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The Students 'English Language Acquisition Stages

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Abstract

This research aims at identifying the English acquisition stages of the students in the one of the private University in Indonesia. It examined the morphological items, Regular Past Verb, Plural -s(standing alone), and 3rd person singular which are placed on Stage 2, Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the Processability Theory (PT) and also described the factors influenced the English acquired by the participants. This research used a quantitative methodology with four students as the participant. The researcher used structured interviews and observation to gain data. The data were analyzed with the respect of the English morphological acquisition of the Processability Theory (PT). The findings show that one student enabled to pass the Stage 2 of the PT English morphological acquisition. One student could reach 2 stages examined. This difference is influenced by factors such as overgeneralization, English input, learning strategies, interaction with foreigners.

Keywords: English language acquisition, English, Processability

Introduction

The Indonesian Teachers Association (IGI) proposed to the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia to make significant changes to the English subject, namely the completion of English lessons at the elementary school level and the elimination of this lesson at the next two levels (Yosep, 2019). These two things are clearly new phenomena in the education system in Indonesia. Most students in Indonesia have studied English for at least 6 years at the Junior High School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA) levels. Unfortunately, during that time, not many high school graduates were able to understand and use English actively both in speech and in writing.

One reason that is often cited is the lack of practice speaking in English. The interaction system between the students and the teachers is more focused on textbooks and problem solving in student workbooks. The demand for completing this material load is the reason teachers cannot develop learning materials that are attractive and easy to understand by the students. This is what causes the students not to be accustomed to using English actively in conversation.

A very real impact can be seen from the inability of students to understand and use English actively when they enter lectures. Although English at the tertiary level is not taught every semester, students' ability to understand and master English is highly demanded. Many reference sources for lecture materials are in English. English is also often a requirement when applying for jobs. By looking at the usefulness of English, it is clear that before entering the world of work, the students must have the ability to speak English actively.

The ability to master English cannot be obtained instantly and it stops at one level of education and in the habit of using it in daily life. This is because English is not a daily language in Indonesia. If it is not used actively, it can be predicted that the learners will become passive.

The activation of the habit of using English in Indonesia becomes stagnant if it is not practiced in a structured manner at every level of formal education. When viewed from the English learning process in Indonesia, students will be introduced to the Simple Present structure first. The result is that learners often use this structure even though in terms of structural accuracy, learners still often make mistakes. This error generally exists at the level of conformity of the subject of the sentence and the verb. This error is quite reasonable considering that in the process of language production, the learners are still influenced by their first language. However, this error has an impact on understanding the message conveyed.

This error can be minimalized when the learners master the English structure and use it actively. The habit of using English structure can be started by paying attention to the development of English language acquisition stages. By following the stages, the learners can learn English structure systematically and use it in an integrated manner.

Therefore, finding out the English language acquisition stages that mastered by the learners in Indonesia and also what factors that influence English language acquisition of the learners in Indonesia become very important to be discovered in order to help the lecturer to determine appropriate, systematic, integrated learning methods.

Method

This research used quantitative approach. This approach was chose in order to explain the position and level of the participants' English language acquisition. In this research, the data obtained by using structured and documented interviews with participants in this study. The documentation in the form of a video interview was then transcribed and confirmed with the participants. The researcher then coded the transcript results. Then the researchers identified and classified the stages of the participants' English language acquisition according to the Processability theory from the results of the interview transcript coding, calculating the total number of participants and the percentage of each stage of English language acquisition according to the Processability theory. Then, conducted a mapping of the participants' English language acquisition and analyzed the mapping and then drew conclusions.

Results and Discussion

A. The stages of English Language acquisition

This research involved four early semester students in the PBI study program. They were in the same semester. In this study, the researchers classified the data statements according to the context of the conversation. There were 3 stages used in the analysis of this research, namely stage 2 to analyze past –ed form, stage 3 to analyze plural –s, and stage 4 to analyze 3rd person singular. The results of each stage were displayed as a percentage of the correct words/sentences. The following is a description of the results of this research.

1. The Stages of English Language Acquisition

Table 1. The Stages of English Language Acquisition

Participant	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
S1	1/5 20%	16/28 57%	1/17 5.9%
S2	1 1%	18/26 69%	2/20 10%
S3	12/12 100%	44/58 75.4%	25/32 78.1
S4	44/51 86.3%	81/87 93%	59/79 70.1%

From the table above, it could be seen that all participants had the percentage that was quite high in stage 3. Even though, there was quite significant difference on stage 2. There were two respondents who had a high percentage in stage 2, but the other 2 respondents were the opposite. The same thing happened on stage 4. The 2 respondents, S1 and S2, could be said that they did not have a minimum percentage of English language acquisition in Processability theory. Although, the percentage of stage 3 got a fairly high number compared to the other two stages. Whereas for two respondents, S3 and S4, S3 could reach stage 2 and S4 could reach stage 3 and stage 2. The two participants had a percentage that could be said to exceed the minimum percentage of language acquisition in Processability theory.

2. The Influence Factors of English Language Acquisition

The results in this research indicated that in general, it could be said that the majority of respondents get fairly large results on the same stage, namely on the stage 3. Although, in 2 respondents there was 1 respondent who could produce words on the stage 2 with very good results. Also, 1 participant who could have a minimum amount of word mastery on two stages at once. This, according to interlanguage theory, could be caused by several things, including overgeneralization, English input, and interaction with foreigners and learning strategies.

a. Overgeneralization

This overgeneralization occurs when language learners generalize different language structures into the same structure. The participants in this research had the same tendency when producing several morphological structures. The following were examples of generalizations made by S2.

S2: *I have three dogs.*

I: *Okay, Can you tell us about your dogs?*

S2: *I have two male dogs and one female dogs.*

My female dogs also have a puppies.

The word **dogs** in English was a type of noun that does not require the -s suffix at the end of the word. The same went for the word puppies. The word puppies did not require the -s suffix at the end of the word like dog does. The addition of -s to both words was possible because in general, the affix -s is added to nouns to indicate plurality.

This overgeneralization occurred in almost all participants. As in S3 and S4.

S3: *actually i dont have close friend because i live in dormitory.*

Actually it is high seminary. So i have many brother here.

The word **brother** in the sentence above was a noun that requires the affix -s at the end of the word to show plurality, but S3 did not add the -s affix.

This was the case with S4, although it had quite a lot of numbers on the stage 3, it still overgeneralized.

S4: *Okay. So the first picture I can, I can see a Brown dogs here, but then, then in the second picture, there is a white dogs. They are, and then they'll. And then I see.*

The word **dogs** above was an overgeneralization, the noun in the quote was a singular noun that did not need an s-affix at the end of the word. However, S4 added the affix -s at the end of the words he said, even repeated it back in the next sentence by saying a white dogs.

b. English Input

The participants in this research had different English input. For two participants the percentage was not sufficient to meet the minimum amount of English Language Acquisition due to the minimal input they got. Meanwhile, the two participants who had a percentage above the minimum number of mastery of English, had sufficiently good input for their English Language Acquisition.

It could be said that the English input obtained by the first two participants was quite minimal. As a second language, English was not actively used in daily communication even when they were with their friends on campus. English was only obtained when doing lectures or communicating on a limited basis with lecturers. Meanwhile, the next two participants had sufficient input to help their English skills. In S3, he was a student who lives in a dormitory and had friends with whom to discuss. This togetherness made them work together and helped each other in doing tasks. This collaboration allowed them to help each other learn English. This then had a positive impact on their English language skills. This could be seen in the following S3 statement.

S3: *If what I don't understand about the material or about what is saying by teachers, I will ask to my brothers. So I will ask to L or A or N.*

On S4, he had good English input because he had worked in an environment that required English communication, so he was used to speaking in English. S4 stated that,

S4: *OK, so basically my company, work together with a company from Belgium and they took two the girls because I'm a girl, so I have to take the girls to stay at my house for twenty four hours to do the tour. And usually I give them a culinary trip or village trip and some. And what else. Yeah, just more or less. I explain how the village works and I introduce them the foods that the traditional foods that Indonesian have and what's the activity that in a family do every for everyday life, and that's all.*

As was well known that the environment had a very significant influence on the level of language skills. Thus, the environment that supported the language learning process was one of the determining factors in language acquisition. (Dulay, 1982) stated that the influence of environmental conditions around the learners had an effect on the success of the learners' language acquisition. This also happened to the participants of this study. The

participants who had an environment that supported the language learning process tended to have a better percentage number than those who didn't.

a. Learning Strategies

The different learning strategies of the participants also led to different results on their language acquisition skills. One of the learning strategies carried out by the participants here was by watching television programs in English. English language visuals had no doubt played a role in supporting English language learning for the participants. S1, for example, did this through a television drama series. He chose to watch drama series, because of his good cinematography factor. From there he could then get language input at the same time.

S1: *Of course I do.*

But i love the cinematography that's my first reason why I watch that Kdrama.

The same strategy was carried out by S4. He admitted that he watched a lot of foreign language television programs, watched films and drama series.

S4: *I like to watch movie, but not Indonesian movie because that's really useless. So I mostly watch, I mostly watch German, German, uh, TV SHOWs, or maybe like from that like dark series or? Yeah, many of them, I watch many, a lot of movie and a lot of series.*

Meanwhile, another learning strategy was carried out by S3. He chose to discuss with his friends when doing assignments, especially when he encountered difficulties. This could be seen in the following S3 statement.

S3: *If what I don't understand about the material or about what is saying by teachers, I will ask to my brothers because we are four that studying about English. So I will ask to L or A or N.*

He stated that he would ask his friends who were in the same dormitory if they had difficulty understanding the material presented by his teacher. Furthermore, he stated that if he and his friends took the same course, they would always choose to have a discussion in doing the assignments they got.

S3: *Actually, every homeworks if we have the same lecture. We will discuss it together.*

b. Interactions with foreigners

Participants in this study also had different experiences in relation to the process of interacting with foreigners. Some of the participants had very little experience of interacting with native English speakers or English speakers. Meanwhile, other participants had the opposite experience. He was in an environment that was very connected with foreigners. In this was a person who spoke using English in everyday communication.

For the participants who had a background of little interaction with foreigners, either used English in daily communication or English as their main language, interaction with foreigners only occurred when there was a student exchange program. Even then, only when these foreigners entered the class they were in. In other words, their attitude tended to be passive. The rest, they would interact when required to find and communicate because of college assignments. Although, in fact they were very happy to interact with these foreigners.

S2 : *Because I love when she speaks. I can understand it well.*

And also when her teach. I can understand it well

The statement above confirmed, that in fact they liked to interact with people using English. They could also understand the conversations that were being held with other people using English. However, communication only occurred when the participants were required to interact with these people, so it could be said that the interaction that occurred was communication that was not carried out naturally.

The opposite happened to S4 which had a percentage above the minimum number of English Language Acquisition according to Processability theory.

S4: *" What else? I worked I worked at the XX for about almost three years as a tour guide and. I made friends with a lot of people from around the world. That's why I be able to speak English better than my friends. I can say I don't know. And I love I love travel. I love meeting people. I love to talk to new people. And I love I love cooking."*

From the above statement, S4 stated that he had worked for some time in a job that required him to use English. The work he did provided opportunities to interact with foreigners using English in his daily life. From this job, he then had many friends who were native English speakers and used English for daily communication. This was shown in the following statement.

R4 : Oh, it's always different dependent. It's always with, it's obviously with a friend before it was my, with my Australian friends. I was at the vacations with my friends from Swiss. He came here for one month. We go, we go to Bromo. We go to, we went, we went to Bromo. We went to, we went to Bali. We went to, uh, I don't really even remember where we went most of the time, because like, it's all like a month terrible. So, yeah, it's basically like before I met my Australian friend, I travel a lot with him.

With the many interactions he had had, it was not surprising that he had better English skills compared to other participants in this study.

The more language input a person gets, the better one's language skills will be. (Ellis, 2002) stated the importance of language input in the learning process by using the target language more often. Furthermore, according to Ellis, the more often you meet the language, the easier it is for students to recognize or produce it. (Mackey, 1999) also stated the same thing that active participation in interactions encourages the grammatical development of a person's language, so he emphasizes the importance of involving students for participation and interaction using that language.

Conclusion

The results obtained in this research indicated that each participant had different results in the stages English Language Acquisition according to the processability theory. Existing data showed that two out of four participants in this study did not meet the criteria for English Language Acquisition. Even though the two participants got a sufficient percentage on the stage 3. However, this percentage was not sufficient to enter the minimum number of English Language Acquisition. Meanwhile, the other two participants indicated that they had a percentage above the minimum number of English Language Acquisition. This difference was influenced by factors such as overgeneralization, English input, learning strategies, and interaction with foreigners.

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