process of learning German, which has significant differences in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and grammar with the students' mother tongue, it causes language errors. According to behaviorist language learning theory, language learning is the formation of habits and mistakes in learning second and foreign languages caused by obstruction of rules and habits that are formed in learning the first language. It learns and forms the habit of the first language rejecting and interfering with the habit formation process of the second and foreign languages. Thus, learner errors are the result of first language disorder according to behaviorist theory [2]. The description above becomes the basis for conducting language error analysis research in the *Deutsch III* course German Department study program.

1.1. Related Work

1.1.1. Error Analysis

It cannot be denied that foreign language learners make the mistake of speaking at every stage of learning which are caused by their carelessness and lack of understanding of the language being studied. As stated by Richards et al. [1] that language learners must experience errors during the learning process. People cannot learn a language without first making mistakes systematically both in spoken and written.

Dulay [3] further stated that studying learner mistakes has two main objectives, namely (1) recording and concluding the process of learning in each phase; and (2) provide the teacher with an overview of the most difficult parts of the target language that make learners often make mistakes.

Griebhaber [4] and Richards et al. [1] have a belief that language errors are systematic. This error is a form of consistent deviation from the language system being studied or the target language at certain stages, both orally and in writing [5] or a foreign language learned. Language errors as systematic deviations are made by learners due to the learner's lack of understanding of the second language (L2) or the foreign language being studied and the related material that should have been learned during the production process of the second language (L2) or the target language being studied. Errors that occur consistently can be examined and then the causes of these errors can be described. Errors are 'signals' that indicate the learning process occurs naturally and that students have not mastered or demonstrated well-structured competence in the second language (L2) or the target language being studied [1].

Language errors can be classified into three types, namely: grammatical errors, lexical errors, and orthographic errors. Grammatical errors themselves include morphological errors, syntactic errors, and morphosyntactic errors. The second type of lexical errors is related to morphological errors. The lowest level studied by morphology is a morpheme, while the highest level studied is a complex word. The third type called orthographic errors can be easily identified from the orthographic's rule of the language. German orthographic plays a significant role since it can affect the meaning of the sentences.

1.1.2. Intralingual and Interlingual Errors

Errors can be classified as various types of errors. According to Richards et al. [1], language errors can be classified into two types, namely interlingual and intralingual. The first type of error is called an interlingual error. This type of error is caused by the influence of the learner's native language. This error

occurs when learners try to move their mother tongue system into the language system that is currently being studied, in this study German. Of course, foreign language learners already have a mother tongue system in their cognition which shapes their language habits. As a result, once they learn a new language with several new systems and are often different from the mother tongue system, they tend to make mistakes because they are still carried away by their native language patterns.

As stated by Richards et al. [1], most of the mistakes of the second language (L2) or foreign language learners mainly occur due to their assumption that the second language system is similar to the mother tongue. Interlingual errors are caused by transfer errors. Richards et al. [1] argue that interlingual errors are caused by native language interference, both from the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and grammatical aspects. As for what is included in the interlingual language error is as follows:

- (1) Transfer error: Errors caused by interference from the mother tongue. A learner who does not understand the rules of the target language will tend to apply the same rules in their mother tongue.
- (2) Mother tongue interference: Errors are generated in the learner's attempt to find the structure of the target language rather than transferring their first language model.
- (3) Literal translation: An error occurs when a learner translates a sentence or idiomatic expression in the target language literally into the mother tongue.

Mother tongue interference is not the only cause of learner language errors. They can make mistakes in the second language (L2) or the target language because they do not understand the target language well so they have difficulty implementing it. Richards et al. [1] states, intralingual language errors refer to the target language items produced by the learner, which do not reflect the structure of the mother tongue but are generalized based on part of the target language system.

In the early stages of language learning, errors occur which are dominated by language transfer, but over time learners will begin to acquire a new system of the target language being learned. At this level, there will be more generalizations about the language system that are manifested in the target language. Richards et al. [1] classify intralingual errors into four categories, namely overgeneralization, ignoring the boundaries of language rules, application of incomplete language rules, and conceptual or semantic errors.

- (1) Overgeneralization: It occurs when a learner creates deviant structures based on knowledge of different structures in the target language. In

German, for example, the n suffix in the plural noun which is often overgeneralized.

- (2) Ignore restrictions on the application of items in the target language: This error is characterized by the learner's inability to identify words that have the same meaning but have different collocations.
- (3) Application of incomplete rules: It occurs when the learner fails to fully implement the target language rules. Generally, this error is characterized by the learner's failure to apply the word order pattern according to the rules of the target language.

Misunderstanding of concepts may lead to semantic errors which refer to the learner's incorrect understanding of the target language item or the language being studied. This error can be seen in the simplification of the target language item which is replaced with a shorter form such as in the mother tongue. This error is generally found in the case of translating the language studied into the mother tongue

2. METHOD

In the context of this research, a qualitative method was carried out to understand the causes and frequencies of students' language errors in the Deutsch III course, Department of German Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya.

The data were gathered from the portfolio of 30 students in 3 classes of Deutsch. They are then grouped and coded based to classify the errors occurs based on the theory.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the following sections, the morphosyntactic errors that have occurred in exams will be devoted. There were both female and male students among the test subjects. I have numbered the essays, and the digits that follow the incorrect sentences refer to the essay in which the error occurred. The errors are italicized in the incorrect sentences.

3.1 Morphological Errors

The irregular verbs which are called "strong verbs" represent only a small group in terms of numbers. The strong verbs are characterized by the fact that vowels are swapped from the verb stem during conjugation. In the present tense only the 2nd and 3rd person singular changes. The plural is conjugated like the regular verbs [2].

The verb *wissen* belongs to irregular verbs, but in the following sentence, the student considered this verb to be regular.

- (1) *Du **wiss**, dass ich um das Seminar beworben habe*, this sentence muss be *Du **weißt**, dass ich um das Seminar beworben habe*
- (2) *Er **lest** die Bücher nach der Arbeit*, this sentence muss be *Er **liest** die Bücher nach der Arbeit*
- (3) *Du **sprechst** nicht zu viel.*, this sentence should be *Du **sprichst** nicht zu viel*

Normally the past participle of regular verbs is formed by adding -t to the verb stem. If the stem ends in -d / -t, -et is appended. With the irregular verbs, this is done by adding -en and changing the stem vowel. The prefix is usually put in front of both verb groups. In all verbs that are derived and whose first term can be separated, *ge* stands between the prefix and the verb. While the verbs *get* and *invite* in the following sentences are irregular verbs in the participle, the students considered them to be regular verbs. Here are examples:

- (1) *Man **hat viel Geld bekommt***, this sentence muss be *Man **hat viel Geld bekommen***
- (2) *Leider **wird sie nicht eingeladen***, this sentence muss be *Leider **wird sie nicht eingeladen***
- (3) *Gestern Abend **ist er um 9 Uhr gekommen***, this sentence muss be *Gestern Abend **ist er um 9 Uhr gekommen***

Conversely, some students have used regular verbs irregularly in the following sentences, even though they are regular verbs:

- (1) *Letztes Jahr **habe ich meine Familie in Berlin besuchen***, this sentence must be *Letztes Jahr **habe ich meine Familie in Berlin besucht***.
- (2) *Wenn du mich **gestern angerufen, habe ich Suppe gekochen***, this sentence must be *Wenn du mich **gestern angerufen, habe ich Suppe gekocht***.

It is probably about the fact that in the sentence above the student considered the verb to be an irregular inseparable verb. Therefore he did not insert a *ge* between the prefix and the verb.

3.2 Syntactical Errors

3.2.1. Main clause and subordinate clause sequence

In the following sentence the student used a wrong sentence sequence in the causal clause, which was *des halb* introduced with the conjunctive adverb. The conjunctive adverb can take the place before the finite

verb alone. The verb must therefore be placed immediately after *deshalb*: *Ich möchte meine nächste Ferienzeit in Deutschland verbringen. Deshalb ich jetzt viel Geld verdiene.*

The student may have thought that *deshalb* is one of the sub-functions that introduce a subordinate clause. The verb “lives” was therefore placed last. The student has extended the word order rule of the subordinate clause to the main clause. This is called over-generalization, and it is an intralingual error. The right construction of the sentence is *Ich möchte meine nächste Ferienzeit in Deutschland verbringen. Deshalb verdiene ich jetzt viel Geld.*

Reversely, in the following sentence, the student probably counted *aber* among the sub-functions and used the word order of a subordinate clause. *Aber ich noch noch viel Zeit habe, fühle ich so froh.*

In the German, it is characteristic that the verbs in subordinate clauses must be in the last position of the sentence. This rule is probably problematic for Indonesian German students because there is no equivalent in their mother tongue.

The following sentence is a relative clause with a relative pronoun that requires the word sequence of a subordinate clause. According to the curriculum, the student has already learned this grammatical phenomenon and it is possible that he forgot. That's why he put the verb *kommen* in the 2nd position.

*Sie haben ihre Wünsche von die Freunden gebraucht, die **kommen** aus vielfältigen Städte.* The sentence should be constructed *Sie haben ihre Wünsche von die Freunden gebraucht, die aus vielfältigen Städte **kommen**.*

3.2.2. Verbrektionsfehler

By rule one understands the relationship between a word and a ruled part of a sentence dependent on it. This includes the rule of verbs, nouns, and adjectives. In this study, I will limit myself to verbal errors. The direction of the verb means its ability to determine the case of the verb. In this part, I will analyze the mistakes that are due to the rectification of verbs. The verbs that require accusative and dative cases are sometimes problematic for Indonesian German students because there is no equivalent in their mother tongue.

While *einladen* is a verb that requires accusative in the following sentence, and *erlauben* and *helfen* are verbs that require dative, learners have used them in reverse.

- (1) *Ich möchte **ihm** zu meiner Party einladen, aber*
- (2) *Alle Kollegen haben **mich** im Büro viel geholfen.*

- (3) *Meine Chefin erlaubt **mich** nicht, mein eigener Computer zu benutzen*

In sentence (1) the student wrote *ihm* instead of *ihn*, and in sentence (2) *mich* instead of *mir*, because he might have thought that *einladen* requires the dative case and *helfen* requires the accusative case. This explanation also applies to other sentences. The sentences should of course read as follows:

- (1) *Ich möchte **ihn** zu meiner Party einladen, aber*
- (2) *Alle Kollegen haben **mir** im Büro viel geholfen.*
- (3) *Meine Chefin erlaubt **mir** nicht, mein eigener Computer zu benutzen*

As mentioned above, the differences between the German and Indonesian sometimes lead to difficulties in the language learning process. This also includes verbs with prepositions. It is very difficult for the students to memorize them and that caused errors in some cases. Here are a few examples:

- (4) *Ich warte **für** deine Email.*
- (5) *Im nächsten Dezember werde ich **nach** USA fliegen.*
- (6) ***Am** letzten Januar war ich zusammen mit den Freunden in Hamburg.*

In sentence (4) the student used the preposition *für* instead of *auf*. There can be two possibilities in explaining this error. It could be because the student transferred “wait for” from English to German. In this case, it is called an interlingual error. Another possibility is that he just broke the rule. In sentence (5) the student chose a wrong preposition. While *die USA* is a plural word, he probably considered USA a proper noun with no article and therefore used the preposition *nach*. This is an intralingual over-generalized error.

The fact that the student has chosen a wrong preposition in a sentence (6) may be due to the fact that he was certainly thinking of the temporal preposition *an*, which is used for days, dates, times of day, and holidays. But for weeks, months, seasons, decades the preposition *im* is used. The student may have over-generalized the use of the preposition *an*. The three sentences mentioned should be formed as follows:

- (4) *Ich warte **auf** deine Email.*
- (5) *Im nächsten Dezember werde ich **in die** USA fliegen.*
- (6) ***Im** letzten Januar war ich zusammen mit den Freunden in Hamburg.*

In some other cases, a student added a preposition even though the verb did not require a preposition, as in the following sentence.

- (7) *Man muss **über** seine Nachbarn kennenlernen*

The verb *kennenlernen* only requires the accusative. The word-for-word translation can be responsible for this error, in which case it would be an interlingual error. But if the student has over-generalized the preposition without thinking of the native language, it is an intralingual mistake.

(8) *Ich habe ein Musikkurs teilgenommen*

In sentence (8), on the other hand, a student did not use a preposition, but directly used the accusative or nominative, although the verb Participate requires a preposition with dative. The sentences (7) and (8) should be formed as follows:

(7) *Man muss seine Nachbarn kennenlernen*

(8) *Ich habe an einem Musikkurs teilgenommen*

3.2.3. Other cases

Errors relating to the past tense, the future tense I, the future tense II, the gender verb, and the mode were not present in the examined corpus. On the one hand, the students mainly used the perfect form in the narration. On the other hand, some grammatical phenomena are still foreign to the students up to the end of level L1, such as the future tense II and the subjunctive I. Therefore they either use them with caution or not at all.

3.3 Result Interpretation

To get an overview of the examined errors, it must be clearly categorized and counted. The evaluation in percentages is shown most errors are syntactical errors (77%), which occurred twice as often as morphological errors. The syntactic errors include word order errors and section errors, which were analyzed as examples in the above part. It occurred twice as often as morphological errors. The syntactical errors include word order errors and section errors, which were analyzed as examples in the above part. Compared to the syntactic errors, the proportion of morphological errors was 33%. This mostly includes verb conjugation and perfect formation errors.

The result shows the number of verb conjugation and perfect formation errors in relation to all morphological errors. First of all, it should be noted that 67.5% of the morphological errors were verb conjugation errors. This proportion is quite large, significantly higher than other errors such as perfect formation errors. It is also noticeable that the verbal errors occurred almost twice as often as the word order errors. Verbal errors include mistakes with regard to the wrong case, verbs with wrong prepositions, etc.

4. CONCLUSION

In the context of this work, I concentrate on intralingual errors and the analysis of the morphosyntactic errors of the students. From a morphological point of view, it can be stated that the German students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya are still at a low level of competence in verb conjugation and perfect formation, despite the L1 level.

These results indicate the need for lectures to provide appropriate feedback and learning methods in order to increase student understanding of German. In the Deutsch III course, students should have been able to reach level L1 with an intermediate level of German language proficiency. However, the results of mistakes made by students seem to be of special note for the teacher. It would be better if the teacher did a pre-test and a post-test for students who took this course to be able to measure at what level the students' German language skills.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would also like to show our gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their so-called insights. We are also immensely grateful to the German Department for the support and comments on an earlier version of the manuscript, although any errors are our own and should not tarnish the reputations of these esteemed persons.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. C. Richards, T. S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002.
- [2] L. Götze, E. W. B. Hess-Lüttich, *Wahrig 4. Die Grammatik der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin: Bertelsmann Lexikon Institut, 1998.
- [3] H. C. Dulay, M. K. Burt, S. D. Krashen, *Language Two*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- [4] W. Griebhaber, *Spracherwerbprozesse in Erst- und Zweitsprache*. Eine Einführung. Duisburg: Universitätsverlag Rhein-Ruhr, 2010.
- [5] H. D. Brown, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. United States: Pearson Education, 2014.