Artikel Fanani Maisarah, Telling Time

by Tafsillatul Mufida Asriningsih

(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

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Analysis of students' errors in telling the English time expressions

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Abstract

EFL Students commonly make errors in expressing English Telling Time. This current study revealed frequent error phenomena of beginner learners in Indonesia: telling time in English. This study revealed the types of errors made by students in grade 7 related to telling time. In addition, it also revealed the factors that caused the error. The approach of this current study is descriptive qualitative. The data of this current research are phrases/clauses/sentences containing 'telling time' erroneous constructions collected through a test. The results show that the respondents still needed help in expressing time in English. Two problems that arose were related to writing and word order. The first problem arose due to the respondents' limited knowledge of the target language, while the second problem was caused by the interference of the first language (Indonesian). This confirms that errors in English are very likely to occur, especially when there are differences between the source language system and the target language.

Keywords: Errors analysis; 7 graders; Time expressions; Indonesia

1 Introduction

Many researchers are interested in examining errors made by EFL learners (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). Many research areas are related to error analysis, for example, pronoun-related errors and silent letters (Fanani & Fitriana, 2014), and others. This study revealed one of the most frequent error phenomena of beginner learners in Indonesia, namely telling time in English.

EFL students commonly make errors in expressing English Telling Time. One of the main problems is that they are commonly confused about the correct order of time expression in English. For example, when they come to express the time of 8.20, they would say eight past twenty instead of twenty past eight.

This phenomenon also happened in the 7th grade of SMP Budi Utomo Jombang. In general, most students still had difficulty telling time in English (interview on November 1, 2019). The teacher further said that various errors in telling time occurred. Such errors repeatedly occurred even though they had been taught to tell the time in English and do the exercises provided in their worksheets (LKS) or books.

This study revealed the types of errors made by students in grade 7 related to telling time. In addition, it also revealed the factors that caused the errors. By identifying the types of error and its causal factors, it is expected that teachers get a better picture of the errors often made by students when expressing time in English, so that they can anticipate and formulate better teaching methods.

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2   Literature review

2.1   Telling time in English

In English, to tell the time two common ways can be used.

2.1.1   Saying the hour first and then the minutes (Hour + Minutes)

- 5:20 - It's five twenty
- 9:10 - It's nine ten
- 9:45 - It's nine forty five

2.1.2   2) Saying the minutes first and then the hour (Minutes + PAST / TO + Hour). It is the commonly taugt rule in school.
For minutes 1-30 we use PAST after the minutes.

For minutes 31-59 we use TO after the minutes.

- 3:55 - It's five to four
- 10:20 - It's twenty past ten

When it is 15 minutes past the hour we can say: (a) quarter past

- 2:15 - It's (a) quarter past two

When it is 15 minutes before the hour we can say: a quarter to

- 9:45 - It's (a) quarter to ten

When it is 30 minutes past the hour we normally say: half past

- 1:30 - It's half past one

2.2   O'clock

The word o'clock is used when there are "no" minutes.

- 5:00 - It's five o'clock
- 12:00 - It's twelve o'clock

2.3   AM vs. PM

We use a.m. (am) for the morning and p.m. (pm) for the afternoon and night.

- 6 am = six o'clock in the morning.
- 4 pm = four o'clock in the afternoon.

2.4   Error Analysis

Many scholars have been interested in Error Analysis (EA). Many definitions of Error Analysis (EA) can be found. According to Dulay et al. (1982), EA is the method to analyze EFL and ESL learners' errors when learning a language. By EA, the strategies learners use to learn a language can be identified so that teachers can see the difficulties that their students encounter when learning the target language, which improves their teaching.

James (1998) gives a different definition of EA. He explains that EA analyzes learners' errors by comparing what they have learned with what they lack. EA, according to Mungungu (2010), has two purposes: (1) theoretical purpose, which is concerned with what and how learners learn a language, and (2) practical purpose, which is concerned with how to help learners learn a language by making use of the knowledge they have already had.

Mungungu (2010) asserts that Error Analysis (EA) is useful. He also proposes the five-stage process of Error Analysis (EA), which consists of (1) the collection of errors, (2) the identification of errors, (3) the description of errors, (4) the

explanation of errors, and (5) the evaluation of errors (Wu & Garza, 2014). According to Heydari and Bagheri (2012), EA is beneficial for teachers because it lets them prepare accurate and precise teachings suitable for their students.

In other words, it can be concluded that EA is the study of language forms that digress from the standard of the target language, which occurs during learners' language learning. The analysis of errors helps reveal the types and sources of errors which can lead to an accurate way and less time consumption to reduce errors made by learners.
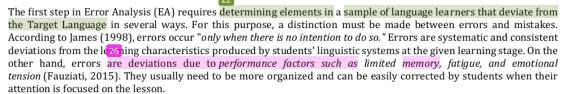
2.5   Classification of Error

Errors found in ESL and EFL learners' writing pieces are analyzed and categorized into various categories. Dulay et al. (1982) categorize errors according to their features into six different categories: omission of grammatical morphemes, double marking of semantic features, use of irregular rules, use of wrong word forms, alternating use of two or more forms, and misordering.

According to James (1998), there are five categories of errors: (1) grammatical errors (adjectives, adverbs, articles, nouns, possession, pronouns, prepositions, and verbs), (2) substance errors (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), (3) lexical errors (word formation and word selection), (4) syntactic errors (coordination/subordination, sentence structure, and ordering), and (5) semantic errors (ambiguous communication and miscommunication).

Because this present study focused on the errors in expressing English time expressions, the analysis of errors used what Dulay et al. propose, the errors were analyzed based on six categories of errors.

2.6   Sources of Error

The first step in Error Analysis (EA) requires determining elements in a sample of language learners that deviate from the Target Language in several ways. For this purpose, a distinction must be made between errors and mistakes. According to James (1998), errors occur "*only when there is no intention to do so.*" Errors are systematic and consistent deviations from the learning characteristics produced by students' linguistic systems at the given learning stage. On the other hand, errors are deviations due to *performance factors such as* limited *memory, fatigue, and emotional tension* (Fauziati, 2015). They usually need to be more organized and can be easily corrected by students when their attention is focused on the lesson.

According to Richards (1985), there are three causes of errors. They are:

- *Interference errors*: repeatedly made by users of the mother tongue when speaking/writing in another language.
- *Intralingual errors*: errors that reflect a pattern's general characteristics, such as false generalizations, and are mostly influenced by existing rules.
- *Developmental errors*: students make errors building hypotheses with limited knowledge.

Richards (1985) divides Intralingual errors into four categories:

- Errors of excessive generalization: students make circular structures based on other structures in the target language (for example, "He can sing" where English allows "He can sing" and "He sings").
- Ignorance of restrictive rules: students adjust rules to contexts that cannot be applied (for example, he makes me rest "through an expanded pattern" He asks/wants me to leave).
- Application of incomplete rules: students fail to take advantage of fully developed structures (e.g., "Do you like singing?" From "Do you like singing?")
- Wrong hypothesis: most students do not understand differences in the target language (for example, the use of "is" as a marker of the past in "One day it happens").

Later on, Richards (1985) classify the causes of errors into two categories. They are

- Interlingual errors: these errors are caused by mother tongue interference.
- Intralingual and developmental errors: errors of this kind often occur when the process of learning a second language is at a stage when students have not gained knowledge. In addition, errors are also caused by difficulties or language problems.

3   Research method

The approach of this current study is descriptive qualitative. This approach aims to gain an understanding of and describe complex realities. Research with a qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words based on people or behaviors observed (Nasution, 2003: 3). This current study is descriptive because it describes some phenomena related to the problems experienced by the students in telling time in English. The description, more specifically, concerns the types of errors made by the students in constructing telling time expressions and the causes of the errors.

The respondents were students in grade 7 in SMP Budi Utomo Jombang. Among the students, 37 (one class) respondents were chosen purposively because they were at the beginner level. The selection of the students as the respondents was at the teacher's suggestion.

The data of this current research are phrases /clauses/ sentences containing 'Telling time' erroneous constructions. The data were collected from the students' answers on the test and the interview results with the respondents. This kind of data was gained through an interview with the respondents making errors concerning why they make errors.

The first data were collected through the following steps:

- Constructing a "telling time" test in English. The test consists of 16 questions. The contents of this test are about telling time,
- Validating the test to the experts. The expert chose to validate the test and checked the contents before giving it to the respondent,
- Managing tests for respondents. After the test was validated, the test was given to the respondent. They were given 1x45 minutes to solve all the questions,
- Collecting test results,
- Checking the student answers, and
- Identifying the construction of phrases/clauses/sentences containing errors when telling stories.

The second data were collected through the following steps:

- Developing the concept of an interview,
- Validating the draft of the interview,
- Conducting the interviews with students who make errors,
- Transcribing the students' responses.

4   Results

This research focuses on students' errors in telling time in English. A qualitative approach was applied to see the natural conditions of a phenomenon. The following are the findings regarding errors made by students. In general, there are five types of errors: errors in using "hours," errors in using "the past," errors in using "to," and errors in using AM / PM.

4.1   Types of errors

4.1.1   Errors in using "o'clock."

Based on the results of the test completed by the respondents, it is found that there are three kinds of errors made by the respondents. First, they missed the apostrophe. Second, they missed 'o'. Third, they substituted 'o' with 'a'.

The first error, missing the apostrophe ('), was made by three respondents (i.e., st. 2, st. 4, and st. 5). For example, st. 2 wrote 'eleven o clock' instead of "eleven o'clock". St. 4 wrote 'It is two o clock' instead of "it is two o'clock", and st. 5 wrote 'seven o, clock, instead of "seven o'clock".

The second error in writing "o'clock" is substituting "o" with "a." For example, st. 1 wrote "three a' clock", instead of "three o'clock".

The third error in writing "o'clock" is missing "c" in the word o'clock. Students 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 made an error in writing o'clock. They all missed the second "c" in the word "clock." They wrote o'clok instead of o'clock".

4.1.2 Errors relating to the use of 'Past.'

Based on the results of the test completed by the respondents, it is found that there are three kinds of errors made by the respondents.

The first error is the reversed order of hour and minute. Naturally, in English, the minute precedes the hour. However, the students reversed the pattern. They put the hour first before the minute. For example, student 1 wrote "it is five past twenty" to refer to the time of 5:20, which the correct order should be" it is twenty past five." Student 2 wrote: "it is half past six," substituting "it is six past half."

The second error is missing "t" in writing 'past.' Some students made an error when they had to write the word "past." Commonly, they missed the letter "t." For example, students 1, 2, and 3 wrote "pas" instead of "past."

The third error in writing 'past' is using double 's'; some students made an error when they had to write the word "past." Commonly, they wrote double, 'S'. Student 1 wrote: "It is eight pass ten," rather than "it is eight past ten," Student 2 wrote: "it is thirty pass twelve," rather than "it is thirty past twelve." Student 3 wrote: "it is thirty pass two," rather than, "it is forty-five past two."

4.1.3 Errors relating to the use of 'to'

Based on the results of the test completed by the respondent, it is known that there is one type of error made by the respondent, that is, the respondent in reverse mentions hours and minutes.

The error is the reversed order of hours and minutes. Some students made an error when writing the hours and minutes. Commonly, they reversed; they should write the minute first than the hour. For example, students 1, 2, and 3 wrote, "it is ten to two o'clock" rather than "it is two to ten o'clock."

4.1.4 Errors relating to the use of 'a.m. / p.m.'

Based on the results of tests completed by the respondent, it is known that there are two types of errors made by the respondents. The first is using a.m. to mention afternoon or evening (12 to 24).

Some students made an error when they had to write afternoon or evening time. Commonly, they seem confused about whether to use a.m. or p.m. In this case, to refer to afternoon or evening time, they wrote a.m. instead of p.m. Students 1, 2, and 3 wrote, "It is 09 a.m.

The second error is using p.m. to mention morning (24 to 12). Some students made an error when they had to write morning time. Commonly, they seem confused about whether to use a.m. or p.m. In this case, to refer to afternoon or evening time, they wrote p.m. instead of a.m. Students 1, 2, and 3 wrote, "It is 11:00 p.m." to refer to 11 in the morning.

4.2 Causes of error

4.2.1 Causes of errors in using "Past."

In this case, there are three kinds of errors. The first is the reversal of the order. In this case, the respondents wrote the order of an hour and a minute reversely. For example, they wrote 'two past forty-five' instead of 'forty-five past two' to refer to the time of 2:45. Based on the interview with those who made errors, the error mainly occurred because the respondents used the Bahasa Indonesia system to write the time. In Bahasa Indonesia, the expression hour precedes the minutes (*dua lebih empat puluh lima*).

The second error is an error in writing past. In this case, the students wrote "pas" without 't' instead of "past." Based on the interview with the students who made such errors, they commonly did it because they did not understand how to write correctly. As a result, the students wrote "nine pas ten" to refer to 10:09.

The same as the second, the third error is an error in writing' past.' However, in this case, the students wrote 'pass' instead of 'past.' Based on the interview, as in the second error, it happened because they still did not understand how to write the word correctly. As a result, the students wrote "twenty pass five" to refer to the time of 5:20.

In this case, there is one kind of error, which is reversing the order of hours and minutes. In this case, the respondent writes in reverse. For example, for expressing 2:50, they write "three to ten" instead of "ten to three." Based on the interview with the student who made errors, the error mainly occurred because he followed the grammar of Bahasa

Indonesia in constructing the expression. In Bahasa Indonesia the time is commonly expressed *"jam tiga kurang sepuluh"*.

4.2.2   Cause of errors in using "am/pm."

From the results of the interview, the error made by students regarding the expression of "am/pm" commonly relates to the use of "am" to refer to afternoon/evening time (12:00 to 24:00) or the use of "pm" to refer to morning time (24:00 to 12:00).

Generally, the difficulties encountered are due to their lack of knowledge regarding the rules for using these two expressions.

5   Discussion

From the results above, several things can be discussed. First, errors related to writing, and second, errors related to word order. In general, errors related to writing are caused by students' lack of knowledge about hours. In contrast, errors related to word orders are caused by students who still regard Indonesian hours, mentioning the first hour and minute.

Errors related to writing certain words are common in learning a foreign language and are generally made by students at the beginner level, as revealed by Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pochakorn (2017). Many students have difficulty writing certain words in English, which is normal for those just learning English (Hengwichitkul, 2006; Phuket & Othman, 2015). Even people in English-speaking countries have difficulty writing in good English (Sermsook, et al, 2017). As a result, it is a challenging task for EFL students, and it is inevitable to find errors made by this group of students because they need more opportunities to write in English. The following is written by EFL students describing the difficulties they face.

The results of this study indicate that time-related words such as "past" and "o'clock" are the most commonly miswritten by students. For the word 'past,' they have difficulty distinguishing from other words in English that have the same sound, namely "pass." As a result, they sometimes write "pass" instead of "past." This is due to their limited English knowledge (Brown, 2000). Alternatively, students will write with the word "fit" according to the sound produced.

Another error related to the time expressions refers to the use of AM / PM. Students often made errors by reversing the two expressions (e.g., writing morning time with PM and writing night time with AM). Again, based on interviews with students, this error is mainly related to their limited understanding. This is in line with what was said by Brown (2000), that limited knowledge contributes to the errors made by L2 students.

As for "to," students mostly made errors in writing or reversed the placement. For example, in writing 2:50 (ten to two), the students erroneously wrote in reverse into two to ten. In error analysis, this problem generally occurs due to the L1 language interference factor (Richard, 1985). They used the first structure of LI (Bahasa Indonesia) to arrange the second language (English). This is in line with the results of research by Suwito (1985) and Fanani and Fitriana (2014), revealing that L1 grammar potentially affected the construction of L2 structure by beginner students. In other words, it can be said that L2 and L1 are in a state of mutual contact. In every language contact, a process of mutual influence occurs between one language and another language. As a result, interference will arise, both verbally and in writing (Brown, 2000).

Therefore, in teaching L2 writing, the teacher must anticipate errors that might occur. In the case of writing time in English, errors that are very likely to occur that need to be anticipated are in writing past and o'clock as well as errors in the use of AM / PM, which are errors due to poor understanding of English. In addition, one of the anticipations that must be done is that it is possible to have an error in the position of hours and minutes due to Indonesian language interference.

Writing in English was considered the most challenging skill among the four English skills (Hengwichitkul, 2006). Even native speakers fail to write good writing (Sermsook et al., 2017). Consequently, this is a challenging task for EFL students. It is inevitable to find errors made by this group of students because they need more opportunities to write in English. The following sentence written by EFL students describes the difficulties they face.

6   Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the respondents (the seven grade students) still needed help in expressing time in English. Two problems that arose were related to writing and word order. The first problem arose due to the limited knowledge of the target language of the respondents, while the second problem was caused by the interference of the first language (Indonesian). This confirms that errors in English are very likely to occur, especially when there are differences between the source language system and the target language.

Based on the results of the study above, the teacher should:

- Pay attention to the errors that will occur when students make compelling Telling time expressions in English. The errors that need to be anticipated are errors in writing, o'clock, Past, To, am / pm. Therefore, the teacher must give much practice and learn for students so that students increasingly understand and understand in writing Telling time into English.
- Provide a deeper understanding of the difference between the Indonesian grammar system and English grammar, especially in time expression. This is very important because this problem can make students make errors, especially in word order.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest within this research.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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