

**VULNERABILITY OF INTERLANGUAGE SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY
OF STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN
SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 1 SURAKARTA**



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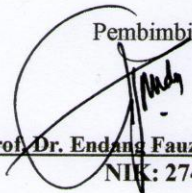
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OF STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN
SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 1 SURAKARTA**

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ABSTRACT

The research deals with the vulnerability of interlanguage system of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta students towards the influences of native language/L1 (Indonesian) system and target language/L2 (English) system. The objectives of the research are to identify: 1) how the influence of native language (Indonesian) linguistic system to the students' interlanguage system is, 2) how the influence of target language (English) linguistic system to the students' interlanguage system is, 3) to what extent the students' native language (Indonesian) system influence their interlanguage system, 4) to what extent the target language (English) system influence the students' interlanguage system and 5) the ratio of L1 (Indonesian) influence to L2 (English) influence on the students' interlanguage system.

The research is a descriptive qualitative research. The data and data source of the research is the erroneous sentences found in English compositions written by two classes of grade VIII students in 2012/2013 academic year in SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. The data collection techniques are elicitation and documentation. The data analysis techniques are collecting data, identification and list of error, classification into error types, analysis of the source of error, description of the influence degree and drawing conclusion. The writer utilizes the interlanguage (IL) theories by Selinker, Rutherford, Adjémian, Ellis and Corder as well as the error analysis (EA) framework by Shridar, James, and Corder.

The study reveals that the students' IL systems are vulnerable to the L1 and L2 influences. The L2 influence is having much higher percentage than the L1's which implies that the students are in the right track within their IL developing stages towards L2 system. The results of the study show that (1) the influence of native language/L1 (Indonesian) linguistic system to the students' IL

system are involving morphological influence and syntactic influence, (2) the influence of target language/L2 (English) linguistic system to the students' IL system are involving morphological influence and syntactic influence, (3) the total number of L1 (Indonesian) influence percentage is 32.5% consisting of morphological influence (20.37%) and syntactic influence (12.4%), (4) the total number of L2 (English) influence percentage is 67.47% consisting of morphological influence (55.32%) and syntactic influence (12.4%) and (5) the ratio of L1 (Indonesian) influence to L2 (English) influence is 1:2.07.

Keywords: *Interlanguage, vulnerability, second language acquisition, applied linguistics*

A. Introduction

Development of technology and science demands us to perceive worldwide information. Nowadays the role of English is very crucial, for instance in making use of technology and in holding worldwide communication, therefore, English competencies must be acquired wisely. However, English is not easy to acquire that emerges of errors cannot be avoided. Students' linguistic system which contain errors influenced by other linguistic system and which is still imperfect is called interlanguage (IL). The errors emerged in the students' linguistic system is the result from both students' native language (in this case, Indonesian) linguistic system and target language (in this case, English) linguistic system being learned itself.

The term "interlanguage" was first coined by Selinker (1997:155) to refer to the students' linguistic system which has its own characteristics—different from both the students' native language (L1) linguistic system and target language (L2) linguistic system. He then confirms that interlanguage (IL) as a universal phenomenon and that interlanguage is the product of interaction between two linguistic systems, namely L1 system and L2 system. Thus, interlanguage (IL) is the reflection of the attempt of the students in internalizing a linguistic system they are learning. According to Nemser (1971:116), "Interlanguage" has its own system, which is approximative in nature.

There are three major characteristics of interlanguage (IL) system according to Adjémian (1976:298-311), namely: its systematicity, vulnerability, and fossilization. The first characteristic of IL system is its systematicity. IL system is

systematic and is having consistent rule and feature. The second characteristic of IL system is its vulnerability (Adjémian prefers to use the term ‘permeability’) toward infiltration or influence of linguistic elements from both native language (L1) system and the target language (L2) system. The last characteristic of interlanguage is its fossilization. Selinker (1988:92) confirms that if the characteristic of interlanguage is being disappeared, then someone’s interlanguage system tends to be fossilized. In other words, fossilization of IL system can possibly be occurred if the interlanguage system is no longer developing towards the L2 system.

From the above description of the characteristics of IL, the researcher is interested in exploring the second characteristic of IL—the vulnerability of IL system. In specific, the researcher investigates to what extend the infiltration or influence of native language (Indonesian) system and target language (English) system to the Indonesian learners of English’s IL system. Consequently, as one of the most qualified schools in Surakarta, the researcher picks the students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta as the subject of the current research and the compositions written by them as the object of the research. The researcher, in particular, picks English compositions written by two classes of the students at grade VIII as sample representing the whole students’ population in the school.

As examples of how IL vulnerability is, the researcher takes several erroneous sentences which are taken from the students’ compositions:

1. ***To arrive we around about Jogja City to climb andong carriage.**
2. [...] my friends and I have ***lounge at canten and studying with they,**
3. My activities ***in Everyday don’t difference with school child my age.**

Through the errors committed, it can be seen that the sentences above are influenced by native language/L1 (Indonesian) and target language/L2 (English) system. These prove the vulnerability of the students’ interlanguage (IL) system to the influence of L1 and L2 system; therefore the language system is neither English nor Indonesian.

The emergence of grammatical errors as well as contextual unacceptability in the above sentences is the result of the influence or infiltration of students’ native

language system (Indonesian) and the target language system (English). The first and the third sentence show that the students' IL system is being influenced by Indonesian system; therefore they utilize word-for-word translation from Indonesian into English in order to convey their intended meanings. While the second sentence portrays the student's problem in English parallel construction implying that their IL system are being influenced by the English rule application itself.

The above phenomenon of second language acquisition (SLA) describes the students' language systems which are still developing. In engaging with this type of SLA study especially the IL study, the researcher considers several necessary frameworks used as tools to deal with the data in the research. Those are interlanguage (IL) theory, error analysis (EA) framework and linguistics. The whole studies dealing with the vulnerability of interlanguage system to the influences of other linguistic systems are being clarified in the current research.

The researcher believes that utilizing Error Analysis (EA) framework in the research is an effective way to deal with data in the absence of a suitable analytical framework in IL. As what Cook (1993:112) believes that EA alone does not provide a sufficient description or explanation of learner's language, but it has a significant contribution to make as part of an analysis. Therefore, the researcher uses the EA framework arranged by Shridar, James, and Corder to analyze the erroneous sentences found in the students' compositions as the reflection of the L1 and L2 influences. Furthermore, the researcher uses the interlanguage (IL) theory proposed by Selinker, Adjémian, Ellis and Corder to recognize the touch of influence from both Indonesian and English system to the students' IL system displayed in the students' English compositions.

The focus of the present study is the influences of both L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English) system to the IL system as reflected on the erroneous sentences found in the students' English compositions which are collected from grade VIII students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. In short, the discussion of the research is being narrowed down into one of the IL system characteristics—its vulnerability to L1 and L2 system. The research elaborates the errors found by

using linguistic category taxonomy by Burt, Dulay, and Krashen. The researcher investigates the influences reflected on those errors by making use of Selinker's and other linguists' theory of IL. Based on the background of the study, the researcher puts the research title *Vulnerability of Interlanguage System: A Case Study of Students Learning English as a Foreign Language in SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta*.

B. Research Method

The research method of this study is elaborated into five points, namely: type of the study, object of the study, data and data source, data collection technique and data analysis technique. (1) Type of the research is a descriptive qualitative research, which is a type of research method without any statistic procedure. (2) The object of the research is erroneous sentences taken from English compositions produced by grade VIII students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta who are learning English as a foreign language in 2012/2013 academic year. (3) Data and data source, the data of the study is the erroneous sentences taken from the English compositions produced by SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta students. Data source of the study is the compositions produced by two classes of students learning English at grade VIII in 2012/2013 academic year as the sample to represent all students in SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. (4) Data collection technique, in this research, the writer uses elicitation and documentation method to assemble the data which is the way to draw out the students to produce their own composition. Then, documentation method includes several steps, those are: give composition task, read each students' composition carefully, write all the erroneous sentences found in the students' composition and put all the erroneous sentences into a list and use them as data of the research. (5) Data analysis technique, the writer applies descriptive analysis technique and error analysis framework modified from Shridar (1980:136) to analyze data of the research. The technique of data analysis are collecting data, identification and list of error, classification into error types, analysis of the source of error, description of the influence degree and drawing conclusion.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

This part presents the research finding and its discussion to answer the problem statement of the current study.

1. Research Finding

The researcher divides this section into five parts, they are including: (a) influence of native language (Indonesian) to the students' IL system, (b) influence of target language (English) to the students' IL system, (c) frequency of L1 (Indonesian) influence to the students' IL system, (d) frequency of L2 (English) influence to the Students' IL system and (e) ratio of both L1 and L2 influence to the students' IL.

a. Influence of Native Language (Indonesian) to the Students' IL System

Since IL system is constructed by both native language and target language linguistic system, the influences of native language (in this case Indonesian) to the students' IL system are unavoidable. It means that the students' IL systems are vulnerable to the native language (Indonesian) influence. This is revealed based on several failures in producing sentences in target language (English) that a great number of errors are committed in the students' compositions. These influences can be classified into two major categories: (1) Morphological influence and (2) Syntactic influence.

Using the taxonomy suggested by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), the researcher has already arranged the errors in terms of linguistic category. First, morphological influence of L1 or students' native language (Indonesian) to their IL system is evidenced in the students' English compositions by the use of L1 lexical item, the use of L1 words with slight modification, the use of mismatch lexical system, the use of function words (omission of article, the use of preposition and omission of verb auxiliary) and the use of wordy constructions. Second, the syntactic influence of L1 or students' native language to their IL system is evidenced in the students' English compositions by the use of literal translation including the use of L1 structure in phrase, L1 structure in clause and the use of L1 structure in sentence.

b. Influence of Target Language (English) to the Students' IL System

As discussed in the review of related literature, interlanguage system is constructed of both L1 linguistic system (Indonesian) and L2 or target language being learned (English), thus the influences of L2 (English) system are essentially unavoidable. The study reveals that the students' ILs are also vulnerable to the influence of target language (English) linguistic system. This is revealed based on several failures in producing sentences in target language (English) that a great number of errors are committed in the students' compositions. Moreover, the finding of the research also exhibits that the L2 influences resulted on the emergences of errors are more dominant and more varied than those of L1 influences. The L2 influences are mostly occurred due to language transfer. The transfer of the L2 system is not only leads into positive transfer, but also negative transfer resulted in emergence of errors. These influences can be classified into two major categories: morphological influence and syntactic influence.

Using the taxonomy suggested by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), the researcher has already arranged the errors in terms of linguistic category. First, morphological influence of L2 or target language being learned by the students (English) to their IL system is evidenced in the their English compositions by the use of misspelled words, the use of false friend (false friend caused by similarity in form, false friend caused by similarity in meaning), diction, the use of content words (the use of pronoun), the use of function words (the use of article, the use of preposition, the use of incorrect conjunction, the use of verb auxiliary, addition of verb inflection), the use of affixation (the use of plural marker, misuse of present participle marker, misuse of possessive marker) and misformation of noun phrase.

Second, syntactic influence of L2 or target language being learned by the students (English) to their IL system is evidenced in the their English compositions by the use of tenses, the use of phrase structure, the use of parallel construction, omission of subject in sentence, omission of predicate in sentence, redundancy in sentence and miscellaneous including misuse of

adverb, misuse of adjective, misuse of quantifier, omission of modifier, omission of object, the use of verb phrase, misformation of clause, the use of passive voice and the use of relative clause instead of noun phrase as an adverb.

c. Frequency of L1 Influence to the Students' IL System

Through the errors committed, it is possible for us to know the vulnerability of their developing IL system to the native language (Indonesian) influence. The analysis exhibits varying percentages of errors as the result of the L1 (Indonesian) influence to the students' IL. The study reveals that the total number of L1 (Indonesian) influence percentage is 32.5%. The highest percentage of L1 influence is recorded for morphological influence (20.37%). The morphological influence includes five different types. Among the five categories, the most dominant influence is recorded for the use of mismatch lexical system (12.14%). The other four categories in the L1 morphological influence are including: first, the use of L1 lexical item (1.12%); second, the use of L1 words with slight modification (0.74%); third, the use of function words (3.36%) including omission of article (0.56%), the use of preposition (1.86%), and omission of verb auxiliary (0.93%); fourth is the use of wordy construction (2.99%).

The next significant category of L1 influence is recorded for the syntactic influence (12.4%). The syntactic influence includes the use of literal translation which is consisted of: first, L1 Structure in Phrase (5.23%); second, L1 structure in clause (0.37%) and third L1 structure in sentence (6.54%). Consider the following chart.

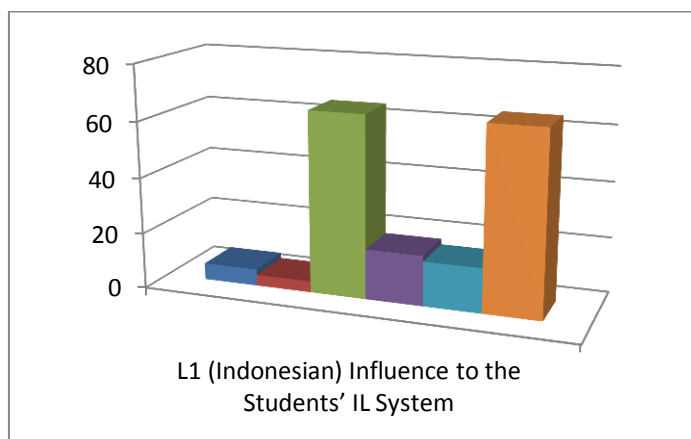


Chart 4.1 L1 Influence to the Students' IL System

The chart above proves that the L1 (Indonesian) influence to the students IL system are dominated by of the frequency of the use of mismatch lexical system and the use of literal translation. Meanwhile, there are errors which have much lower frequency including: the use of function words, wordy construction, the use of L1 lexical item and the use of L1 words with slight modification.

d. Frequency of L2 Influence to the Students' IL System

Through the errors committed, it is possible for us to know the vulnerability of their developing IL system to the target language (English) influence. The analysis exhibits varying percentages of errors as the result of the L2 (English) influence to the students' IL. The study reveals that the total number of L2 (English) influence percentage is 67.47%. The highest percentage of L2 influence is recorded for morphological influence (55.32%). The morphological influence includes seven different types, including: first, the use of misspelled words (5.23%), second the use of false friend (8.78%), which includes false friend caused by similarity in form (2.8%) and one that caused by similarity in meaning (5.98%), third, diction (7.66%), fourth the use of content words which includes the use of pronoun (1.86%), fifth, the use of function words (22.05%) which includes the use of article (10.65%), the use of preposition (3.55%), the use of incorrect conjunction (1.86%), the use of verb auxiliary (3.92%) and addition of verb

inflection (2.05%), sixth, the use of affixation (6.72%) consisted of the use of plural marker (4.48%), misuse of present participle marker (0.37%), misuse of possessive marker (1.86%) and seventh, misformation of noun phrase (2.99%).

The next most significant category of L2 influence is recorded for the syntactic influence (12.4%). The syntactic influence includes seven different types: first, the use of tenses (4.11%), second, the use of phase structure (0.37%), third, the use of parallel construction (2.61%), fourth, the omission of subject in sentence (0.93%), fifth, the omission of predicate in sentence (0.56%), sixth, redundancy in sentence (1.86%) and miscellaneous (1.68%). Consider the following chart.

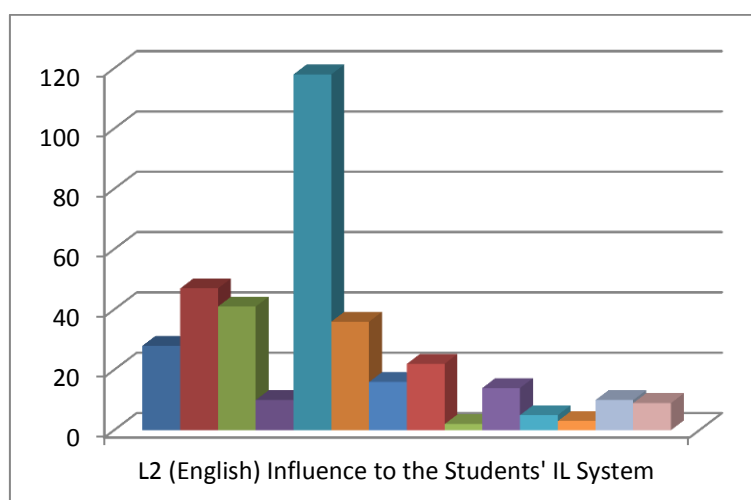


Chart 4.2 L2 Influence to the Students' IL System

The chart above proves that the L2 (English) influence to the students IL system are dominated by of the frequency of the use of function words involving the use of article, the use of preposition, the use of incorrect conjunction, the use of verb auxiliary and addition of verb inflection. Next, the lower frequency of L2 influence is recorded for: the use of misspelled words, the use of false friend, diction, followed by the use of affixation and the use of tenses. Meanwhile, there are errors which have much lower frequency including: misformation of noun phrase, the use of parallel construction, the use of content words, redundancy in sentence, the use of

content words, miscellaneous, followed by the omission of subject in sentence, omission of predicate in sentence and the use of phase structure.

e. Ratio of both L1 and L2 Influence to the Students' IL System

The present study, so far, finds the ratio of L1 (Indonesian) influence to L2 (English) influence on the students IL system is 1 : 2.07. On the one hand, the analysis portrays that the percentage of errors influenced by the native language (L1) linguistic system is (32.5%). The study reveals that the Indonesian influence to the students' IL system is involved morphological influence (20.37%) and syntactic influence (12.14%). On the other hands, the study also unveils that the percentage of errors influenced by the target language (L2) linguistic system being learned by the students is (67.47%). The study reveals that English influence to the students' IL system is involved morphological influence (55.32%) and syntactic influence (12.14%). Let us observe the following chart.

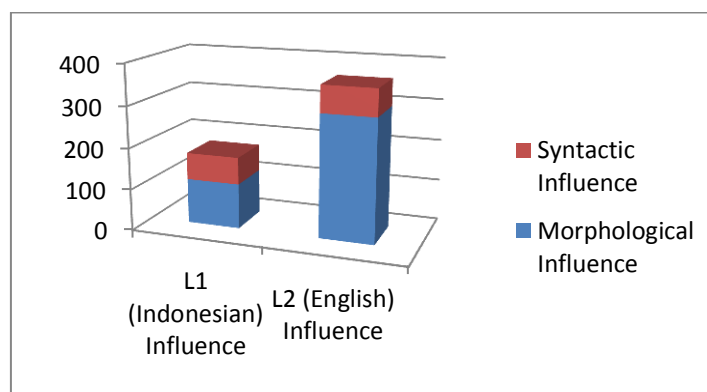


Chart 4.3 Ratio of both L1 and L2 Influences to the Students' IL System

As shown in the chart above that the frequency of the L2 (English) influence is greater than that of L1 (Indonesian) influence to the students' IL system. Therefore, it can be assumed that the influence of target language (English) linguistic system plays such an important role while the influence of the student' native language (Indonesian) linguistic system plays a relatively minor role to the construction of IL system. Within each sources of influence, it is obviously seen that morphological influences plays dominant role in the construction of the students' IL system.

2. Discussion

In this section, the researcher discusses the finding of the present research and compares it with those of the other four previous studies. From the errors found in the analysis, it can be conclude that the IL systems of the students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta are vulnerable to both students' native language (Indonesian) linguistic system and target language being learned (English) linguistic system since, as Corder states (1967) that, errors are the most important source of information to linguistic phenomenon. It is also relevant with Rutherford's thought that IL system is vulnerable to invasion by features of both native and target language (1989:41).

However, this vulnerability of IL system is what makes the IL system different to the other linguistic systems (Ellis, 1985b). As pointed out by Selinker (1997:155) that interlanguage (IL) as a universal phenomenon and that interlanguage is the product of interaction between two linguistic systems, namely L1 system and L2 system. Thus, interlanguage is the reflection of the attempt of the students in internalizing a linguistic system they are learning. According to Adjémian (1976), there are two sources of influence (L1 and L2) which combine to build up the new system. Therefore the researcher tries to illustrate the shape of the students' IL system as the following chart.

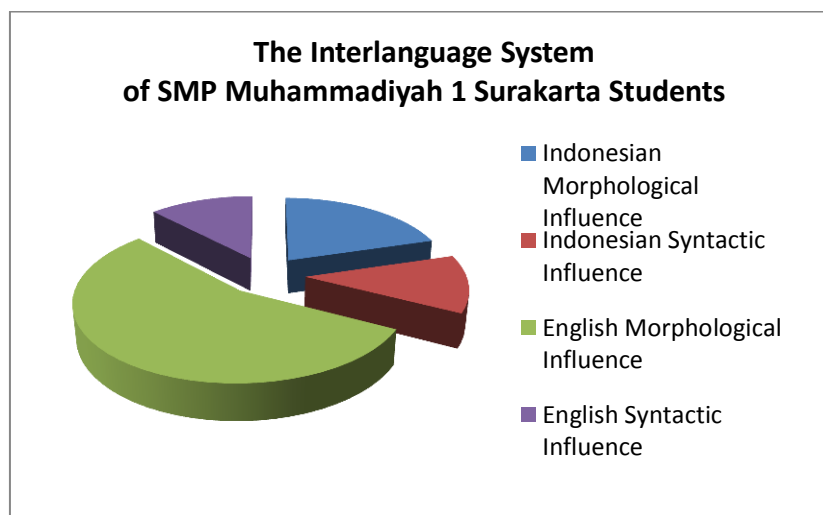


Chart 4.4 The IL System of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta Students

From the chart of above, it can be inferred that students' IL system are vulnerable to the influences of the two linguistic systems (Indonesian and English); thus the students' IL systems are constructed from its vulnerability to the influences from both Indonesian and English linguistic system. However, it is obviously seen that the influence of target language (English) linguistic system plays such a dominant role while the influence of the student' native language (Indonesian) linguistic system plays a relatively minor role to the construction of the student's IL system. It means that the students are in the right track in their developing IL system and that they are in progress to move closer to the TL system.

Yet, the chart shows us that morphological influence from each linguistic system (English and Indonesian) is having such a dominant role in the construction process of the students' IL system, as reflected on the dominant percentage of the influence. This is in accord with what Schumann (1982:338) states in Hobson (1999:34) that lack of morphology seems to be one of the main features of IL developing process. So it can be inferred that the students are through the right stage of morphological development within the IL developing process. Although all of these suggest that while transfer seems to be a reasonable and logical explanation for some part of the nature and form of ILs, there are certain doubts that should be born in mind. Only particular structures or forms of language seem to be transferable from the L1.

In conclusion, the present research is different from those previous studies not only in terms of method in which the research makes use of descriptive qualitative method and uses error analysis as the framework of the IL study, but also in terms of result. It is found in the present research that the students' IL systems are vulnerable to the influence of both L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English) linguistic system and that its vulnerability is dominated by the English morphological influence (55.32%) implying that the students are in the right track of the stage of morphological development within the IL continuum which moves closer and closer towards the English linguistic system.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the IL systems of the students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta are vulnerable to both students' native language (Indonesian) linguistic system and target language being learned (English) linguistic system. The present study finds that the students' IL systems are dominated by L2 (English) influence (67.47%) while the L1 (Indonesian) influence has much lower percentage (32.5%). It is found in the present research that the students' IL systems are vulnerable to the influence of both L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English) linguistic system and that its vulnerability is dominated by the English morphological influence (55.32%) implying that the students are in the right track of the stage of morphological development within the IL continuum which moves closer and closer towards the English linguistic system.

2. Pedagogical Implication of the Study

The first implication concerns to the teacher that has the role as facilitator of education in the classroom. The language teachers should revise and vary the teaching method and language learning materials in order to fit the varying types of learners therefore the materials are easy to comprehend. Second, teaching methodology would play such an important role in the second language learning. Therefore the methodology of teaching learning process should be varied to match the varying types of learners in the classroom. The proper methodology allows for active learning which involve the students in the teaching and learning process as best as we can. Last but not least, the third implication concerns to the students as the main subject of the language teaching and learning process. The research findings will lead them to be aware of their own deviant utterance not only in writing but also in speaking. This will give them such an enthusiasm in progressing through their IL continuum towards the English linguistic system.

3. Suggestion

a. To the next researchers

It is highly recommended for the next researcher to conduct further research on other aspects of IL system besides its vulnerability, such as IL continuum, IL development or other characteristics of IL including its systematicity and its tendency to fossilize. As a result the further research hopefully will complete the whole study of interlanguage (IL). It is also suggested to focus on the problem statements raised in the research so that the study will be well-organized and easy to comprehend. Working with details in the analysis is possibly leading to such confusions; consequently it is important to the next researcher to deeply comprehend completely the theory of IL and EA framework before doing analysis. Moreover such deep comprehension is useful to able to deeply analyze any detail object of research dealing with the IL study. Ultimately, the reader of the research will gain better and deeper comprehension related to the core of the study.

b. To the English teachers

It is highly suggested to the English teacher in junior high school in particular to improve the students' English skills including listening, writing, reading and speaking skill by gradually innovate the teaching methodology and the language learning materials. The teacher should vary the learning materials to fit the varying types of learners in the classroom so that it is easy for them to completely internalize the materials. The teacher should also be able to provide errors correcting treatment to the errors committed by the students; that the students are able to be aware and to reconstruct their own deviant utterances and ultimately they would be able to increase their self-monitoring system to their own speech production. In order to master English language skills, it is important to the teacher to give as many practices as possible to the students and to involve the students actively during teaching and learning process and grow the students'

enthusiasm in challenging themselves rather than monotonously spoon-feed them with a bulk of explanation.

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