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Language in the Online and Offline World 6:

THE FORTITUDE

May 8 & 9, 2018

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PREFACE

In this digital and globalized era, language has an essential role in both real and cyber worlds. Due to this fact, scholars and researchers are continually trying to explore the language used in both worlds. Apprehending the situation, since 2010 the English Department of Petra Christian University has conducted Language in the Online and Offline World (LOOW) conference, a signature biennial conference, to address the issues of the use of online and offline languages in reciprocal relation with individuals, society, and culture.

This LOOW 6 conference held at Petra Christian University on May 8-9, 2018 adopts the theme: The Fortitude. Just like the word "fortitude" which signifies "mental and emotional strength in facing difficulty, danger, or temptation courageously", the objective of the conference is to challenge teachers, researchers, and scholars dealing with the use of languages in the field of education, business communication, media, and cultural studies to have mental and emotional strength in confronting the hazards and struggles of the online and offline languages used in those fields. Related to the theme, the proceedings of LOOW 6 contain articles and research papers of assorted topics of various issues on language as well as media and cultural studies. The conference presents keynote speakers from Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Through the distinctive topics presented in the parallel and plenary sessions by knowledgeable teachers, researchers, and scholars from various backgrounds, hopefully the LOOW 6 proceedings give enlightenment and new perspective to boldly confront the impact of the online and offline language use.

On behalf of the organizing committee, I would like to express my genuine appreciation to all the plenary and featured speakers who are willing to share their invaluable expertise and knowledge in this conference. Also, my profound gratitude is addressed to all the presenters and participants who have contributed to the success of the conference.

Eventually, this LOOW 6 conference may end, but I hope it could shed light upon us all forever, just like the proverb which says, "as iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend".

Surabaya, May 08, 2018

Dr. Nani Indrajani Tjitrakusuma
Chairperson of the Organizing Committee

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LOCAL VS GLOBAL ERRORS: COMPREHENSIBILITY JUDGMENT ON THE SPEECH OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS BY NATIVE SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT

This study is part of a series of research on Error Analysis conducted with the aim of improving the English speech of students in one of the tertiary institutes in Indonesia. It is well known that Corrective Feedback is an important form of support by the teachers to the students individually (Lyster et. al., 2013), and is viewed positively by teachers and students alike (Schulz, 2001). However, any experienced teachers would know that not all errors need to be corrected, especially during a spontaneous speech in which there is more emphasis on communicability and comprehensibility of the message. Burt (1971) distinguished between global and local error, where the former refers to errors which may cause misunderstanding or incomprehension in the listeners, and the latter as those which do not hamper communication. In this study, recordings of students' speech were given to native and near-native speakers of English, who in turn answered questions to gauge their understanding of the students' message. The result was then studied using a previous research on Error Analysis (Gozali, 2017) to determine the type of errors that can be classified under global or local. This study may have useful pedagogical implication for teachers in order to know when to provide the Corrective Feedback, as well as the linguistic area which need to be emphasized in the lessons.

Keywords: error analysis, comprehensibility judgment, English speaking

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English speaking skill can be quite an amusing task at times. This happens when students, compelled to express their thoughts in a foreign language, make hilarious mistakes in their pronunciation or the use of vocabulary. A memorable example was a student who, acting as a waiter, ushered in his customer to be seated by saying "please s*it down", to which the whole class burst into uproarious laughter. Jokes aside, Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (Non-NEST) who share the same first language (L1) as the students perhaps have an advantage over their Native English-Speaking Teacher (NEST) counterparts in that the former would still understand the students despite the errors or inaccuracies in the students' speech. However, this can be a disadvantage for the students, since the Non-NEST teachers then may not be able to, or want to, correct the mistakes since the speeches were still comprehensible to them. While it is true that frequent corrections to students' speech is neither beneficial nor appropriate, it would still be ideal if students are also equipped with the knowledge of more accurate pronunciation or vocabulary usage, so as to be able to communicate in English at a global scale. Therefore, the Non-NEST teachers are faced with the challenge of knowing when to correct the students' speech, or which part of English speaking skills should be emphasized for the students to avoid making those mistakes.

The writer has taught English Conversation in a tertiary institute in Surabaya, Indonesia, for more than three years. In the course of listening to the students' English speeches, she began to detect certain patterns in the mistakes and errors committed by her students in their talks. This has prompted her to carry out some studies to compile the errors and analyze them as to their types and causes (Gozali, 2017). Now, she is interested to find out which among those errors need more attention by the teachers, either in order to correct them or to be taken into account in the teaching

materials. One of the criteria to determine those so-called priority errors would be to check the comprehensibility of the speech against native or near-native English-speakers.

Before proceeding with the review of studies, definition of terms used is in order. Firstly, the term 'native speakers' here follows the classic division of Kachru (1990), who divided countries which use English in the world into three categories; the inner, outer, and expanding circle. Thus, it follows that English speakers from the inner circle countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are simply termed as native speakers or, if they teach English, Native English-Speaking Teacher (NEST). Those from the outer circle such as Singapore, the Philippines, India and Nigeria could be said to be near-native speakers or Near-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) for the teachers. Lastly, the non-native speakers (or Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher – Non-NEST) are then included in the expanding circle, such as China, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia.

Secondly, 'Comprehensibility' is also distinguished from 'intelligibility' and 'interpretability'. Comprehensibility is the term used for the ability of the listener to understand the meaning of the speaker in a given context. When the listener is able to distinguish individual words in an utterance, that is termed 'intelligibility'. Lastly, 'interpretability' is defined as the ability of the listeners to understand the meaning of the speakers beyond the words themselves. (Pickering, 2006). Although, as can be seen later, this study involved judgment which is halfway between 'comprehensibility' and 'intelligibility', 'comprehensibility' was chosen since it is a more operable term compared to 'interpretability', and it is presumed that the listeners actually understood the words that are intelligible to them within the context provided.

This study was inspired by one carried out by Marina Burt in 1974. From a corpus of several thousand erroneous sentences produced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from all over the world, she selected 300 sentences and asked native speakers of various background to make judgement on the comprehensibility of their meanings. From the result, she distinguished two types of errors. The first type is errors which do not significantly hinder comprehension, and those she termed local errors. Some of the causes are mistakes in the use of noun, articles, auxiliaries and inflections. On the other hand, global errors are those which might alter the intended meaning of the speakers in a substantial way. Burt identified several causes of global errors such as misordering of words and errors in the use of connectors as well as under/over-generalization of syntactic rules (Burt, 1974). From the result, she postulated that EFL learners need to master the so-to-speak global grammar, namely the grammar which, though still imperfect in terms of English language requrement, is still understood by the native speakers interlocutors.

Since then, more sophisticated researches involving comprehensibility judgments by native speakers have been conducted. An oft-cited study is one conducted by Varonis and Gass (1982, 1984), who examined various variables in their relation to comprehensibility judgement of non-native speakers by native speakers. They investigated the effect of pronunciation and grammar in the earlier study, and familiary with the speakers and topics in the next. Then, Saito et. al. (2015) examined the speech of 40 French speakers of English (L2 learners) against 20 native speakers using eleven variables within the field of phonology, lexis, grammar, and discourse. The 20 native speakers were further divided into two; a group consisted of linguistically-untrained individuals, while the other were people with some language-teaching or learning background. This study aimed to, among other things, investigate the influence of those eleven variables on comprehensibility and accentedness of the L2 learners. The results showed that, in the first place, the linguistically-untrained individuals could provide somewhat reliable rating on various linguistic aspects cited above, although the experienced raters were found to be more lenient and consistent. Secondly, accentedness was deemed to be more influenced by pronunciation, while several linguistic variables such as pronunciation, lexis, grammar and discourse structure make up the integral components of comprehensibility. The pedagogical impact of this finding is twofold;

on the one hand, even novice or inexperienced teachers should be able to provide a reliable assessment of their students' comprehensibility. On the other hand, the goal of oral teaching should not be focused on achieving a certain accent or native-like sound of the target language, but rather to have succesful communication, i.e., comprehensibility, which is dependent on several factors apart form pronunciation. The writers also proposed more communicative style of teaching and the use of corrective feedback to address this issue (Saito et. al., 2015). In another similar research, Saito, Isaacs, et. al. (2015) focused on finding the lexical correlates (appropriateness, fluency, variation, sophistication, abstractness, and sense relation) to comprehensibility. Their results showed that L2 comprehensibility is related to choice of words and fluency for beginning-to-intermediate L2 learners, and to morpho-syntactic forms for intermediate-to-advanced learners (Saito, Isaacs, et. al., 2015).

Examining the listeners' variable, Saito and Shintani (2016) investigated the difference in the comprehensibility rating between respondents from Canada and Singapore, who were made to listen to recordings of Japanese learners of English. The choice of the two countries were purposefully done to differentiate between raters of monolingual background (Canada) and those from multilingual environments (Singapore). From the outcome, it was found that the Singaporean raters generally assigned higher score in terms of comprehensibility of the speech samples, and that they were able to draw meaning from lexis and grammar apart from pronunciation and fluency, as compared to their Canadian counterparts who attained comprehensibility more from pronunciation and fluency. Thus, it could be said that native speakers pay more attention to phonology and temporality of linguistic to attain comprehensibility, while near-native speakers like Singaporeans are able to draw their comprehensibility cues from vocabulary and grammar. The implication of this finding in English language pedagogy is that teachers should revive explicit instruction of pronunciation, especially the supra-segmentals such as stress, pitch, speed, etc., apart from vocabulary and grammar in a meaningful, communicative context (Saito and Shintano, 2016). On the other hand, Crowther et. al. (2015) investigated the speakers' variably, by examining the effect of L2 learners' first language (L1) background on the comprehehensibility rating. He found that the comprehensibility was judged to be related to different domain of language, depending on the speakers' L1. For example, it was related to pronunciation for the Chinese and morphosyntax for Hindi speakers (Crowther et al., 2015).

In the field of Error Analysis, the pioneer study seems to be Corder's work, which was published with the title the Significance of Learner's Errors in 1967. In the said paper, Corder made a distinction between 'mistakes', which are deviations in performance, and 'errors' that are systematic and indicative of the learning stage of the person (Corder, 1967). The significance of learners' errors are then three-folds, as postulated by Corder. To the teachers, the errors would help them to gauge the learning progress of the students. They are also useful for the researchers in terms of studying learning process and strategies. Lastly, the learners themselves also benefit from their own mistakes if they are able to use them as tests of their own language learning hypothesis (Corder, 1967).

In subsequent research, Error Analysis had been instrumental in studying several types of errors, such as syntactic, lexical, and phonological ones (Al-Khresheh, 2010). In Indonesia, Sastra (2014) had conducted an Error Analysis on Indonesian students' speech, with focus on morphosyntactic structure. She then categorized the errors into omission (37%), misformation (35%), addition (27%), and lastly misordering (1%). The writer has also carried out a simple Error Analysis on the erroneous samples of her students, separating them into errors in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Gozali, 2017).

This present study does not pretend to achieve such comprehensive results as obtained by the above-cited studies. Rather, it aims simply to find out the type of Local and Global errors committed in the English speeches of Indonesian students, as measured against their comprehensibility to listeners who are native and near-native English speakers. The Global Errors,

which would consequently need more attention by teachers and students, would then be examined as to their types and causes, be they in the domain of pronunciation, grammar, or lexis. Based on the result, it is hoped that it can contribute to the pedagogical knowledge of English teachers, specifically what types of errors need to be corrected and which aspects of English speaking skill need to be emphasized and highlighted in the classroom.

METHODS

This study was done with a qualitative approach, comprising of speakers, recordings of the speeches, native speakers and near-native speakers listeners, and the listeners' transcriptions of the speeches which were then subjected to analysis.

The speakers were students of the writer's English Conversation Class. In one of the usual lessons in which they have to perform a short speech in front of the class, they were asked for their permission for the speech to be recorded using the recording feature of a hand phone. From the 15 students who were in the class, six recordings were selected for this study, simply because they were the ones who produced the clearest sound on the play back. The six recordings were the speeches from five boys and one girl, so the audio files were labelled as Boy 1, Girl 1, Boy 2, etc. The speeches were all less than a minute long, and they were answers to the following question:

> **"Complete this sentence: "If I won the lottery, I would …"**
> **Please talk about (1) your study or work, (2) your family, (3) anything else like hobbies/religion/charity."**

The six recordings were then sent by email to friends and acquaintances of the writer abroad. The six audio files were accompanied by a letter explaining about the research, the instruction, and the answer sheet. They were asked to listen to all six recordings, and transcribe the speeches, putting (?) mark when they are not able to understand the words or phrases. The listeners were selected from countries like the USA, Canada, and Australia who then represented the native speakers, and from the Philippines and Singapore who then count as near-native speakers. It was ensured that the listeners have no knowledge of *Bahasa Indonesia* or the first language (L1) of the speakers, so as to prevent the possibility of them understanding the speakers due to familiarity with the L1. Out of the many requests to help with the research sent, only 14 individuals returned their responses. They were regarded as five native speakers (two from USA, one from Canada, and two from Australia), and nine near-native speakers (five from the Philippines and four from Singapore).

The responses were then tabulated using an excel spreadsheet. The actual words spoken by the students were placed at the top, and the transcriptions of the listeners were typed below each actual speech transcript. The listeners' transcript were then compared with the actual transcript. Words in the actual transcript which are not understood by more than half of the listeners (either because the listeners put a (?) mark or because they didn't write them at all) were then marked in red and the were deemed to be Global Errors. Actual transcripts whose general, overall meaning could be understood by more than half of the listeners were marked green. Lastly, if the actual transcripts were erroneous in some ways, whether in the domain of pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary, but could still be transcribed by the listeners, they were marked orange. These then constituted Local Errors. Each of the Global and Local Error was then separated into the different aspect of the language, namely Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary and Phrase.

FINDING(S) AND DISCUSSION

A summary of the result is depicted in the table below:

	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Phrase
LOCAL	party	facilitated	big (extended) family	to all
	send	for ()	dischange (discharged)	from the (becoming) victim
		go to (to go)		
		never to work		
		making, buying		
		so ()		
		house(s)		
		it (them)		
		can (be) save(d)		

	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Phrase
GLOBAL	build	house future (future house)	to life only (to live alone)	Because I want to
	house	age old (old age)	Mekah (Mecca)	my parents' store
	future	life (live)	Haji (Haj)	never study again
	hobby	happy (happily)	Madura	I (am) smarter than
	basketball	success(ful)	ping pong (table tennis)	to each (member of) my family
	Chinese			
	player			
	history			

The errors are highlighted in red, such as the word ‘facilitated’ in the grammatical, Local Error which should be in the present tense and without the ‘d’ ending. The corrected words are shown in green; for example, the wrong word order ‘house future’ in the Global Error should have been ‘future house’.

Looking at the Global Errors, it can be seen that many of the incomprehensible words were due to Pronunciation mistakes or inaccuracies. For example, the phonetic ‘ou’ and ‘ui’ sounds in the words ‘house’ and ‘build’ respectively suffered from interlingual transfer errors and were pronounced ‘in the Indonesian way’, and so might have contributed to them not being understood by the listeners. The words ‘hobby’ and ‘basketball’, which were not comprehended by more than half of the listeners, may be due to errors in the suprasegmental features of the English language, such as the stress or the tone. The Global Errors in the grammatical domain were due to mistakes (‘age old’, ‘house future’) in the Adjective – Noun word order and erroneous usage of part of speech (the verb ‘live’ should be used instead of the noun ‘life’). For vocabulary, most of the failures to understand the words arose from proper names in the L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) which, understandably, were foreign to the listeners such as the words ‘Mekah’, ‘Haji’, and ‘Madura’. Lastly, the phrases that were not comprehended by the listeners might be due to the long sentence produced by the speakers, compunded with pronunciation or grammatical inacurracies in one of the words in the phrase, so the listeners might have missed the entire phrase altogether.

When considering the Local Errors, there were very few contributions from the field of Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Phrase. As for Grammar, there were errors in the use of past tense marker of the ending ‘d’, plural marker ending ‘s’, the usage (or missing) conjunctions ‘for’, ‘to’, and ‘so’, and overusage of the continuous tense marker ‘ing’.

The finding of this study with regards to phonological errors being the main contributors of incomprehensibility in the native/near-native speakers is consistent with the above-mentioned work of Saito and Shintano (2016). As they have put forward, native speakers relied heavily on phonological cues to achieve comprehensibility. Similarly, wrong word order in the grammar domain was also found within the Global Errors, which agrees with the finding of Burt (1974). In the same way, some of the Local, grammatical Errors in this study are also mentioned by Burt (1974) in the same work, namely “errors in noun and verb inflections”, like in house(s) for noun inflection facilitate(d), mak(ing), and buy(ing) for verb inflection.

What could be quite novel in this study is the effect of errors in parts of speech to the comprehensibility judgment of the native and near-native speakers. In this study, there were two instances in which the speakers wrongly employed the noun 'life' where they should have used the verb 'live'. In the first instance, only two listeners could transcribe the 'life' word, while in the other, none of the listeners could understand him. In a similar way, the speakers who made mistakes with the words 'success(ful)' and 'happy(ily)' could only be transcribed correctly by two and one listeners respectively. This indirectly gives an inkling as to the importance of using the appropriate part of speech to attain comprehensibilty for native and near-native listeners of English.

When attemps were made to analyze the difference between the responses of the native speakers (those from the USA, Canada and Australia) and near-native speakers (Singapore and the Philippines), the outcome was inconclusive. Although it was predicted that this result will mirror that of Saito and Shintani (2016) cited above, in which Singaporeans listeners could comprehend better than their Canadian counterparts due to the former's multilingual background, a qualitative look at the responses of the native speakers and the near-native speakers in this study showed some variety in the outcome. At a glance, the responses from the Philippines seem to be the best, followed by the native speakers (USA, Canada, Australia), and then Singapore. More rigorous approach and considerable responses would be needed before drawing any substantial conclusion in this regard.

The pedagogical contribution of this study is simply to add to what have been put forward by the prevous researchers in this field, namely the need to have more explicit pronunciation instruction in a speaking course (Saito and Shintani, 2016). The result of this study is also consistent with the recommendation made in our previous work (Gozali, 2017), where Error Analysis showed the importance of Phonetic teaching since certain types of pronunciation errors occur frequently among Indonesian students. From the result that refer to the morphosyntactic errors, this study showed that errors in the word order and the part of speech comprised the Global Errors. Hence, it is important that teachers emphasize this aspect when teaching those forms to the students, as well as correct the students when they make mistakes in those area.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to find the Local and Global Errors committed in the English speech of Indonesian tertiary students, through comprehensibility judgment of native and near-native speakers of English who were made to listen to the recording of those students and transribe them. The purpose was to determine the type of Global Errors so as to highlight those aspects during teaching and to provide corrections when errors are made in order to consolidate the students' knowledge. The result showed that Local Errors were mostly made up of those aspects of Grammar involving verb and noun inflection. Global Errors, which hinder comprehension in the listeners were due to phonological errors (pronunciation, prosody) and morphosyntactic errors in the aspect of word order and parts of speech. Explicit instruction on pronunciation in speaking lessons, as well as emphasis on those aspects of Grammar that bring about Global Errors mentioned above are then highly recommended to English teachers in Indonesia.

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