



## Permeability of Native and Target Language to International Learners' Descriptive Composition: A Case Study

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Saswati, R. & Puspitasari, I. (2025). Permeability of Native and Target Language to International Learners' Descriptive Composition: A Case Study. *Journal of English Language and literature*, 10(1), 197-204. doi: 10.37110/jell.v10i1.282

Received: 12-01-2025

Accepted: 12-02-2025

Published: 02-03-2025

**Abstract:** This study is to investigate the interlanguage errors that the learners committed in their Indonesian descriptive paragraphs. It does not only shed light on the categories of interlanguage errors but also the sources of the interlanguage errors found in learners' writing. The research method employed for this study is a descriptive qualitative method that applies the theories of error taxonomy from Dulay & Burt (1982) and Brown (2007). The participants of this study are international students learning Indonesian in Basic Indonesian class. The data are taken from their descriptive writing. The result reveals that the most common category of error the students committed is the spelling and diction used. The source of errors mostly found is interference from English since they are still learning English..

**Keywords:** *Interlanguage, categories of Errors, sources of errors, descriptive composition*

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the productive skills that learners need to master besides speaking. Writing for learners is a challenging task since there are conventions learners need to consider to write well. Writing is recognized as the most complex skill to be mastered by learners (Harmer, 2001; Al-Shujairi & Tan, 2017). Aside from differences in grammar and vocabulary, the problem with the letter, word, and text formation, as demonstrated by handwriting, spelling, layout, and punctuation are aspects that the learners need to consider when writing. One type of writing is composition. The learners must have ideas to be put together about a subject. They need to compose the ideas. It can consist of some sentences telling about one subject (Nurdquist, 2010).

When writing, EFL learners create a new system of language that is not similar to either their native language or their target language. It

is the interlanguage in which is term introduced by Selinker (1972). The interlanguage is produced by learners who are in the process of learning the target language. The interlanguage (IL, henceforth) has characteristics which are: (1) It has its own system; (2) It is dynamic; (3) It is varied regarding forms produced; (4) It is the product of learning strategies employed by the learners; (5) It has a tendency to be fossilized; (6) It is possible to be influenced by the learners' native language and target language. It is termed as permeability. the susceptibility of interlanguages to infiltration by first language and target language rules or forms. (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Saville-Troike, 2012; Benati, 2018; Fauziati, 2017).

This study adopts the method called error analysis to analyze the IL errors made by the learners. Error analysis is the method for analyzing the deficiencies in learner errors in speech or writing (Brown, 2007; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Keshavarz, 2019). The result of

the error analysis is beneficial for teachers, learners, and syllabus makers to get the data for deciding whether the remedial material or classes are planned. In conducting error analysis, several procedural steps are required.

### **Error analysis**

According to Dulay et al. (1982), error analysis is the method for analyzing the deficiencies in learner errors in speech or writing. Errors occur when the learner changes the surface structure in a particular systematic manner. Thus, regardless of its form or type, the error represents the failure at the level of target language production. Furthermore, Brown (2007) defines error analysis as the process of observing, analyzing, and categorizing deviations from the rules of the second language and revealing the systems operated by the learner.

Keshavarz (2019) states that error analysis attempts to account for learner performance in terms of the cognitive process learners use in reorganizing input from the target language. The evidence provided by learners' errors contributes significantly to understand the underlying processes of second language acquisition, which is a primary focus of error analysis. It studies the unacceptable forms produced by second or foreign language learners. Conducting an error analysis can provide several advantages. According to Khan and Khan (2016), error analysis can help teachers identify the difficult areas of English subjects in which students find difficulties in learning a language. It can also help teachers, learners, and syllabus designers discover beneficial remedial material for correcting errors.

It can be inferred that error analysis is a method of identifying the errors made by the students. It is because, in the learning process, students will make errors while learning. These errors can have an impact on the meaning of a sentence. In conducting error analysis, several procedural steps are required. Corder in Limengka and Kuntjara (2013) distinguishes five steps in conducting error analysis.

### **Collect the sample of learner language**

The researcher must gather a sample of learner language to provide data for the error analysis. The researcher can control the data at this point by narrowly specifying the samples that the researcher intends to collect.

### **Identify the errors**

Errors are identified by comparing learners' sentences to native speakers' sentences in the same context. The researcher can determine which parts of the students' sentences are different from the reconstructed version. Additionally, Tarone and Swlerzbin (2010) state that in identify the errors, we must prepare a reconstruction of the sample that would have been produced by the learner's NS counterpart under similar circumstances. For example, if the learner is a teenager speaking in a particular social situation, their counterpart is an NS teenager speaking in the same situation. Sometimes the researcher may need to make two or three possible reconstructions because we do not know the learner's intended meaning, and we have to guess. When it happens, indeterminacy is a basic characteristic of learner language. Then compare the learner's production to the reconstructions, identifying which part of each learner utterance differs from the reconstructed versions.

### **Describe the errors**

The contrasts between learner's sentences and native speakers' sentences are frequently described using either linguistic taxonomy or surface structure taxonomy.

### **Explain the errors**

Explaining errors involves determining their sources in order to account for why the errors occurred. Learners make errors as a result of difficulties in accessing their second language knowledge in communication. Another expert states the something. Tarone and Swierzbin (2009) stated that the researcher has to make a decision about any differences that our reconstruction has identified. The researcher has to decide if it is an error (systematic) or a mistake (a one-time slip like one that an NS might make). Since the researcher only has a few language samples, it will be hard to be sure, but the researcher has to see if they can find evidence for one or the other. If the researcher decide it is an error, identify possible causes for the error, such as native language (NL) transfer, intralingual error, induced error, communication strategy, and so on. Be open to the possibility that a single error may have more than one cause.

### **Evaluate the errors.**

Error evaluation is a step that comes after



error analysis. It involves determining the gravity of various errors in order to decide which ones should receive instruction.

### **Types of Error in Surface Strategy**

#### **Taxonomy**

Analyzing errors from a surface strategy perspective reveals many processes that underlie learners' reconstruction of the new language. It also involves awareness of the learners' errors are based on logic. Surface strategy taxonomy consists of four elements: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (Dulay et al., 1982).

#### ***Omission***

The absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance is characterized as an omission error. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are the morphemes that carry the majority of a sentence's referential meaning. Grammar morphemes are omitted far more frequently than content words by learners.

#### ***Addition***

The error of addition is an error to add an item that should not exist in a sentence. This type of error is contradictory to the previous one. They are characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance.

#### ***Misformation***

The use of the incorrect form of a morpheme or structure is characterized as error misformation. In misformation errors, the learner provides something that is incorrect. In the case of omission errors, the item is not provided at all.

#### ***Misordering***

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance.

### **The Source of Error**

Brown (2007) defined the source of error become four categories which are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies.

#### ***Interlingual transfer***

It is defined as the negative influence of the first language. Before the second language system is familiar, the learner's native language is the only linguistic system from which to draw.

#### ***Intralingual transfer***

It is defined as the negative transfer within the target language. A major factor in second language learning is the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language. The early stages of language learning are distinguished by the predominance of interference or interlingual transfer. Once learners have begun to acquire part of the new system, more intralingual transfer-generalization within the target language is manifested. In other words, it is the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language.

#### ***Context of learning***

Context refers, for example, to the classroom with its teacher and its material in the case of school learning or the social situation in the case of untutored second language learning. In a classroom context, the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to form incorrect hypotheses about the language. Students frequently make errors as a result of a teacher's misleading, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook or because of a pattern that was rotely memorized in a drill but improperly contextual. It pertains to the employment of verbal or nonverbal mechanisms of the productive communication of information. It is related to the learning style. Learners use production strategies to improve the effectiveness of their messages. However, these techniques can occasionally become a source of error.

The identification is to use the source of errors borrowed from Brown (2007). It comprises 4 categories; however, this study employs only two categories, which are interlingual and intralingual transfer. The former is an interlingual transfer, which is defined as the negative influence of the first language. The learner's native language is the only linguistic system from which to draw before the second language system is familiar. The second is intralingual transfer is defined as the negative transfer within the target language. A major factor in second language learning is the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language. The early stages of language learning have distinguished the interference or interlingual transfer. When learners acquire part of the new system, more intralingual transfer-generalization within the target language is found. In other words, it is the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language. Moreover, it is stated that beginning

learners are commonly familiar merely with their NL system. Therefore, many learner errors in this stage are due to the influence from their NL system.

A study conducted error analysis on sentences by Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn (2017). It analyzes written English sentences produced by Thai university students. This study found that punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragments were the most frequently committed errors. The primary sources of error were discovered to be interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, and students' carelessness. Phuket and Othman (2015) analyze EFL students' errors in writing a narrative essay. They found that the most common errors were translated Thai words, word choice, verb tense, prepositions, and commas. There were two types of errors, which are interlingual and intralingual. The most common source of errors was discovered to be interlingual or native language interference. Some other studies are summarized are conducted by Choroleeva (2009) conducted a study on Bulgarian NL are influenced their English writing at the level of phonology, orthography, vocabulary and grammar. Solano et al. (2014) found out that the influence of Spanish on the Ecuadorian students' English writing. The results reveal that there were NL interference (verb tenses, pronouns, prepositions, articles, and word order). Qaid (2011) found out that intralingual errors were categorized into six types of errors (omission as the dominant error, addition, fragment, word choice, and simplification). Kaweera's (2013) found that the interlingual interference includes lexical, syntactic, and discourse interference and seven intralingual interference. Saswati and Puspitasari (2023) investigating the interlanguage grammar errors of the international learners learning Indonesian. The learners attending basic Indonesian class committing errors in their descriptive paragraphs. Intralingual errors found in all types, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Misformation is mostly committed by learners in their IL grammar errors in their descriptive paragraphs. Sources of errors are from interlingual transfer. The learners translate from their native language into Indonesian.

The previous studies discuss the intralingual and interlingual transfer from NL and TL. The types of errors committed by the learners are

described. The research gap drawn is this current study is the influence of NL and TL to the International learners's Indonesian descriptive composition. The NL is not only Japanese. The influences or permeability comes from the language they learn. Those are Japanese and English. Additionally, this current research described the causes of the permeability seen from the context of learning that is the learning strategies employed by the learners.

This study is to shed lights on one of the interlanguage features which is permeability. It is defined as the susceptibility of interlanguages to infiltration by first language and target language rules or forms. It is to provide evidences by describing the types and the native and the learners' IL production; to elaborate the types of TL influence on the learners' IL production; and to elaborate the causes of the influences. The data are the learners' descriptive composition, each around 20-30 words, written by International learners learning Indonesian in Japan. They attended the Indonesian basic class. Elicited data through free descriptive composition with topics: about myself, about a friend , my daily activities, my favourite food..

## **METHOD**

This study employing a qualitative research of SLA in a classroom context or instructed SLA (Ellis, 2006). The objectives of the current research to elaborate the types of NL influence on the students' IL production; to elaborate the types of TL influence on the students' IL production; to elaborate NL and TL influence on the students' IL production; and to elaborate the causes of the influences. The data are the learners' descriptive composition, each around 20-30 words, written by International learners learning Indonesian in Japan. They attended the Indonesian basic class. Elicited data through free descriptive composition with topics: about myself, about a friend , my daily activities, my favourite food.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This part is divided into intralingual transfer and interlingual category in which is described under what category of error the learners commit.

### **Intralingual Transfer: Grammatical and Lexical Items**

It is found that the learner committed an error on grammar under the category of mistransformation. The learner uses the word 'pakai' as a verb instead of *memakai* as it reveals in (1-4).

1. *Saya pakai kaus warna merah muda. Saya pakai celana pendek warna biru tua. Saya pakai kaus kaki warna ungu muda.*
2. *Dia pakai kacamata warna merah. Dia pakai celana pendek warna biru tua.*
3. *Dia pakai kaus warna biru muda.*
4. *Hari ini saya pakai T-shirt warna hitam.*

The other category is misordering in which the learner committed an error on grammar by making incorrect placement of the words. It is found in 'Diminum ini' which should be 'Ini diminum' in (5).

5. *Diminum ini saat musim dingin atau badan tidak sehat.*

The lexical transfer are characterized Indonesian pronunciation, diction and spelling. The data following reveal the evidences. The learner committed an addition error since she/he added the letter 'r' in *berrambut* in (6). The omission of the letter 'h' in *liat* in (7), addition of the letter 'h' in *kuching* in (9), mistransformation in '*hijaw*' in (11), *sapatu* in (10), *sekerang* in (8). The use of the word *tinggi* for *rambut* is an mistransformation error since Indonesian does not use modifier '*tinggi*' to explain the noun '*rambut*'.

6. *Dia berrambut hitam.*
7. *Saya liat.*
8. *Sekerang saya makan malam.*
9. *Saya suka Kuching.*
10. *Saya pakai sapatu putih.*
11. *Saya pakai kaus berwarna hijaw.*
12. *Rambut dia tinggi*

### Interlingual transfer: Grammatical and Lexical Items

The evidences reveal that the learners are influenced by English structures to construct Noun phrase. The structure is composed by noun proceeded by modifier that is adjective or adverb. However, Indonesian noun phrase is composed by modifier proceeded the noun. It is like '*makanan pedas*'. The data show that the learners are influenced by English when writing the noun phrases. They wrote, *Jepang drama, malam makan, Jepang makanan, ayah umur saya, itu ransel* instead of *drama Jepang, makan malam, makanan Jepang, ransel itu, umur ayah*

*saya*. As it is stated in (13-19) which are categorized into misordering.

13. *Ini Jepang drama.*
14. *Saya malam makan.*
15. *Ini Jepang makanan.*
16. *Ayah umur saya 40 tahun.*
17. *Itu ransel*

The interlingual lexical transfer is found in the following list. The influence is from English. The learners still keep the spelling in English such as the word *jeans* in (18), *restaurant* in (19), *campus* in (20). The word *Jepan* is influenced by the learner's native language, Japan as in (21). The category of error is mistransformation since it is not Indonesian.

18. *Saya pakai celana jeans warna hitam.*
19. *Dia bekerja di restaurant.*
20. *Ini campus saya.*
21. *Saya dari Jepan*

### Context of learning

The context of learning is related to the learning strategies the learners apply when writing. The learners just borrow the words from English since they lack of knowledge in Indonesian words. They should look up the words in Indonesian dictionary to assist them to translate. They wrote down the Indonesian words based on what they hear. They employ the overgeneralization that what they hear is similar to the written words. The grammar is influenced by Japanese and English pattern.

### Discussion

The erroneous words, phrases and sentences are found in learners' descriptive composition. The permeability is from their native language, Japanese and English. It is categorized as intralingual and interlingual transfer. The learners' learning strategies contribute the occurrence of the errors. The learners employ overgeneralization, borrow the words from Japanese, their native language and English, and simplify that the oral language is similar in written language. The last results the wrong spelling. The learning strategies employed contribute to the permeability and result errors. As it is stated by Fauziati (2017) that the employment of the strategies becomes the major factor the occurrence of the erroneous sentences in learners' writing. She elaborates that the sources of errors are the influence of the NL and

TL (Indonesian and English). This research reveals different evidences that the sources of errors are the permeability of the learners' native language, Japanese, and English since they are international learners. The factor contributing to NL influence is the students' limited knowledge of the Indonesian as the TL to express ideas in Indonesian. One of the factors contributing to the NL influence → the students' mastery of their native language for this system provided the resources of being borrowed to express the TL. Another actor is the influence of English since at the same time the international learners learning English as their subject in school.

### CONCLUSION

The learners committed erroneous words and sentences when writing their descriptive composition. The intralingual grammatical and lexical errors are found under all the types of the errors (addition, omission, misordering and misformation). The permeability is from the target language, Indonesian as the intralingual error. The interlingual grammatical and lexical errors are found. The permeability is from Japanese, English. The source is from their native language, Japanese and English. The other International learners who are not Japanese commit the errors not based on their native. They just borrow the words from their native language words. It is food vocabulary which is not considered an error. Their erroneous parts come from English and Japanese since they have learned English and Japanese; therefore, the permeability of the two languages are found in their writing

### Acknowledgement

The authors extend their deepest gratitude to the teachers and institution who have allowed the authors to take the data. Moreover, the authors feel thankful to the university where the authors work to give enough time to finish writing this article.

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