Elementary Students' English Sentence Construction Based On Linguistic Typology Perspective

By Muhammad Saifuddin

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' ENGLISH SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION BASED ON LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

Muhammad Saifuddin
Universitas Pesantren Tinggi Darul Ulum Jombang
email: muhammadsaifuddin@fbs.unipdu.ac.id

Abstract

The ability of constructing sentence might depend upon language features. They need not only to decode what they have in terms of exploring ideas but also transferring the knowledge into written language. Students of elementary school are those who are in early language learning. They deal with the language form and its function. In using English, they might use their first language to be transferred into English. On the other hand, as it is known that a language differs one to another language. English as foreign language has different language properties (i.e. word class, grammar, and spelling) to Indonesian language. These distinctions of language properties can be defined as typology. It shows that different languages provide different language features. This research focused on investigating elementary students' English sentence construction. This was based on linguistic typological perspective which viewed their languages and identified their linguistics typology. In that case, this research used qualitative research as it was intended to investigate elementary students' English sentence construction based on linguistic typological perspective. To be able to gain the data, short essay test was used. This instrument was intended to gain students' writing. Furthermore, it was found that there were some typological classifications. The most dominant identification of students' sentence construction was based on syntactic typology. This result showed that most of students viewed Indonesian language was equal to English that both language served the same language features.

Keywords: Linguistic Typology, Sentence Construction, First Language Interference

1. INTRODUCTION

Human speaks through different languages. The languages all around the world may have different pattern. This variety of language pattern might also includes different language property. The language which sees its difference is so-called linguistics typology. This linguistic typology considers the classification of languages into different structural types (Song, 2001, p. 8). Witltschko (2014, p. 300) also supports the idea that linguistics typology is served primarily to figure out and explain the diversity of linguistic used for certain languages. The diversity of the language may likely appear on the structure of the sentence where it describes at least the position of 'subject', 'verb', and 'object'. One language, accross languages, might have slightly different structure in terms of sentence structure. English, for example, uses sentence structure based upon grammatical English sentence structure.

Structurally, 'subject' as the agent of the action is placed at the beginning of the sentence which is followed by 'verb' as the predicate of the action. The 'object', the aim of the action, can be either direct or indirect following the 'verb', for example, *John writes a letter*. This example of the sentence shows the structure used of English structure, SVO. Moreover, there is the agreement between 'subject' and 'verb' which describes reasonable diversity among English to other languages (Bisang, 2004, p. 20). This variety of language is seen through the comparison of the languages. It happens since it compares across languages to be the same grammatically structure and is not against on another (Song, 2001, p. 10).

To be able to use that pattern properly depends on how human both acquire and learn language. Indeed, human language develops across time or it is gradually developed from first into second language, to third, or fourth language (Saifuddin, 2014). Human , especially elementary students, learns English language as foreign language after they first acquire first language. Furthermore, in relation to using the language properly, students tend to activate and apply their language competence that this refers to linguistic or syntactic rules (Brown, 2000, p. 30). In consructing English, elementary students might follow their first language, in this case Indonesian language. They might also assume that both English and Indonesian language serve the same pattern. It sometimes emerge since children have some characteristics toward children language learning, they are (Krashen, 1981):

1. Rely on others to choose what is important to be learned
2. Accept the presentation of important information
3. Have expectations that what they are learning will be useful in their long term future
4. Have little or no experience upon which to build

However, students' sentence construction is not viewed what and how they make such errors of the language, but it is rather to seek the language variation. Related to linguistic typology, typologists try to figure out to what extent lenguages present structural variation and where they follow universal patterns (Bisang, 2004, p. 19). Universal language can also be closely related-demonstrated by one of the language universal (Song, 2001). What is so called language universal is when the example of an implicational universal shows if the demonstrative follows the head noun, then relative clause follows the head noun (Croft, 2003). On the other words, students' language does not fall under the grammatical feature they eventually maintain equally principled grammatical system which is allowed by universal grammar (Lenneberg, 1967). The following is the example of linguistic typology and also language universal (Comrie, 1989):

K hi   tôi dên   nhà   ban   tôi chùng   toi bât ââu làm bài.
when I   come house friend I   PLURAL   I   begin   do lesson
'When I came to my friend's house, we began to do lessons'

Based on the above sentence, it is said that there is no morphological typology, one of linguitics typology types. The words from both language is morphologically the same. They come from single word without morphological process. For example, the tense used 'come' and 'came', I and tói.

Within the linguitics typology, it should not only provide the dimension of language variety but it also involves the influence of language acquisition (Bowerman, 2011, p. 591).At school, children are taught how to use the English language properly. They should not only be familiar the English speaking, but also how the words are spelled or pronounce, and especially when they use it in written form. In the attainment of language ability, denotation is also takes a part in language learning. This denotation links students mind concept with real shape of thing, or relate between word and real world (Griffiths, 2006, p. 25). This can also be one of factors how students use their language.

When it comes to typological analysis, it should be determined on what aspect the variety is analyze, what circumstance is analyzed, or what grammatical property is analyzed. Indeed, linguitics typology varies at its type and function. There are types of linguistic typology (Moravcsik, 2013; Song, 2001); lexical typology, morphological typology, syntactical typology, and/or phonological typology.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this study was to describe students' ability in constructing English sentence based on linguistics typology perspective. More specifically, it was in accordance to students' behavior of how they used thier language competence to produce English sentences. To be able to understand how it is like, qualitative research was intendedly used. This research approach provided this study to look their individual behavior how they produced such English sentences (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 23). It was also beneficial that qualitative proposed a characteristic which let the study to explore the problem and develop an understanding of students' language competence interpreted in written form using English.

To be able to gain comprehensive result of the research, students' writing examples were collected as a source of data. Short writing essay was proposed as the research instrument to get students' writing examples. This students writing examples consisted of some English sentences they produced. Moreover, the students, the subject of the research, were the sixth year students of elementary students. There were 12 students in a class. This class is used to be taught with English, and there was an English day when they speak and write English as they could as possible by teachers' guidance. They were asked to compose some sentences based on the picture given. This result of students wiritng was analyzed based on linguistic typology.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Using linguistic typology to observe students' English language is beneficial to discover deep regularities in variety of pattern across languages, including English toward Indonesian language (Bowerman, 2011, p. 591). This result of the study emphasized more on how vary the both languages in their language property used by the elementary students. Based on the findings of the study, it showed that linguistic typology provided how the language varies which some might be influenced by their first language.

3.1. Lexical Typology

Lexical typology sees how the words are similar one another or how is the word order. Based on the finding, it showed that some students applied some synonymous words to their sentence construction. One of the example stated on the examples of students' writing were;

    a) *the turtle got a glorious victory for the competition.*
    b) *I am go playing soccer*

The first sentence showed that it was gramatically correct. Furthermore, based on lexical typology view, the word 'got' is preferred to be used rather than 'attain'. The word 'got' explains that it won the competition. However, looking at the sentence, it might have the meaning that 'the turtle' attained a victory through games which were parts of competition. Meanwhile, the word 'soccer' in sentence (b) refers to football. This is interchangeable but there were some countries are familiar with football rather than soccer based on its famous word.

Those words varieties is defined as partonomy (Moravcsik, 2013, p. 27). This partonomy, one of lexical typology types, describe how words relate one another. In previous sentence (b), soccer plays clear partonomy in which the word 'soccer' and 'football' remains the same. What makes them separated is not based on the meaning, but they are used in different countries. Moreover, if they are compared to Indonesian language, then the result is;

The turtle got glorious victory for the competition (English)

Kura-kura memenangi pertandingan yang hebat tersebut (Indonesian)

What is clearly seen from both sentences is based on the meaning. '*Pertandingan yang hebat*' has different form with '*the competition*'. It seemed that the student's sentence construction was influence by the first language that this affected him/her to construct English properly though it was grammatically appropriate.

3.2. Morphological typology

Morphological typology identifies the sentences based on three canonical types of language, they are; isolating, agglutinating, and fusional. An isolation sees the words have no morphological process, however, at least word to morpheme (Comrie, 1989, p. 43). It was found on the students' writing that there are some morphological process used in sentences, one of the example, *I keep playing soccer happily*. The word '*happily*' was used by the student. It comes from morphological process as descibed below:

Happily

happy   *ly*

adjective   morpheme '*ly*'
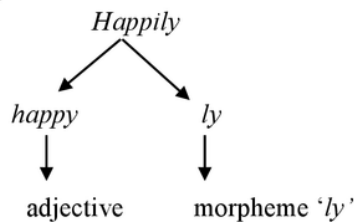
Those words describe how morphemes are joined to form word is called morphological typology (Moravcsik, 2013). Another is found related to a clause formulation. It seems to be completely grammar pattern. However, the following sentence is seen through the morphological process;

Today is a special day because I play with my friends

There were two noun clauses but they serve different numbers of word and function. The clause, *a special day,* used three parts of speech to form one noun clause. They are derived from 'article + adjective+ noun'. Furthermore, English morphology is different to Indonesia, certainly about word order.

     a special day   (English)
     satu hari yang indah   (Indonesian)

This could show that the word order to combine the words into a good clause is different. In English, an adjective preceeds the noun to modifies that noun while in Indonesian language, adjective comes after noun and should be add the word '*yang*' to have the adjective meaningful.

3.3 Syntactic Typology

This type of linguistic typology describe the cross-linguitics within different word choice of form. It much refers to the syntax or the structure of the sentence. This type was found in most of students' sentences. The followings are the students' sample:

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a) My hobby is playing football
b) I wash my t-shirt
c) I am so shy

As it is stated before that English must provide an agreement among SVO. Those three sentences had already represented what so-called an agreement. However, Indonesian language doesn't seem applying this agreement. One of the elaboration of the example is as follow;

a) My hobby is playing football (English)
*b) Hobi saya adalah bermain sepak bola* (Indonesian)

In (a) sentence, '*my hobby*' is a singular subject which needs singular tobe '*is*'. This shows the correct pattern and agreement. However, it is not seen in Indonesian version. The subject used '*hobi saya*' does not say whether it is singular or plural so that it is a way of Indonesian language which does not apply an agreement.

At these all around, most of students' sentences showed how linguistic typology serves the variety and the classification of the language. On the other hand, the way the students construct their English sentences was sligtly influenced by their first language. It remains that they had assumption that Indonesian language has the same sentence structure and language properties to English. Based on the linguistic typology, English and Indonesian language use the same sentence pattern in the form of SVO, but they are different in word order forms.

Table 1. Result of Students' Writing Samples Analysis

No.	Types of Linguitics Typology	Amount
1	Lexical Typology	7
2	Morphological Typology	16
3	Syntactic Typology	34
Total		**57**

Figure 1. The Total Number of Linguistic Typology Production

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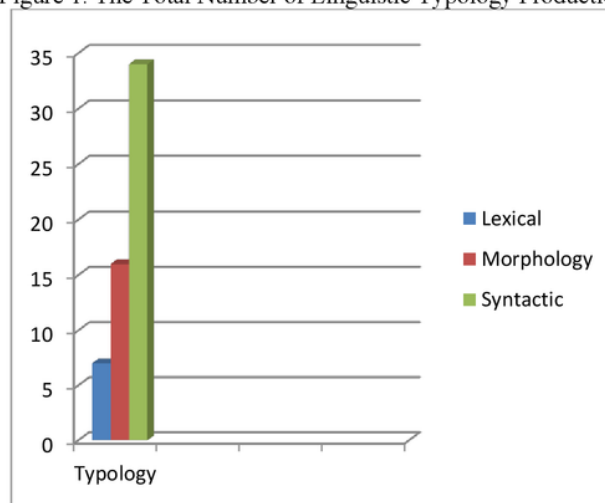
Based on table 1 above, it showed that there were some linguistic typology found on students' writing result. There were 57 sentences identified and it can be seen that the dominant type of linguistic typology was syntactic typology. Moreover, these findings of the students' sentences showed that there were linguistic typological process which is closely related to first language acquisition. Most of the student could produce understandable English written language. Typologically, the sentences showed the variety of the language between English and Indonesian. Also, it was identified that both English and Indonesia has the same sentence structure, SVO but they are different in word order form.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and the analysis above, it can be summarized that elementary students could construct English sentences with which it also provides the linguistic typological perspective. By this result, linguistic typology is also closely related to first language interference which it sometimes interferes students to use English as foreign language. Besides, it was found that the dominant type of linguistic typology types is syntactic typology. In addition, it elementary students' English sentence construction could represent both their language use and language variety.

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