

# THE INTERFERENCE MANIFESTATION THROUGH INTERLANGUAGE : A STUDY ON A MULTILINGUAL CHILD'S VERBAL PERFORMANCES<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract: Interference is often seen as an intrusion from the native language when a language learner is trying to perform the target language. In fact, it is more a part of the process of acquiring the target language which naturally happens before a language learner successfully achieves the target language proficiency. As a process rather than a final product of learning language, it is hoped that it is not seen as a permanent incorrectness. The interference is manifested as an interlanguage. The interlanguage itself can be divided into 4 categories, namely overgeneralization, simplification, hypercorrection and avoidance. This research is trying to see the interference manifestation of a multilingual child.*

**Key words:** *interference, interlanguage, multilingual*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, English becomes more and more important. It happens because in the globalization era where there seems to be no border among nations, English is seen as one of the languages which can answer the challenge of globalization. This situation, then, is captured as a big chance to build educational institutions which use and offer English as the language of instruction. As a result, new international schools appear and grow like the mushrooms in the rainy season. These phenomena are often seen in Indonesia in the last five years.

However, the effort of sending children into the international schools actually relates with the passion of the parents to make their children have multilingual ability. Until today, for most Indonesian children, English is their foreign language. When the parents have their commitment to put their children in the international school, actually they also have to make their own commitment towards the children's foreign language development by providing supportive environment to the children.

This study, however, examines an extraordinary Indonesian child whose English is as a second language. There is in fact, some factors that need to be given focus in the second language acquisition's process. One of the factors is the phenomenon that the children may produce some sorts of errors before they are able to achieve the second language proficiency. This error is defined as Interference. Haugen (1953) as cited by Dulay (1982:100) says that interference happens because of the passion of the language learners to enrich their language. This indirectly shows that the errors do not appear because of the influence of the learners' native language. Thus the interference which happens on the middle of the process of acquiring the target language is also not only a matter of transfer, but rather a kind of interlanguage. According to Dulay (1982:102),

interlanguage is a process which has to be passed by the language learners in the process of acquiring the target language.

As a process which can not be avoided when the language learners try to acquire the new language, interlanguage must be seen not as a final product. The final product itself, as the child teaching is absolutely different from the adult teaching, still depends on how the parents provide supportive environment to their children language development. This paper highlights the interference manifestation through the interlanguage of a multilingual child's verbal performances. In addition to speaking English and Indonesian, the child in this study also speaks German . Because this study uses only one multilingual child, it can not be generalized. The interlanguage process on a child may vary from one child to another child.

## **INTERLANGUAGE ERRORS**

Grosjean (1999:286) defines the interlanguage as the deviation which occurs if one of the languages is mastered only to a certain level of proficiency. He also states that as the manifestation of the interference, interlanguage errors may include:

### **A. Overgeneralization**

Language learners in both first and second language acquisition have been observed to produce errors like 'comed' which can be explained as extensions of some general rules to items not covered by this rule in the target language which is according to Ellis (1985:301) can be referred as overgeneralization. There are two types of overgeneralization. One of them is talking about the irregularity of the verbs and nouns. Meanwhile, the other one talks about the negator. The subject of this study did not do all of the three overgeneralization types:

### 1. **Irregular Noun (Pluralisation)**

Here is one of the dialogue which is recorded between the writer and the subject:

Calla: Look the child is running! (Pointing at the drawing book. Actually there are two children on the picture)

Agung: Wow, they are looked so fast.

Calla: Like horse ya?

Agung: Yes

#### **Conversation 1: Overgeneralization**

In the dialogue above, the subject did not use the correct form of the noun 'child'. The noun 'child' is categorized as irregular noun whose plural form is 'children'. At first, the writer assumes that the subject has overgeneralized it because the irregular noun is not treated as the way it is. Then the writer realizes that the subject does not try to pluralize the word 'child' by adding it with 's'. Therefore, the writer assumes that the subject does not do overgeneralization. The error appears because the subject has not mastered the plural form.

### 2. **Irregular Verb**

English applies the regular and irregular categories on the usage of not only their nouns, but also their verbs. The application of this rule is almost similar with the nouns. The regular verbs should be added with certain suffix, such as suffix -ed, while the irregular verbs, as its counterpart, can not be added with certain suffix.

Actually, the irregular verbs do not only appear in the past tense form, but they can also appear in other tenses, such as present or present perfect tense forms. Here is the example which is done by the subject:

Agung: This is the rabbit (pointing at the drawing picture). What are their names?

Calla: Choco, the white one.

Agung: And the other one?

Calla: I don't know.

Agung: Papaya? (One of the name of Calla's rabbit)

Calla: No, Papaya have died.

### **Conversation 2: Overgeneralization**

As a verb which belongs to the irregular verb category, the verb 'have' should be changed into 'has' when it functions as a present tense verb and has the third singular person as its subject.

In fact, the common grammatical rule of the simple present tense states that the changing of the verbs in this tense may vary. It depends on the subject. On the one hand, when the verb has a third singular person as its subject, it demands the changing of the verb. It should be added with the suffix *-s* or *-es*. On the other hand, when it is not a third singular person who becomes the subject, it does not need any change on the verb because it requires the infinitive verbs. However, the common rule can not be applied on to the verbs which are considered as irregular verb. The verb 'have' is one of them. As the irregular verb, the word 'have' can not be added with suffix *-s*. It can not be changed into 'haves'. In this study, the subject did not change the verb into 'haves', therefore, it can be assumed that the subject does not do overgeneralization process. Again, the error is mostly caused by the subject's immature English structure.

### **3. Negative Sentence**

There are two negators of the negative sentence. Both of the negators have the same function that is to change the positive

sentence into the negative one. The negators are the words 'no' and 'not'. The use of the negator depends on the verb or the noun which stands beside the negator. Related with this study, the subject only performed a few negative sentences. None of them was overgeneralized. The use of the negator 'no' or 'not' can be applied appropriately while the data are gathered. The subject was able to put the negator 'no' beside the noun, and the negator 'not' beside the verb.

Calla: (Drawing a flying bird)

Agung: Oh? A chicken?

Calla: A bird

Agung: Butterfly.

Calla: No.. A bird..

Agung: So you need a tail.

Calla: Not.. Not need a tail..

Agung: (Drawing a bird's tail) This looks good.

### **Conversation 3:**

#### **The negative sentence**

The use of the negator on the dialogue of the Conversation 5 is still imperfect because the negator should be equipped with the word 'do' to become 'do not', but the subject has been able to use the negator appropriately. Ellis (1985:172) gives an example of the overgeneralization on the negative sentence with 'No like beer' in which the negative maker 'No' is overgeneralized as the negator of verb as well as noun. However, the example which is taken from Ellis above is not found on this study. Although, it is not complete yet, the subject has not done overgeneralization in the process of producing the negative sentences.

## **B. Simplification**

Simplification is an action which is done in order to simplify the word or sentence which is produced by the second language learners

in the process of learning a new language as defined by Spolsky (1999:286). There are two manifestations of simplification processes.

On the one side, it appears as the effort of deleting one of the semantic elements. Whereas, on the other side, simplification appears in the form of deleting the syntactical part of the sentence. Both of them are done by the subject. The subject did the semantic simplification as it is shown in the dialogue below.

Agung: Five minutes again, I will go home because you have to sleep.

Calla: Why five minute?

Agung: Because I if do not go home, you will not sleep?

Calla: Play all the time.

Agung: Yeah you will.

**Conversation 4:**  
Semantic simplification

In the dialogue of the Conversation 4 above, the subject semantically simplified the sentence by reducing or deleting the subject of the sentence. The full presentation of the sentence might be 'I will play all the time with you' rather than only 'Play all the time' as it has been shown on the dialogue. Yet, the subject of this study deleted the word 'I will' and 'With you'.

### **C. Avoidation**

Learners are likely to avoid structure they find difficult. One cause of this difficulty may be a lack of correspondence between the target language and mother tongue structures.

### **D. Hypercorrection**

Hypercorrection appears because of the careful speech which is done by the language learners. The effort of trying to use the language well may cause a certain effect on its performers. They will try to be

very careful in order not to make any mistakes. Therefore, it will give an impact on the quantity of the target language that the learners may produce. The learners may think twice or may be three times before they finally produce it. As a result, the quantity of the language that they perform will also be decreased because they are afraid of making mistake. They always try to check the languages which have been produced and make a self correction on it.

## OVERALL RESULT

Entirely, the result of the study can be seen on the following table:

No.	Interlanguage	Number of Occurrences	Percentage
1	<b>Overgeneralization</b>		
	a. Irregular noun	0	0%
	b. Irregular verb	0	0%
	c. Negators	0	0%
2	<b>Simplification</b>		
	a. Semantic Simplification	1	1%
	b. Linguistic Simplification	4	4%
3	<b>Hypercorrection</b>	0	0%
4	<b>Avoidation</b>	0	0%
	<b>Total Interlanguage</b>	5	5%
5	<b>Non Interlanguage Utterances</b>	95	95%
	<b>Total Utterances</b>	100	100%

**Tabel 1:**  
The Use of Interlanguage

Based on the tabel above, it can be seen that the interlanguage process happens only about 5 percent of the subject's overall verbal performance during the data gathering. The writer sees that the emphasis should be given to the word 'data gathering' because interference which is manifested in the form of interlanguage can not be seen as a 'final product' of the language learner's performance.

Interlanguage is rather a process that can not be avoided when learning the target language than a result of language learning . It is a process that must be passed by any of the language learners without exception eventhough the result may vary from one to another person.

Therefore, interference which comes out as interlanguage is not needed to be worried. The final result still depends on how good the support from the enviroment is. In relation with this study, the parents of the subject need to provide a supportive enviroment to the language learning in order to help the subject to be able to achieve the target language fluency. It can be done for instance by giving her the English story books, singing English song, watching English movie, or doing any other activities that makes the subject getting more familiar with English and trying to correct if the subject does any interference. By doing that, the subject will know her incorrectness and replace them with the correct ones while she is trying to perform the language.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and the interpretation of the data gathered, it can be concluded that the interference manifestation through the interlanguage of a multilingual child's verbal performances appears in the forms of:

### **1. Overgeneralization**

The overgeneralization includes the overgeneralization of the irregular nouns, irregular verbs, and negators. The subject,

based on the data gathered, does not do the overgeneralization of the irregular nouns, irregular verbs, and the negators.

2. **Simplification**

Simplification consists of semantic and linguistic. The subject does both of the simplification categories. However, the writer also found that the subject does not use the appropriate auxiliary be when it deals with the plural nouns.

Related to the tense marker's linguistic simplification, the subject of the study also does it. However, the subject does not simplify the tense marker consistently. On a certain occasion, the subject is able to use an appropriate form.

3. **Hypercorrection**

The subject does not produce any hypercorrection. She has never tried to self correcting her sentences. The subject just says whatever she wants to say without caring about the other thing. Her main intention is only communication. As long as the subject's partner can understand what she says, she will not correct or repeat her sentence.

4. **Avoidation**

Based on the data that have been gathered, the subject does not employ avoidation. On the contrary, the subject does what the writer calls as a contra-avoidation in which the subject does not avoid the difficult or different structure. The subject still uses it as long as her speech's partner understands what she says.

However, as interference is a process that has to be passed, it is better not to see it as a permanent incorrectness. It is a process that naturally happens before a language learner becomes more proficient in the target language.

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