

Interlanguage Grammar in English:

Produced by Indonesian students learning French

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Abstract—The society around the world is becoming more and more multilingual. This paper reports research on the interlanguage grammar (ILG) in English finite clauses produced by multilingual students who speak Indonesian (L1), French (L3), and English (L2). The paper will describe the variations and the causes of the emergence of the variation of ILG in English finite clauses structures. The research used the Minimalist Program, which is the syntactic theory of Generative Grammar to explain finite clause in English. To examine the variation of interlanguage grammar in the multilingual students, the research adopted a qualitative approach, employing grammaticality judgment technique with multiple choice test type. The participants consisted of 25 students who had reached A2 level in French. The results showed that variations in ILG have been caused by lack of knowledge or lack of mastery of functional category Infl(ection) with its relevant features as the head element in English finite clauses.

Keywords—English; second language acquisition; finite clauses; interlanguage grammar

I. INTRODUCTION

More and more people in the world are becoming multilingual, and Indonesian people are no exception. Indonesian students studying French are multilingual with Indonesian as L1, English as L2 and French as L3. Of the three languages above, L1 and L2 have similarities in word order in the declarative sentence, namely S (subject) A (dverb) V (erb) O (bject); meanwhile, L3 is composed of SVAO. Results of preliminary observations and test show that L2 declarative sentence indicates interlanguage grammar (ILG) with three variations, namely (a) reaching the native speaker level of L2, or (b) the presence of mistakes due to transfer from L1 grammar, or (c) the presence of mistakes due to transfer from L3 grammar as (1) below.

(1) *He sings certainly a song.

As the sentence (1) above show, the transfer from L1 grammar can be seen from the loss of the morpheme –s which

realizes the features of Number [-Plural] and Person [+ 3P]. Transfers from L3 can be seen in the word order of SVAO (subject, verb, adverb, object), which is not permitted in L2.

In Indonesian context, error Analysis theory is very dominant in explaining ILG in L2 [1-4]. Their research in general found that L2 ILG occurs due to transfer from L1 grammar and lack of L2 grammar knowledge. The argument based on results of their analysis on the grammatical performance (actual utterances) produced by subjects and the fact that their conclusions were descriptive using the theory of traditional grammar.

In contrast to the previous research, the present study uses the Minimalist Program from Generative Grammar to explain grammatical competencies of multilingual students studying French which caused the emergence of ILG in L2, such as declarative finite clause in (1) above which is called Verb Movement. In L3, Verb Movement takes place, creating an SVAO pattern. On the other hand, there is no Verb Movement in L1 and L2; in other words, both languages have SAVO pattern. It is expected that the present study will contribute to the existing research on ILG using a different theory.

The basis used to explain the grammatical competence of ILG L2 above is based on some relevant theories. First, the definition of ILG L2 adopted is the unconscious underlying linguistic system of L2 learners [5]. Second, the syntactic theory adopted is the Minimalist Program from Chomsky [6] which is also supported by Galbat and Maleki [7], Cole and Hermon [8], Radford [9], Leung [10], Kurniawan [11], Kurniawan and Davies [12], and White [5], Prevost [13] and Hamann [14]. They say that the Universal Grammar contains a set of principles and parameters. All principles are universal or invariant that consist of Computation for Human Language (CHL), the principle of Derivative Economics and Economic Representation, two levels of representation namely Phonetic Form and Logical Form. On the other hand, the parameters govern differences between languages.

In the context of parameters, declarative finite clauses in L1, L2 and L3 are considered to have functional category Inflection or Infl that becomes head in the Inflectional Phrase projection having structure abstract as in (2) below which also has Verb Phrase (VP). The abstract structure in (2) is adopted for L1, L2 and L3.

(2)	IP			
	DP	I'		
		I	VP	
		Adverb	V'	
		Phrase	V	DP
a. Dia	selalu	menengok	neneknya	
b. He	always	visits	his grandmother	
c. Il	visite; toujours	ti	sa grandmère	

Infl is formed by Tense and Agreement features. Tense feature is marked by [\pm Past]. The difference between L1 and L2 with L3 is determined by feature's strength [\pm Strong]. In L1 and L2, the Tense feature is [-Strong] so it doesn't trigger the Verb Movement as in (2a-b) but in L3 the verb moves and skips the adverb because Tense feature is [+ Strong] which triggers a Verb Movement like (2c) where the verb moves to jump over adverb. The Agreement features which consist of Number and Person features connecting between the subject and the verb to form subject verb agreement such as (I visit vs. He visits) where the suffix -s has a [-Plural, + 3P] feature. In L1, the morphemes that make up the subject Verb agreement do not exist. Conversely, in L3, the subject verb agreement is far more complete than L1 and L2 like (vous visitez 'you visit' vs. nous visitons 'we visit').

Finally, this paper adheres to the Rich Agreement Hypothesis from Leung [10], White [5], Bobaljik [15], Koeneman and Olaf [16], Koenaman [17], Sundquist [18], Tvica [19] which states that if morphology paradigm of verbs does not indicate the presence of overt morphology of Number and Person then Tense feature belonging to Infl is [-Strong] or weak so that there will be a Verb Movement (as in L1 and L2). On the other hand, Tense feature of L3 is [+ Strong] because the morphology of the paradigm of French is always marked by overt morphology of Number dan Person features for example suffix -ons in finite verb regards 'to watch' indicates the presence of Number [+ Plural] and Person [1 P]. This gives an assumption that French has Tense feature which is [+ Strong] that triggers Verb Movement as in (2c). The whole theory adopted above is intended to explain the L2 ILG faced by students.

II. METHOD

A. Design

This is preliminary research on the phenomenon of L2 ILG based on The Minimalist Program. For the purposes of this paper, the research design uses a qualitative approach by adhering to the descriptive method to extract L2 grammatical competencies that cause ILG in L2.

B. Participants

25 students took part in the grammaticality judgment test using multiple choice items. They have learned French language for 2 years (four semesters) with A2 level from French CECR. They have studied English since elementary school until semester 1 at the target university. So, they never formally studied L2 again since their university year. In addition, they use more: L2 for the sake of reading (receptive) than writing (productive).

C. Instrument

The research instrument used was a grammaticality judgment test using multiple choice type test consisting of 10 questions with three alternative answers comprising of one correct answer and two distractors, each of which reflected the transfer of L1 or L3.

D. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out after all the required data was collected through the data card and each data was compared with the L2 reference grammar. Then, each data is interpreted based on the adopted theory as presented in the introduction.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis in general show that there are variations in students' L2 ILG. Table 1 shows the variations in ILG in L2 in more detail. The data in Table 1 can be explained as follow: First, the students showed inconsistencies in mastering the formation of L2 finite clauses because they could reach the native speaker level but at the same time, they made mistakes caused by the transfer of L1 or L3 or from both languages in the same sentences. Second, the L2 grammatical competence that causes ILG is successfully explained by using the syntactic research program of the Minimalist Program.

TABLE I. FINITE CLAUSES INVOLVING ADVERB OF FREQUENCY

No.	Right Answer	Freq	Wrong Answer	Freq.
1	She rarely visits her mother	19 (76%)	She visits rarely her mother	6 (24%)
2	He never thinks of his father	25 (100%)		
3	They often fix the table	13 (52%)	They fix often the table	12 (48%)
4	The baby sometimes tries to catch cats	16 (64%)	The baby tries sometimes to catch cats The baby sometimes try to catch cats	2 (10%) 7 (28%)
5	We sometimes tell a story to our son	18 (72%)	We tell sometimes a story to our son	7 (28%)
6	The boys always fight	11 (44%)	The boys fight always The boys always fights	7 (28%) 7 (28%)

Table 1. cont.

7	John and Tim definitely win a contest	16 (64%)	John and Tim definitely wins a contest	9 (36%)
8	John surely has a bath	18 (72%)	John surely have a bath Bobby has surely a bath	6 (24%) 1 (4%)
9	John certainly sings a song on a scholl contest	24 (96)	John sing certainly a song on a scholl contest	1 (4%)
10	You certainly look yourself in the mirror	14 (56%)	You look certainly yourself in the mirror You certainly looks yourself in the mirror	7 (28%) 4 (16%)

Based on the correct and wrong sentences in Table 1 above, the inconsistencies of ILG in L2 occur. The majority of students have the knowledge that Tense feature of Infl is [-Strong] that does not trigger the Verb Movement. Second, their knowledge shows the ownership of morphemes that represent (overt morphology) features of Tense, Number and Person on the L2 verb. The relationship of both is in accordance with the Rich Agreement Hypothesis which confirms that the ownership of knowledge of morphemes that represent Tense features, Numbers and Persons on verbs means also functional categories Infl and Tense features that are [-Strong] have been mastered as in example (3) below.

(3) He never thinks of his father.

In (3), the SAVO word order is reached where the verb occupies position V because the Tense feature is [-Strong] which cannot trigger the Verb Movement from position V to position I (according to the structure in (2) in the introduction section). However, mastery of functional categories and their relevant features cannot be relied on entirely because even though sentence (3) is fully controlled by 25 students but in the same time 12 students also choose the wrong sentence as evidenced by the transfer of the grammatical competencies of L3 and of L1. Transfers from L3 can be seen in SVAO of (3) above.

(4) * They fix_i ofenti the table.

(5) *John surely have a bath

In (4), the SVAO arrangement has been shown by 12 students. This means that they do not have steady L2 grammatical competency because they have used the grammatical competencies of L3 and of L1. In L3, the functional category Infl has a Tense feature that is [+ Strong] so that it can trigger Verb movement where the verb moves from position V to, I skip the adverb as in (2c) in the introduction section. The grammatical competence of L1 has also been used by 6 students to choose (5) where the verb *to have* does not inflect for the features of Number and Person. In general, the data in Table 1 strongly supports inconsistency in

ILG in L2. Data also shows that transfers from L3 are much stronger than transfers from L1.

ILG also occurs in the finite clause involving adverbs of manner like definitely, surely and certainly as displayed in Table 2.

TABLE II. FINITE CLAUSE INVOLVING ADVERBS OF MANNER

No.	Right Answer	Freq.	Wrong Answer	Freq.
7	Tim and Kim definitely win a contest	16	Tim and Kim definitely wins a contest	9
8	Bobby surely has a bath	18	Bobby surely have a bath Bobby has surely a bath	6 1
9	Lindsay certainly sings a song on a school contest	24	Lindsay sing certainly a song on a school contest	1
10	You certainly look yourself in the mirror	14	You look certainly yourself in the mirror You certainly looks yourself in the mirror	7 4

Variations in ILG in (7-10) in Table 2 almost have similarities with the data in (1-6) in Table 1. First, the majority of students have the knowledge of the Tense feature of parameterized Infl [-Strong, -Interpretable] which does not trigger the Verb Movement and (b) that knowledge can be proven by the knowledge of the morphemes that represent (overt morphology) the Number and Person features that are not as complete as the French language so that they do not meet the Hypothesis Rich Agreement. Second, a small number of students make mistakes with two variations, namely (a) absent the verb form has the Number (Singular) and Person (3P) features such as * Bobby surely have a bath. (b) loss of suffix -s which represents the Number (Singular) and Person (3P) feature features such as * Lindsay, a song on a school contest or (c) the appearance of a morpheme that represents unnecessary Number and Person features such as suffix -s * Number (Singular) and Person (3P) features * You certainly look at yourself in the mirror and finally (c) the appearance of a Verb Movement that is never allowed in English for example * Bobby has surely a bath, * You look certainly yourself in the mirror.

Based on the above explanations, ILG on L2 can basically be explained by the Minimalist Program syntactic research program. All differences between languages only occur at the parameter level, namely mastery of functional categories and its relevant features that cause the Verb Movement in L3 or the absence of Verb Movement in L1 and L2. This means that Universal Grammar still regulates ILG in L2 carried out by students. Likewise, the Rich Agreement Hypothesis also successfully explains why ILG variations in L2 occur.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the context of ILG research in Indonesia which is dominated by theory of Error Analysis that has been done mostly only at the level of ILG description based on actual speech. In this paper, the Minimalist Program syntactic research program also successfully explores abstract grammatical competency of L2 that causes the emergence of ILG. This paper is expected to increase the amount of ILG research results in the Generative Grammar context which since the 2000s has only been filled by a why-question acquisition study from Kurniawan [11].

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