ERROR AND MISTAKE IN EFL LEARNING

Adip Arifin

STKIP PGRI Ponorogo

adiparifin@yahoo.com

Abstrak: *Di Indonesia bahasa Inggris diajarkan bukan sebagai bahasa kedua, tetapi sebagai bahasa asing. Pembelajaraan bahasa apapun sebenarnya tidak terlepas dari terjadinya kesalahan berbahasa, termasuk pada pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Terkadang istilah "error" dan "mistake" diartikan sama, padahal sebenarnya berbeda. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan perbedaan "error" dan "mistake" sekaligus membahas tentang perbedaan pemerolehan (acquisition) dan pembelajaran (learning) bahasa. Pembelajaran bahasa terjadi sepenuhnya ketika pembelajar berada dalam alam sadar dan melibatkan lingkungan pendidikan, sedangkan pemerolehan terjadi pada alam bawah sadar dan melibatkan lingkungan yang alami. Istilah"mistake" diartikan sebagai ketidakmampuan pembelajar dalam menggunakan bahasa tetapi masih mampu untuk mengoreksi kesalahan yang dibuatnya. Sedangkan "error" diartikan sebagai kesalahan berbahasa yang dibuat secara konsisten sehingga pembelajar tidak mampu untuk mengoreksi kesalahannya tersebut.*

Kata kunci: *Kesalahan Berbahasa, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*

Abstract: *As known, English in Indonesia is taught as foreign language rather than second language. Learning any language is actually closely dealt with language error and mistake, including in learning English as foreign language. Sometimes error and mistake are considered to be the same, whereas in fact they differ. This article aims to discuss the difference between error and mistake in language learning as well as explaining learning and acquisition in language. Learning happens in the level of consciousness and involves educational setting while acquisition happens in the level of sub-consciousness and involves natural setting. The term error is defined as the lack of language use which is consistently made and is not self corrigible by its user. While the term mistake refers to the learner's inability in using the target language and is self corrigible. It means that language learner can fix the mistake without help from somebody else.*

Keywords: *Error, Mistake, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

As known, English in Indonesia is taught as a foreign language, rather than a second language. The teaching of English as foreign language in Indonesia then implies the way of teacher in conducting teaching and learning process. The teaching of EFL is mostly occurred inside the school environment only, and dominated by the situated classroom setting. Ellis (1994: 214) called it as the educational setting. In educational setting, especially in Indonesia, providing the natural setting of English learning for the English learner is not easy, even it is impossible. It happens because the English is learnt as a foreign language only, and it is not used for daily communication by most of Indonesians.

Huang characterized language learning as a process of trial and error, in which a learner form a hypothesis and later on prove it, abort it, or adjust it (2003: 19). It means, when the learners learn the second language, probably, they meet many kinds of second language learning problems dealing with pronunciation, vocabularies, language structures, language interpretation, misuse, non-English constructions, misspelling, and so on. Some of the learners might be able to overcome those problems, but for some learners, they might be unable to

overcome them, and those who are unable to fix them, they will make a number of mistakes and even the errors. Moreover, according to Bloom (as cited in Ellis, 1994: 47) even the children also make errors when they learn their first languages.

Hariri (2012: 4856) stated that the process of learning English as a foreign language is actually a process of making errors, correcting errors and promoting the acquisition level. Lado (as cited in Ellis, 1994: 43) stated that the students' errors are strongly influenced by their L1, while Ellis (1994: 49) stated that the process of making errors can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the learners' mother tongue (L1), lack of vocabularies, lack of target language knowledge, and so on. Those factors will lead and influence the L2 learners in making the mistakes, even the errors. The term mistake and error are sometimes considered as the same, whereas those two have the difference characteristics. This article is aimed at discussing as well as explaining error and mistake in English as foreign language learning.

DISCUSSION

Second/Foreign Language Learning

Practically, people use a language to communicate with others for many kinds of purposes. The first language used by people to communicate is commonly called as mother tongue (L1) or first language. According to Brown (2001: 21), "the acquisition of mother tongue happens naturally", that's why, people sometimes do not realize it as the process of acquiring language. Actually, through natural setting, people learn their mother tongue since they were babies. Corder (in Richards, 1974: 20) added that "the learning of mother tongue is inevitable, as a part of whole maturational process of the child".

At the beginning age, the small babies babble and coo, cry, receive and send a number of unusual messages to others. In this phase, the hearer can't easily recognize the babies' messages. As they reach the end of the first year, babies will make specific attempts to imitate words and speech sounds they hear around them (Brown, 2001: 21), and after that,

the babies will use them. When the babies use the languages to say something, they will not directly be able to use the language in a complex and long words construction. Probably, they will utter two-words or three words sentences, such as" *bye-bye Daddy*", and "*gimme toy*". In this phase, it will be easier for us to recognize the babies' messages. By the time, the process of first language acquisition will improve more and more.

Krashen (1985: 1) emphasized the two independent ways of developing ability in second language acquisition. He defined those two ways as acquisition and learning. According to him, "acquisition is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language", while learning is a conscious process that results in "knowing about" language.

After acquiring the first language, many people do not stop to learn the second, the third or even the fourth languages. Ellis (1997: 3) stated that the languages which are learnt subsequent to the mother tongue are called "second language". Here, the second language does not refer to the learning of second language only, but also the learning of the third, the fourth languages, and even the foreign language learning, while James (1998: 3) suggested the use of "target language" (TL) for describing the language to be learnt after the mother tongue. He preferred to use the term "target language" in order to be neutral, rather than using the terms second or foreign language. In line with James, Nemser (1971:1) defined the target language (TL) as "the language in which communication is being attempted: in the case of a learner it is the language he is learning, when he uses it."

Ellis (1997: 3) defined the second language acquisition as "the systematic study of how people acquire a second language". Widdowson (in Ellis, 1997: 3) concluded the second language acquisition as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom. Adapted from Ellis' definition, the foreign language acquisition also can be defined as a systematic study of how people acquire a foreign language. In line with Ellis, Johnson (2004: 3) stated

that the current models of the second language acquisition are linear in nature. They go from the input into the intake to the developing system of the output. Corder (in Richards, 1974: 20) added that the learning of second language normally begins only after the maturational process is largely completed. Later on, the study of those languages, both the second and the foreign, often referred to as the study of L2.

Learning the first and the second language is quite different in terms of processes. Corder (1967) has noticed, in the first language learning the learners start with no language behavior, while in the second language learning, the learners start with language behavior. In the first language learning, the learners may have the same motivation to learn. They have no option to learn another language, because people around them use that language as mother tongue (L1). But in the learning of a second language, the learners might have various motivations, such as they want to study abroad, they want to live in another country which uses different language, and so forth.

Besides motivation as stated above, there are two major factors which influence the second language learning: those are external and internal factors (Ellis, 1994: 16). The external factor consists of social factors, such as learner's attitude, age, social class, sex and ethnic identity (Ellis, 1994: 198-207), language input and interaction, while internal factor consists of learners' language transfer, learners' cognitive process and linguistic universals. Those factors take the significant role in the area of second/foreign language acquisition.

Error and Mistake

In the area of second or foreign language acquisition, the terms "error and mistake" must be carefully differentiated. It needs to be differentiated because those two terms have the different characteristics. The definition of error firstly emerged in the 1967, introduced by Corder. He defined the term 'error' as unrecognized mistake committed by the language learners, and caused by the lack of knowledge. He also added that the errors are 'uncorrected' by the language learners.

Brown (2001: 217) defined the term 'error' as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, and reflects the competence of the learners. James (1998: 78) underlined the term 'error' as an instance of language use that is unintentionally deviant and is not self corrigible by its author. Ellis (1994: 48-51) stated that error is generally viewed as an unwanted form, and defined it as a deviation from the norms of the target language. He differentiates the errors based on the error-maker. Children's errors are seen as transitional forms, while adult native speakers' errors as slip of the tongue. Ellis (1994: 49) also added that the error made by the learners can be influenced by a variety of factors, for instance the learners might make errors in speaking, but not in writing. Corder (1973: 256) also added that the majority of learner's errors are linguistically quite different from those made by a native speaker. In line with the above definitions, Dulay *et al* (1982: 138) defined the term errors as the flawed side of learner' speech or writing. They also argued that people cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors.

On the other hand, the term 'mistake' is also commonly used to refer to the learner's inability in using the target language. Corder (1973: 256) argued that all learners make mistake, including the natives when they speak using their mother tongues. James (1998: 78) stated that a mistake is either intentionally or unintentionally deviant and self corrigible, while Brown (2001: 217) defined the term 'mistake' as the result of some sort of temporary breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech. Furthermore, Corder, James and Brown seem that they agreed that mistake can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out by the speaker. The example given by Brown is when the English learner says "John cans sing", but on other occasions says "John can sing", it is classified as mistake because the learner is able to correct his/her speech. On the other hands, if the learner consistently says "John cans sing" in other occasions, he/she has made an error. The point of Brown's examples lies on the consistency

of learner's inability in using the language, whether it is self-corrected or not.

From some definitions of the terms 'error and mistake' above, the researcher simply differentiates them into these definitions, firstly, errors are happened due to the lack of learners' competencies, while mistakes are happened due to the learners' failure in performing their competencies, both in spoken and written form.

There are some categories of error sources that have been classified by some linguists, for instance Dulay, *et al* (1982: 138-139) categorized the errors into a kind of taxonomy which consisted of four categories, they are; (i) omissions, refers to the absence of an item that must appear in a well formed utterance, (ii) additions, refers to the presence of an item that must not appear in well formed utterances, (iii) missinformation, refers to the use of wrong morpheme or structure, for example: *The dog ated the chicken,* and (iv) misordering, refers to the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance, for example: *What daddy is doing?*

While Corder (1973) classified the errors based on their system into three types, as follows; (i) pre-systematic errors, occurs when the learner is unaware of the existence of a particular rule in target language, (ii) systematic errors, occurs when the learner has discovered a rule but it is the wrong one, and (iii) post-systematic errors, occurs when the learner knows the correct target language rule but uses it inconsistently.

Besides the errors classification as presented above, Richards (in Ellis 1994) also distinguished the errors into three different categories, they are interlingual, intralingual, and developmental error. Firstly, interlingual errors, occurs when it is caused by the interference of mother tongue. It occurred as a result of the use of elements from one language while speaking another. Interlanguage (IL)' refers to the intermediate states (or interim grammars) of a learner's language as it moves toward the target language (Selinker in Saville-Troike, 2006: 40). In other words, the interlanguage errors happen at the level of "between language", between the mother tongue and the target language, as the negative transfer of a mother tongue into a target language. For instance: an Indonesian learner of English wrote down the word 'karakteristic' to refer the term 'characteristics' in English, as known the term 'characteristics' is adopted into 'karakteristik' in *Bahasa Indonesia.* So, the learner made an interlingual error due to his/her limited knowledge about the target language. Another example is taken from the student's mistake in using the verb in this sentence: '*Reog become the icon of Ponorogo city'.* The verb 'become' is grammatically incorrect if it is used in that sentence, because the subject '*Reog'* is singular. It should be added 's' at the end of the word "become → becomes". Actually, that mistake is influenced by the interlingual aspect. As known, the subject in *Bahasa Indonesia,* whether it is singular or plural, didn't influence the form of the verb.

Secondly, intralingual, occurs within the target language itself. Intralingual reflects the general characteristics of learning rule. Saville-Troike (2006: 39) defined that intralingual errors are also considered as the developmental errors and often represent incomplete learning of L2 rules or overgeneralization of them. He added that intralingual errors happened at the level of 'within language'. This type of error involves overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concept hypothesized. For instance: an Indonesian learner of English wrote down the word 'eated' to refer the past form of the verb 'eat'. It is happened due to the overgeneralization of the language rules of English, in case of the regular verb. The learner thought that all of the English verbs can be added 'ed/d' to refer the past form. Another example of intralingual error which is commonly done by the Indonesian learners of English is in case of pronouncing the word 'examined and determined'. Many of them pronounce those two words by spelling 'ai', when they come to the spelling of 'examined and determined'. So, their incorrect phonetic transcriptions will be:/ɪgˈzæmaɪnd/, and the correct one is/ɪgˈzæm.ɪnd/, while the incorrect phonetic transcription for the word 'determined' is/dɪˈtɜː.maɪnd/, and the correct ones is/dɪˈtɜː.mɪnd/.

Lastly, developmental error occurs when the learner attempts to build up the hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience. Saville-Troike (2006: 39) stated that developmental errors also known as intralingual errors, they are inaccurate utterances that represent incomplete learning of L2 rules or overgeneralizations. See the example below, the sentences are written by a Korean learner of English:

> 'The weather is been[1] very hot in the[2] Washington D.C. There climate[3] last week warm[4].

The explanations of learner's errors found in the example above are:

(1) Use of *is* instead of *has* with *been* (intralingual/ developmental error). This is evidence that the speaker/writer is learning the English auxiliary verb system, but hasn't yet mastered the distinction between forms of *be* and *have*, which doesn't exist in Korean.

(2) Use of *the* with a place name (intralingual/ developmental error). This is evidence that the speaker/writer is learning to use articles in front of nouns (no articles are used in Korean) but hasn't yet learned that they don't occur before most place names.

(3) *There climate* is a direct translation of the Korean phrase which would be used in this context (interlingual/interference error).

(4) In Korean the word for 'warm' is a verb itself, so no additional verb corresponding to English *was* would be used (interlingual/interference error).

Furthermore, related to intralingual error, Lott (in Ellis 1994) broke down into three categories, namely: overextension of analogy, transfer of structure, and interlingual/intralingual error. Beside Lott, another former linguist, Richards (1974) also proposed further subdivisiion of intralingual error. He distinguished it into four categories, as follows: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. On the other hands, Dulay and Burt (1974), as stated in Ellis (1994) classified the errors related to their sources into three broad categories: development, interference and unique.

CONCLUSION

Mistake and error in language learning are something normal which experienced by the language learner. Mistake and error can happen both in the process of language learning and acquisition. Learning happens in the level of consciousness and involves educational setting while acquisition happens in the level of sub-consciousness and involves natural setting. Based on their characteristics, mistake and error can be identified in quite simple way. Mistake refers to the learner's inability in using the target language and is self corrigible. It means that language learner can fix the mistake without help from somebody else. The term 'error' refers to the lack of language use which is consistently made and is not self corrigible by its user.

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