AN OBLIGATORY OCCASION ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF PAST REGULAR AND PAST IRREGULAR FORMS IN RECOUNT TEXTS BY VIII GRADERS OF SMPN 1 BOJONEGORO

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ABSTRACT: This study specifically aims at examining the accuracy of VIII graders of SMPN 1 Bojonegoro in using the past regular and the past irregular forms in recount texts, and also to determine the order of learning of the two morphemes to help in making decisions about whether (or perhaps when) to provide form-focused instruction. The data are divided into two groups which are group I and group II according to the number of words they write in their recount texts. Both of the groups have a higher percentage of accuracy for the past irregular form than the past regular form. Therefore, the past irregular form is automatically placed first in the order, and the past regular form is in the second place.

Keywords: Obligatory Occasion Analysis, Past Forms, Recount Texts.

Written language is often more formal than the spoken language. Riddell (2003) states that the emphasis on accuracy with writing is much greater than with speaking. The 2004 Curriculum also emphasizes the importance of mastering English grammatical structures those are accuracy and language features. There are many aspects of English grammatical structures which are different from Bahasa Indonesia. For example, in Bahasa Indonesia, we do not have to change the verb when we talk about something in the past. Saville-Troike (2006) states that second language learning can be very important for vocabulary development as well as for achieving grammatical accuracy at the level of morphology (or word structure); especially for learning English where thousands of words are formed by compounding smaller words (e.g. wind + shield = windshield (British windscreen)) or by adding prefixes and suffixes that can create new meanings (e.g. un- + kind = unkind) or change part of speech (e.g. friend (noun) + -ly = friendly (adjective)). Grammatical accuracy in many languages requires knowledge of the word parts that carry meanings such as tense, aspect, and number (called inflectional morphology or inflections), as in English kicked, coming, and books. Thus, to be accurate in writing English words is somehow difficult for some Indonesian students. A central assumption in the morpheme studies points out that the accuracy with which learners perform a set of grammatical morphemes indicates the extent to which they have been acquired.

The Contrastive Analysis offers a transfer theory with the purpose of predicting learners’ errors by comparing the linguistic systems of the mother tongue and the target language. As Dulay & Burt (1984) say that according to Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, while learning a second language, learners tend to use their native language structures in his second language speech. Corder (1967) says that the value of the inventory of the difficult areas which the learner would encounter would be to direct the teacher’s attention to these areas so that he/she might devote special care and emphasis in his/her teaching to the overcoming, or even avoiding, of these predicted difficulties. But, not all mistakes can be predicted as is assumed by those who advocate the principles of the CA. Some mistakes might not be caused by the first language interference. Thus, some researchers begin to analyze errors that have been made by the learners. Corder (1967) says that learners’ errors provide the evidence of the systems of the language that they are using (i.e. have learned) at a particular point in the course. By analyzing learners’ errors, the teacher will know how far he/she is proceeding towards the goal the learner has progressed. It also provides the researcher with the evidence of how language is learned or acquired and the strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language (Corder, 1967). Then,
some researchers begin to analyse samples of learner language in order to examine the order of acquisition, and determine how accurately learners use specific linguistic forms.

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) point out that a series of cross-sectional studies of second language learners in the 1970s (for example, Dulay and Burt in 1973; Bailey, Maiden, and Krashen in 1974; Larsen-Freeman in 1976) indicated that the order of accuracy is equated with the order of acquisition. Thus, it is assumed that if learners perform one grammatical morpheme (for example, English past irregular) more accurately than another (for example, English past regular), they will acquire it earlier. Such an assumption is controversial, however, as at least some morphemes display a \( u \)-shaped pattern of development. For example, when learners acquire English past irregular, they frequently pass through an early stage of acquisition where they use some irregular forms correctly only to replace these later on with over-generalized -\textit{ed} forms (for example, goed supplants went). Clearly, accuracy in the use of structure where over-generalization is common is not a reliable measure of acquisition. However, the methodology employed in longitudinal morpheme studies helps to obviate this error. It suggests the need to ensure that learners population are grouped according to general L2 proficiency, and accuracy orders calculated separately for each group. This will enable researchers to investigate proficiency as a co-variate of accuracy order and to identify which morphemes display a lower level of accuracy at a higher level of proficiency.

The variables being studied are the past regular and the past irregular forms that the students use in writing recount texts. The researcher chooses past regular and past irregular forms as the target morphemes to be analyzed. As we know, Bahasa Indonesia does not have different form of action verb as it is found in English grammatical structure, such as past forms in past tense. It may cause some difficulties to the students in learning English accurately, especially in writing. Therefore, the researcher would like to conduct an obligatory occasion analysis of the two morphemes in a text produced by the students.

Recount text is a type of text which contains past tense because the communicative purpose of this text is to tell a situation or activity that happened in the past (Depdiknas, 2004). It is chosen as it will be easier for the students to write a story about an experience they have.

Obligatory occasion analysis will predict a trajectory in which a morpheme is acquired before another morpheme. In other words, obligatory occasion analysis is able to describe ESL development rather than simply portray non-target usage. The procedure is done by counting the tokens of the target morpheme and its obligatory occasions. Then, it is expressed as a percentage of accurate use. The focus of the study is describing how accurately the VIII graders of SMPN 1 Bojonegoro use the past regular and the past irregular forms in writing recount texts, also their order of learning.

**METHOD**

This study is categorized as descriptive qualitative research based on the definition stated by Gay (1987) that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study.

The data were collected from the VIII graders’ works in the form of written recount texts. This study was conducted at SMPN 1 Bojonegoro. The setting was chosen based on two considerations. The first consideration was because this school was one of the International based secondary school in Bojonegoro. Therefore, it was expected that the findings from this research could become the model for other schools. The second consideration was that English had been used for communicating in this school one day every week. That was meant to increase the students’ frequency in practicing the language. The VIII grade was chosen because the students began to learn and use the past form of verb in
texts. This study used materials the subjects wrote themselves as data. All the data obtained from the materials would be used as the source for data analysis.

In this study, the researcher acted as a prompter. A prompter is a person who tells actors in a play what words to say when they forget (Longman, 2005). In the context of this study, a prompter was meant to be a person who gives some words to help the students to start their writing.

The researcher attended the class to give a writing prompt to the students in order to collect the data in the form of recount written texts. Despite the fact that the students as the subject of the research knew about the researcher’s status and purpose of joining their class, the researcher tried as well as possible to make the setting as natural as it usually was. The researcher created the same situation as when they were having test. The researcher explained to the students what they had to do. The students were given certain amount of time, 30 minutes in this research, to finish their writing. Then, they have to submit their work to the researcher.

In collecting the data, the researcher used writing prompts as the instrument. The students were told to write a recount text according to the prompt that was given by the researcher. There were four writing prompts in different topics provided that the students had to choose; namely, an experience of winning something, a funny thing that might happen on their way to somewhere, uplifting experience, and something that they had done that bore a consequence.

The data were selected and grouped based on the words that the students had written in the certain amount of time. The data which consist of more than 150 words were grouped in group I and the data which consist of less than 150 words were grouped as group II. They had at least three occasions for every morpheme which was being investigated; they were past regular and past irregular. The student who had less than three occasions for a morpheme was excluded from the sample, but included in the other morpheme which the student had at least three occasions. Then, the students’ accuracy in using every morpheme was calculated by means of an obligatory occasion analysis with this formula:

\[
\frac{n \text{ correct suppliance in contexts}}{\text{total obligatory contexts}} \times 100 = \text{per cent accuracy}
\]

But, to take account of overuse of a morpheme (which the above procedure fails to do), Pica (1984) proposed what she called “target-like use analysis”. This is calculated using the following formula:

\[
\frac{n \text{ correct suppliance in contexts}}{n \text{ obligatory contexts} + n \text{ suppliance in non obligatory contexts}} \times 100 = \text{per cent accuracy}
\]

Once group scores have been achieved for individual morphemes, the morphemes can be ranked in decreasing order of accuracy, that is, the morpheme with the highest accuracy score placed at the top and the morpheme with the lowest accuracy score placed at the bottom.

In order to carry out the implicational scaling, the level of accuracy of use a learner must achieve in order to claim that a morpheme has been acquired is set at 77 per cent. Thus, if a learner achieves an accuracy score of 77 per cent or higher, the morpheme is considered “acquired” and scored 1, but if the score is lower, it is considered “not acquired” and scored 0. The choice of 77 per cent as the acquisition level is based on the minimum score or KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal) set by the teacher at the school.
FINDINGS

Obligatory Occasion Analysis for the Two Morphemes

There were 50 students in total for both groups included as the sample. But for group I, the researcher eliminated one student from the calculation of each morpheme because the students did not achieve the minimal occasion for a morpheme, which is three occasions. Student number 37 was excluded from the calculation of the past regular form, while student number 42 was excluded from the calculation of the past irregular form.

The result of accuracy calculation of both group I and group II for the past regular and the past irregular forms is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Obligatory Occasion Analysis of Group I and Group II for the Two Morphemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Morphemes</th>
<th>Obligatory Occasions</th>
<th>Suppliance</th>
<th>Overuse</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Past Regular</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Past Irregular</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Past Regular</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Past Irregular</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1.1, we can see that group I has more occasions in both of the morphemes than group II. Group I also has some overused forms. Therefore, the analysis used to calculate the accuracy of this group was not the same with group II. Table 1.1 also shows that group II has a less number of occasions than group I but has a higher accuracy in both morphemes. So, we can say that although the students in group II know less about the past regular and past irregular form and use a less form in their texts, they use them more accurately than the students in group I.

To illustrate the distribution of the score in both of the groups, the researcher calculated the standard deviation of both of the groups for the two morphemes. The result of the calculation is shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics of Group I and Group II for the Two Morphemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Group I Past Regular</th>
<th>Group I Past Irregular</th>
<th>Group II Past Regular</th>
<th>Group II Past Irregular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Valid</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>76.47</td>
<td>81.95</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>29.43</td>
<td>29.48</td>
<td>21.59</td>
<td>27.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>866.24</td>
<td>869.2</td>
<td>466.02</td>
<td>746.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 1.2 we can see that although group I has a less number of students included as the sample, the standard deviations for both morphemes of this group are higher than group II, which is 29.43 for the past regular form and 29.48 for the past irregular. Meanwhile, group II has 21.59 for the past regular form and 27.32 for the past irregular form. Therefore, we can conclude that the distribution of the scores in group II is better than in group I.

The Accuracy/Learning Order for the Two Morphemes

The researcher used a rank-ordering method to decide the learning order. The learning order which is decided using this method is based on the students' accuracy calculation result shown in the Table 1.3 and Table 1.4.

Table 1.3 Accuracy/Learning Order of Group I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morpheme</th>
<th>Group accuracy score</th>
<th>Rank position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past irregular</td>
<td>77.27%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past regular</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Accuracy/Learning Order of Group II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morpheme</th>
<th>Group accuracy score</th>
<th>Rank position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past irregular</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past regular</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Implicational Scaling for the Two Morphemes

As it was shown in the Table 1.3 and 1.4, the rank-ordering method did not necessarily decide whether a particular morpheme was acquired or not. The learning order was based on accuracy order irrespective of the absolute level of accuracy of individual morphemes. Therefore, the researcher carried out the implicational scaling. The level was set at 77 per cent which was based on the minimum score or KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal) set by the teacher at the school. The morpheme which had 77 per cent or more was considered “acquired” and scored 1, but if the score is lower, it is considered “not acquired” and scored 0.

The data in the implicational scaling matrix shows that there are a more number of students in both of the groups who have acquired the past irregular form than the past regular form. So, in order to make a staircase, the past regular form is placed in the first column while the past irregular form is placed in the second column. But the data do not fit into a perfect staircase. The data shows that there are some students who acquire the past regular form yet they do not acquire the past irregular form. Therefore, to predict accurately which morpheme each student has acquired on the basis of his/her rank in the matrix, the researcher calculated the coefficient of reproducibility (Crep). A Crep score of 90 per cent or higher indicated that the proposed scaling was valid.

Based on the implicational scaling of group I, there are four errors (shown by a circle). The Crep is, therefore, 96 per cent. Since the Crep score is higher than 90 per cent, the proposed scaling for group I is considered valid. Meanwhile, based on the implicational scaling of group II, there are three errors (shown by a circle). The Crep is, therefore, 97 per cent. Since the Crep score is higher than 90 per cent, the proposed scaling for group II is considered valid.
DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the result of average accuracy calculation for total 50 students of group I for the past regular form is 76.7 per cent and the past irregular form is 77.27 per cent. Meanwhile the result for 50 students of group II for the past regular form is 77.4 per cent and the past irregular form is 79.5 per cent. We can see that the accuracy score of group I for the past regular form is below 77 per cent, which is the minimum score or KKM that has been set by the English teacher in SMPN 1 Bojonegoro. Those numbers show us clearly that group II has a higher percentage of accuracy than group I. But, we cannot conclude that the students in group II learn those two morphemes better than the students in group I since each group has different number of occasions and suppliance of the two morphemes.

As we know that Bahasa Indonesia does not have different form of past action verbs, so it may need more effort for the students to learn. Moreover, there is no exact rule for the past irregular form as for the past regular form. So, teachers tend to use the past irregular form in giving examples to the students more often than the past regular form because they think that the past irregular is more difficult to learn.

There are some past irregular forms which is often found in the students’ writing, such as: slept, bought and brought. These past irregular forms are often used by English teachers in their examples of past tense sentence. Moreover, the researcher found one past irregular form which is used by all students, that is, went. This past form of go is like a must-learned past form. Teachers never leave this form when they teach about past tense. These forms are the past irregular forms which most of the students used with high accuracy. This happens because the teacher tends to use the forms so many times in classroom and the students use the forms so often in producing text in past tense.

The input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1978) points out that language acquisition takes place because there is comprehensible input. The students automatically learn the necessary grammar if they get understandable and enough frequency of the input from the teacher. But, not only by getting understandable and enough frequency of the input, practicing also has to be done by the students to go from controlled to automatic processing. The more they practice to use a form, the better and more accurate they use the form. So, we can conclude that the students are not only learning the forms consciously by rule, but also imitating and practising to use them.

Although group I has more occasions than group II, group II has a higher percentage of accuracy for both morphemes. As the students knew the purpose of the researcher asked them to write a recount text, some of them could not be relax. In other words, the affective filter of the students is “up” that make the input may not be processed. Therefore, some of them tried to use as many past form as possible without considering whether they use it correctly and accurately or not. This causes group I has a more number of words in their writing, a more number on occasions, but a lower accuracy score in using both of the morphemes than group II.

As for students in group II, most of them only use the forms that is used and practiced often (e.g. went, slept, bought and brought). Therefore, this group has a less number of words in their writing, a less number of occasions, but a higher accuracy score for both morphemes than group I.

The Accuracy/Learning Order for the Two Morphemes

The rank-ordering method did not necessarily decide whether a particular morpheme was acquired or not. Therefore, the researcher carried out the implicational scaling and had confirmed that the proposed scaling for group I is considered valid with the Crep score of 96 per cent. And for group II, the implicational scaling is also considered valid with the Crep score of 97 per cent.
The result from the rank ordering method is that both of the groups have the same order. The past irregular form is in the first rank, while the past regular form is learned later. This result is the same as the “acquisition hierarchy” as Krashen (1977a) suggested by grouping morphemes according to accuracy. Therefore, the result supports Krashen’s (1978) natural order hypothesis; we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that although the students in group II have a less number of occasions for the two morphemes than the students in group I, they use both of the morphemes more accurately. The result of average accuracy calculation of group I for the past regular form is 76.7 per cent and the past irregular form is 77.27 per cent. Meanwhile the result of group II for the past regular form is 77.4 per cent and the past irregular form is 79.5 per cent.

The result shows us that although the students in group II use a less number of occasions of the past regular and the past irregular forms, they use them accurately. While in the case of the students in group I, they tried to use as many past forms as possible, yet they cannot use them accurately. That is why we can find some overused morphemes in group I. Those errors are made because the affective filter “up”, they were inhibited when the research was conducted, so the input may not be processed. Moreover, this group has a higher standard deviation than group II which is 29.43 for the past regular form and 29.48 for the past irregular. Meanwhile, group II has 21.59 for the past regular form and 27.32 for the past irregular form. These numbers show us that the distribution of scores in group II is better than in group I.

Although the accuracy score of group I for the past regular form does not reach the minimum score or KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal) that has been set, which is 77 per cent, we cannot conclude that the students in this group do not acquire the past regular form. Therefore, the implicational scaling is carried out to demonstrate whether each morpheme has been acquired or not. In this scaling, each student has their own score. The result of this scaling shows us that there are a more number of students group I who are considered “acquired” the past regular form than the number of students in group II.

This scaling also shows that the orders of learning of both of the groups for the two morphemes that have been proposed are valid. According to the rank ordering method which sets the order of learning based on the average percentage accuracy score, the past irregular form is learned before the past regular form. The order of learning got from this study is the same with the hierarchy of acquisition suggested by Krashen (1977a).

The results of average accuracy calculation of both groups are only slightly above the minimum score set by the school, there is also one that does not even reach the minimum score. Then, we can say that the students need more input and practice in using the past regular and the past irregular forms. As for the second research problem, the answer is based on the accuracy score, the past irregular form is learned before the past regular form which is the same with the hierarchy of acquisition suggested by Krashen (1977a). Thus, the result supports Krashen’s (1978) natural order hypothesis; we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order.

There are some factors that constrain this study. First, the data are taken only once which makes this study is less reliable to be used as a standard of the description of the students’ accuracy. Second, the data was got only in the form of recount texts. The students may have different percentage of accuracy of the past regular and the past irregular forms when writing different type of text (e.g. narrative text).
SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions are proposed by the researcher to follow up the findings. The suggestion is addressed to the English teachers and future researchers.

For the English teachers, it is suggested to give more help to the students in practicing both the past regular and the past irregular forms. As we know that there is no exact rule for the past irregular form as for the past regular form, teachers consider it as the more difficult to learn and tend to give more examples of the past irregular form than the past regular form. Therefore, to prevent an imbalance of the knowledge of the past regular and the past irregular forms and also an overgeneralization of past form, the teacher should help students in memorizing those forms. The teacher could give the students some tasks regarding the past forms, such as memorizing a certain number of past regular and past irregular forms that they have to recite in every meeting, give the students a written task about the past forms (e.g. writing a diary), ask the students to tell their experience or a story.

Whatever the task the teacher gives, the students should get a reward in the form of scores. So, when a teacher gives a task to memorize the past form, there should be a range of number set by the teacher in order to get a certain score. For example, if the students want to get 80, they have to recite 30-40 for past regular and past irregular forms each.

As for future researchers, it is suggested to take the data more than just once. The future researchers can take the data once every week or every two weeks. It means the future researchers should collect the data four times or, at least, twice in a month. So, the researchers will get more data from the students and know their progress as well by comparing the previous data to the next data. Thus, the future researchers will be able to show how accurately the students use specific morphemes more accurately and it is expected that the result of the next research will be more reliable.

Although this study describes the calculation of the students’ accuracy, it cannot be used as a standard of the students’ accuracy by the English teacher since the data analyzed in this study was taken only once. Thus, if the teacher wants to know the students’ accuracy more accurately, he/she can analyze the students’ works continually to get more up to date information. Moreover, the teacher will know whether the students have improved or not.

REFERENCES