

**INTERLANGUAGE AND ERROR FOSSILIZATION: A STUDY OF
INDONESIAN STUDENTS' LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE**

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Abstract: Learner errors are an inevitable sign of human fallibility; therefore, they always exist in second language learning. They become the source for studying the system of the learners' L2 or interlanguage (IL). As a language system, IL has at least three main characteristics: systematicity, permeability, and fossilization (Adjemian 1976; Saville-Troike, 2006, p.41). That IL is systematic and permeable is no longer disputable. However, the premise which claims that IL is fossilized is still debatable. Schachter 1990; Han 2005, etc. view that there is critical period for SLA; adult L2 learners cannot attain complete TL grammar. Their IL errors are fossilized. Meanwhile, the opposing view comes from White and Genesee 1996, Bialystok 1999, and Steinberg et al. 2004, believing that there is no critical period for learning syntax. Based on these, the present study concerned an error fossilization-related issue, with specific focus on grammatical errors. The data were grammatical errors from the learners' free compositions collected four times: prior and after one-semester instruction and two months afterwards. The data were analyzed qualitatively. The result indicates that almost all of the learners' grammatical errors could be eliminated. Further surveillance shows that they were dynamic. At a certain period of learning course, some grammatical errors appeared. Due to the instruction, they changed their nature—some were destabilized, some were fluctuating, while others were stabilized. Fluctuating errors tended to destabilize and the stabilized errors were also likely to destabilize. The conclusion drawn from this study is that the learners' grammatical errors are dynamic and not fossilized. They may get stabilized but just temporarily. The learners can take a lot of benefits from the given instruction so as to make their grammatical errors can be destabilized.

Key words: interlanguage, stabilization, fossilization, grammatical errors.

All learners make errors in learning a new language. Their target language (TL) always contains errors. In general, such errors are considered as an inevitable sign of human weaknesses, for example, as a consequence of lack of attention, poor memory, or incomplete knowledge of the language on the part of the learners, or inadequacy of the teachers' teaching. Errors are inevitable in any learning situation which requires creativity such as in learning a foreign language. Current literatures view errors not just as deviations but rather as a source for studying the process/strategies used by the learner in learning the TL. They are evidence about the nature of the process and of the rules used by the learner at a certain stage in learning course. Therefore, if we want to study the learners' IL system, we should find clues to the systems by analyzing the errors they make.

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English produced by Indonesian secondary school students (the research subjects) contains a great number of grammatical errors, as shown in the following sentences:

- (1) *My name is Gilang Cikal Romadhan, I am school at SMA 7 Jakarta.
- (2) *I love biology but I love not subject language French.
- (3) *I have a sister, she age 19 years old and she study at University Esa Unggul.
- (4) *I like sport because with sport we can healthy and strongly.

The examples above show that the learners are confronted with a lot of grammatical problems in their attempt to express the intended meaning in English. To cope with these, they often relied on the linguistic knowledge they already knew either from their native language (NL) or the target language (TL). The above examples indicate that their IL system clearly contains linguistic elements of both from English as well as Indonesian (their native language).

With regard to such errors, on the one hand, Mukkatash (1986), Thep-Ackrapong (1990), Schachter (1990), Sorace (1993), and Han (2005) confirm that non-native speakers cannot attain complete TL grammar; the errors will become permanent features of their IL. In other words they are fossilized. Pedagogical intervention to learners' IL has a very little or no value; learners cannot take benefit from instruction provided by the teachers. They believe that the fossilized IL exists no matter what learners do in terms of further exposure to the TL. The major argument for the claim is that there exists a critical period (CP) for second language learning. It is argued that fossilization is internally determined due to the functioning of biological constraints. They agree that CP reveals a genetic cause of the observed general lack of success among adult L2 learners.

On the other hand, there are scholars who disconfirm such a view. Scovel (1988), White and Genesee (1996), Bialystok (1999), Steinberg et al. (2004) provide data which refute the claim of a CP for the acquisition of grammar. Thus, the belief that a learner's IL may get fossilized (in a sense that the learner's IL may stop developing and thus fail to achieve a TL grammar) is still disputable. It is this phenomenon which inspired me to conduct research on IL errors and because this has become the centre of SLA studies. Scholars in the field say that one of the noticeable characteristics of SLA is the phenomenon of error fossilization; thus, an explanation to error fossilization issue is worth discussing.

The subjects of the present study are 30 Indonesian secondary school students grade twelve who are learning English as a foreign language. Their average age is 17. They have been learning English for 7 years through formal instruction. The problem statement says "are the learners' grammatical errors fossilized?" To answer this question, some subsidiary research questions were raised and formularized as follows: (1) what typical grammatical errors do the learners make? (2) What effect does instruction give to these grammatical errors? (3) What is the nature of the learners' grammatical errors; are they fossilized?

This study is very significant as it can give us (teachers) vivid pictures of the common phenomenon usually occur in L2 learning. The insights derived from this study can contribute to the development of the theory of applied linguistics, especially to the existing theorization of error fossilization in SLA. In general, it can give insights into several aspects of adult L2 learning (i.e. the resources, the process, and the constraints on adult L2 learning).

The term IL was first introduced by Selinker in 1972. He hypothesizes that IL is a natural language, systematic throughout its development. It reflects learners' attempts at constructing a linguistic system that progressively approaches the target system. IL is conceived as the product of interaction between two linguistic systems, the NL and the TL (Gass and Selinker, 1994). Adjemian (1976) refined the 1972 IL hypothesis and singled out three important characteristics: systematicity, permeability, and fossilization. Of these, I want to focus on fossilization. The term fossilization was also introduced by Selinker to refer to "the persistence of plateaus of non-target like competence in the IL" (1988: 92). When its dynamicity and permeability are lost, the features of an IL become subject to fossilization. Normally, we expect a learner to progress further along the learning continuum, so that his competence moves closer to the TL system and contains fewer errors. Some errors, however, will probably never disappear entirely. Such errors are often described as already fossilized, meaning that they have become permanent features of the learner's speech.

A lot of issues have been reported that the vast majority of adult L2 learners fail to achieve native speaker's competence. Estimates of rate of success in adult L2 acquisition typically range from virtually nil to 5% (Birdsong, 2004, p. 12). This might be the reason for Han to prefer to use the term *failure* to refer to this phenomenon, and she defines it as "the permanent lack of mastery of a TL despite continuous exposure to adequate input, adequate motivation to improve, and sufficient opportunity to practice" (Han, 2005, p. 4). This phenomenon of non-progression (cessation) of learning an L2 has become a central concern for SLA researchers and has posed a major challenge to second language theorists.

Researchers note that fossilization is one of noticeable characteristics of SLA. Ellis (2004) states that fossilization is part of the IL process which occurs at a certain point in the IL development. Towell and Hawkins (in Han 2005, p. 13) state that "even after many years of exposure to an L2, in a situation where the speaker might use that L2 everyday for normal language, it is not uncommon to find that the speaker still has a strong foreign accent, uses non-native grammatical constructions, and has non-native intuitions about the interpretation of certain types of sentence". Researchers, therefore, have been confronted with one of the most enduring and fascinating problems of SLA, that is, whether or not adults can ever acquire native-like competence in L2.

In addition to the term *fossilization*, Selinker and Lakshamanan (1992) introduce the term *stabilization*. They state that stabilization is the first sign of presumed fossilization. The difference between the two is defined in terms of permanence. Errors become fossilized when they have become permanently established in the IL of an L2 learner in a form that is deviant from the TL norms and that continues to appear in performance regardless of further exposure to the TL. Meanwhile, stabilized errors are not permanent; they are maintained in the learners' L2 production at a given level of IL development. It is just a momentary halt. Thus, stabilized errors are the ones that eventually disappear as the learner makes progress, whereas fossilized errors are those which do not disappear entirely regardless of the input and exposure given to the learner. Thus, *fossilization* is different from *stabilization*.

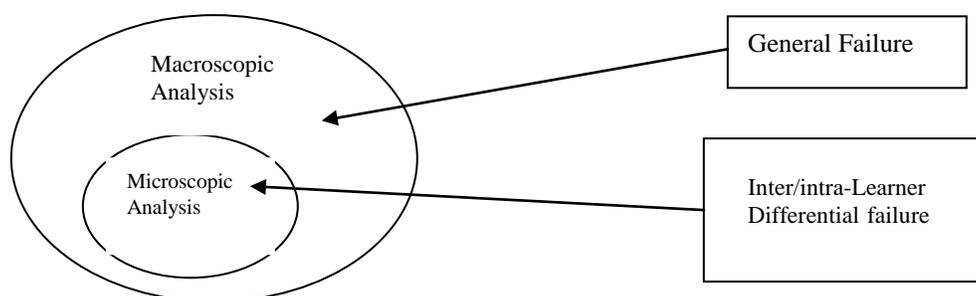
There are multi-factors (external and internal) which influence SLA; by analogy, there are also a lot of factors that cause fossilization to occur. Beebe (1990) and Towell and Howkins (1994) for example, proposed several different perspectives to account for these phenomena such as psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and neurolinguistic. Neurolinguists emphasize the mental or cognitive processes involved in acquisition and the representation of language(s) in the brain; sociolinguists emphasize variability in learner linguistic performance

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and extend the scope of study to communicative competence, and social psycholinguists emphasize group-related phenomena, such as identity and social motivation, and larger social contexts of learning. Han (2005, p. 29) has listed fifty variables used to explain the causes of fossilization which can be grouped broadly into four major perspectives (environmental, cognitive, neurobiological, and socio-affective). Based on these, she offers a systematic way to analyze fossilization that incorporates a macroscopic and a microscopic perspective (as shown in the figure below). The former tries to explain the general causes of fossilization while the latter investigates inter- and intra-learner failure. On the level of microscopic analysis, SLA researchers to date have advanced a considerable number of explanations for the causes of fossilization. These factors may operate independently or in partnership leading to the differences in the individual learner's failure. On the level of macroscopic analysis, Han strongly assumes that "adult L2 learners are universally preconditioned to fossilization" (2005, p. 44) because of two basic constraints, namely, biological (i.e. critical period) and cognitive (i.e. NL transfer). These two constraints "control the ability to acquire an L2 and subsequently the ultimate degree of success" (2005, p. 87).

Chart 1: A two-level analysis of fossilization:



(Han, 2005, p. 8)

The present study does not touch specific factors which account for the variability and individuality of the learner, but rather, it concentrates on general factors which cause error fossilization (or macro analysis). These general factors are relatively stable and hence generalizable, at least, to large homogeneous groups of learners. Further discussion focuses on the latter. L2 learners are generally preconditioned to experience error fossilization due to biological (critical period) and cognitive constraints.

Within biological perspective, a good number of SLA research gives strong evidence that CP is responsible for error fossilization in learners' SLA. It is argued that fossilization is internally determined due to the functioning of biological constraints. Research findings show that CP reveals a genetic cause of the observed general failure among adult L2 learners. This view initially comes from Lenneberg (1967, p.176) who claims that most individuals of average intelligence are able to learn an L2 after the beginning of their twenties, although the

occurrence of 'language learning blocks' rapidly increases after puberty. Automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a laborious effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty.

Fossilization studies by Johnson and Newport (1980) and Patkowski (1989) as reported by Han (2005, p. 53) have empirically confirmed Lenneberg's CPH and refined it to a significant extent. Among other things, it is concluded that age limitation on L2 development is due largely to the biological maturation and not due to lack of exercise of the learning capacity during the CP. The studies also demonstrate a heterogeneous difference in the ultimate performance of post puberty learners. This heterogeneity can be explained as follows: (1) before age 15, and most particularly before age 10, there are very few individuals who differ in the ultimate ability to learn language within any particular age group. Success in learning is almost entirely predicted by the age in which it begins; (2) for adults, later age of acquisition determines that one will not become native in a language. However, there are large individual variations in the ultimate ability in the language, within the lowered range of performance.

With regards to syntax, however, there are two competing views about the CP for learning syntax. Applied linguists such as Patkowski (1980), Johnson and Newport (1989), and Long (1990) view that there is a CP for learning syntax. The opposite view comes from Scovel (1988) White and Genesee (1996), Bialystok (1997) Steinberg et al. (2004), and Birdsong (2004) who confirm that there is no CP for the acquisition syntax. Learners who begin to acquire an L2 after puberty still have the potential to attain native-speaker level of grammar.

Within cognitive perspective, IL is considered as a separate linguistic system. It is thought to be distinct from both the learner's NL as well as the TL. IL is prominently characterized by the existence of errors. Within cognitive view, errors are evidence about the nature of the processes (or strategies) used by the learner at a certain stage in the course of IL development. Most L2 learners, however, are reported to fail to reach the TL competence. In other words, they still produce errors in their TL performance. They stop learning when their IL still contains errors. In other words, their errors are fossilized.

It is assumed that IL is the result of the learners' attempts to produce the TL norms. That is to say, errors are the product of the cognitive process in SLL. Selinker (1997), Ommagio (1986), and Ellis (2004) share a common understanding about such cognitive processes. It was Selinker (1977) who first conceptualized the five cognitive processes/strategies of second language learning. He describes the five processes in terms of: (1) language transfer (interference from native language), (2) transfer-of-training (errors due to the nature of the language-learning materials or approaches), (3) strategies of second language learning (errors due to the learner's own approach), (4) strategies of second language communication (errors due to the way in which the learner communicates with native speakers in natural language-use settings), and (5) overgeneralization of TL rules (errors due to the way in which the learner restructures and reorganizes linguistic material).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses L2 learners' reaction to grammar instruction as a means of determining whether or not learning has ceased to develop (Han, 2005). The procedure constitutes three main stages: pre, while, and post instruction. This study was initiated by assigning the research subjects (30 secondary school students learning English as a foreign language) to write a free composition (C1) entitled "About Myself" of about 150 to 200 words. To get a similar result, however, they were given pointers to tell about such as their study, parents, daily activities, past experience, future ideas. An error analysis or EA (James 1998) was carried out on their C1 to identify grammatical errors or difficulties shared mostly by all the students. The result of this EA indicates that 8 main types of grammatical errors were made by the learners.

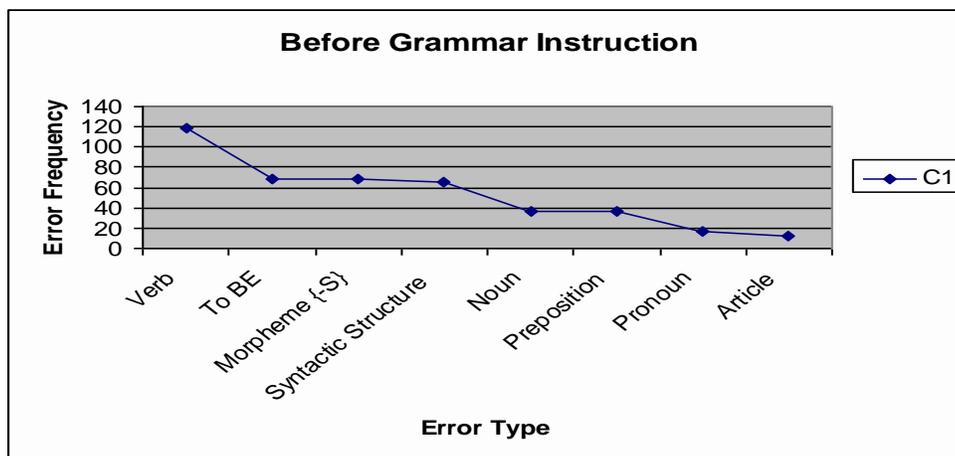
Next, an instruction on these 8 error types was conducted for one semester (16 meetings). Each session was dedicated for the discussion of one grammatical feature; even though there were often classroom events which covered more than one grammatical feature. Such a condition was unavoidable. Explicit grammar instruction plays an important role in the foreign language classroom, particularly in the acquisition of grammar. That is to say, this may create the conditions needed for grammar acquisition to occur; they are facilitative for SLA. The explicit grammar instruction given to the students was a planned intervention in SLA, that is, by presenting and practicing the grammatical features. There were at least 3 main things covered: it provided the students with L2 input (teachers' words, both their form and their function illustrate how language is used); the opportunities for interaction (at least between teacher and students); and the grammar explanation. These could enhance the learners' recognition or conscious understanding of grammatical constructs.

After the instruction, I returned their C1 and asked the learners to rewrite it to produce composition two (C2). This was intended to find out the learners' response to the instruction as an attempt to eliminate their grammatical errors. Two months after the project, again I returned their C1 and asked them to rewrite it to produce composition three (C3). In addition, the learners were also asked to write another free composition with different topic to produce composition four (C4). I strongly assumed that the learners would make new error types (different from those they previously made) as they started learning to use new grammatical items. From C4, I tried to investigate whether or not the learners would make new error types. These four compositions (C1, C2, C3, and C4) constituted the primary data of this study. Finally, a qualitative study (through observation, debriefing, and interview) was conducted to collect information about the cognitive causal factors of error stabilization and the classroom events which contributed to error destabilization. This was, of course, carried out throughout the semester, since the beginning of the project until the end.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

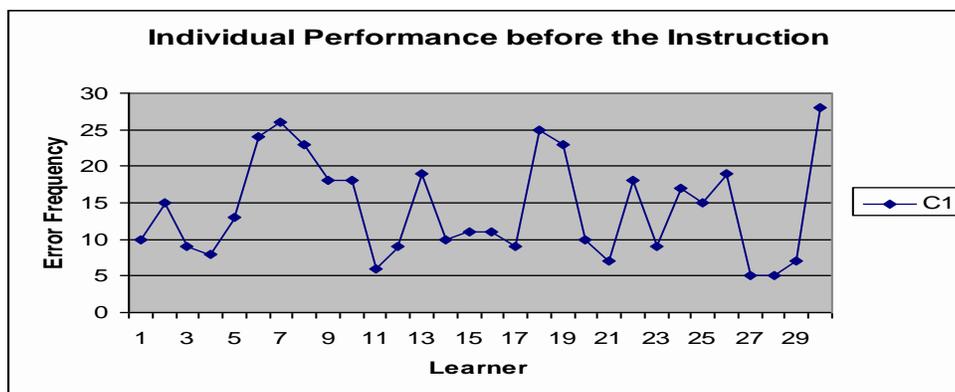
The result of EA on the learners' C1 indicates that the learners made a significant number (422 cases) of grammatical errors, which could be classified into: verb (119 cases), to BE (69 cases), bound morpheme {-s} (68 cases), sentence structure (65 cases), noun used as verb, (37 cases) preposition (36 cases), pronoun (16 cases), and article (12 cases), as shown in the chart below.

Chart 2: The Types and Frequency of Errors before Instruction



Each of the learners contributed different number of errors. The highest number (29 cases) was made by student No 30 and the lowest number (5) was made by learners No 26 and 27. Thus, each learner made 14 errors in average in his/her composition one, as illustrated in the charts below.

Chart 3: The Learners' Individual Performance before Instruction



Based on these, in essence, I can draw a conclusion that the learners' English is considered as IL. Their language system is neither that of English nor Indonesian; it contains the elements of both. Their IL is idiosyncratic in nature; it is distinct from both their NL (Indonesia) and the target language (English) but containing elements from both languages, as seen in the chart below.

infiltrated by both the NL and the TL linguistic rules, as was proven by researchers in the 1970s and the 1980s such as LoCoco 1976; Grauberg 1977; and Wode 1986.

The third property is fossilization. With regards to this aspect, I conducted a classroom remediation (grammar instruction) on the eight types of error mentioned above. It was expected that pedagogical intervention could give beneficial effect to their grammatical errors; in a sense that their errors could be eliminated. The instruction lasted for one semester. At the end of the semester, I returned their C1 and asked them to rewrite it to produce C2. The error frequency collected from C1 and C2 were compared and the result revealed that grammar instruction was capable of reducing 66% of the learners' errors, from 422 error cases in C1 to 142 error cases in C2. The charts below illustrate the decrease of the error frequency after the ET.

Chart 5: Error Frequency after the Instruction

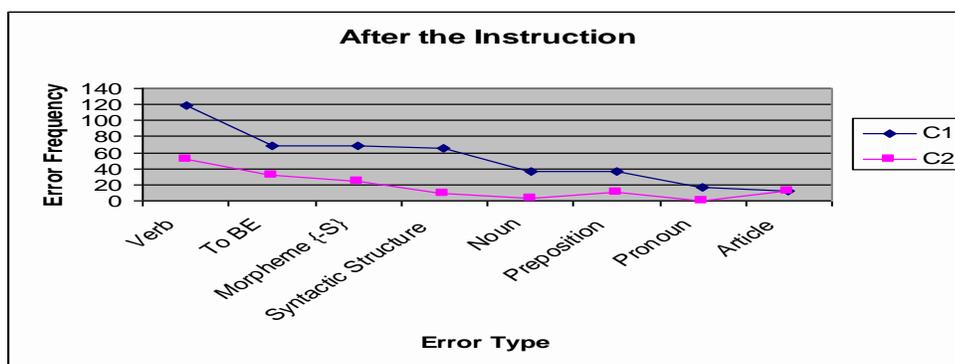
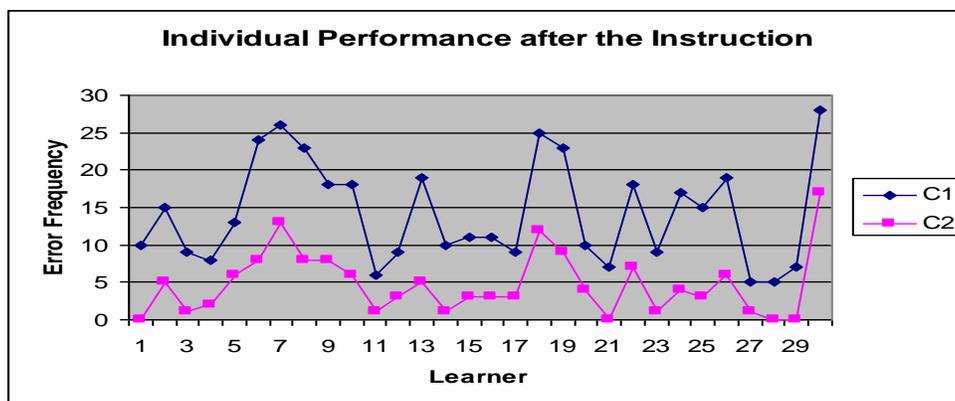


Chart 6: The Individual Performance after the Instruction



This outcome supports the previous studies on the effect instruction on SLA by White (1996), Spada and Lightbown (1993), and Muranoi (2000), claiming that L2 learners gained benefit from instruction provided by the teacher. It contributed to the students' IL development. However, the result also indicates that their errors were not eradicated entirely. To certain aspect, I also agree with Mukkatash (1986) and Thep-Ackrapong (1990) who confirmed that even with systematic pedagogical intervention, learner errors persisted; and

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based on such a phenomena, they claim that IL is fossilized. The present study shows that the grammar instruction could eliminate 66% of the errors; there still exist 142 (34%) persistent (stabilized) errors.

The qualitative analysis shows that these stabilized errors were the results of the learners' learning strategies. At least there are three cognitive mechanism matched with the data, namely: NL transfer as shown in sentences below:

(13) IL: *In the evening *I work my homework or playing play station*, watching TV and sleeping.

NL: *saya mengerjakan pekerjaan rumah atau main play station*

(14) IL : *In the morning *I am praying shubuh* and then I have breakfast then going to school.

NL: *saya sholat shubuh*

Overgeneralization as shown in the following sentences:

(15) *I falled in the ditch in front of my house.

(16) *I telled her that I loved her.

(17) *I holded her hand and she holded my hand.

And simplification as shown in sentences below:

(18) *My mom name Nurlela.

(19) *My father a teacher and my mother house wife.

(20) *I have one brother and two sister.

The above sentences illustrate how they activated their interlingual unit with the three cognitive processes in their attempt to produce English of which their knowledge was still quite limited. The result of the interview indicates that in expressing their ideas in English, most of the learners relied to linguistic knowledge they already had or acquired (either from the NL or the TL). In other words, the learners' IL as the product of cognitive process appeared to be much dependent on NL and TL rules. One thing is very clear. Having fewer resources at their disposal in the TL, they relied on the knowledge they already knew, either from their NL or the TL to help them cope with the problem. In one situation they relied extensively on their NL and in another situation they relied on the TL grammar but did it wrongly by over generalizing or simplifying the rules. Thus, NL transfer, overgeneralization, and simplification are the result of cognitive processes, which manifest themselves in strategies of transfer, overgeneralization, and simplification. These strategies can help learners to cope with the complexity of the TL grammatical system but the result was erroneous.

In this respect, however, I disagree with Mukkatash's and Thep Akkrapong's claims that the learners' grammatical errors were fossilized, but rather they were just stabilized temporarily at that particular period of the learning course. Getting stuck at a certain stage in the learning course is common in L2 learning because of the genetically determined latent psychological structure or interlingual unit which was activated whenever the learners attempt to produce the TL. And the learner errors are the product of such cognitive mechanism in L2 learning.

To prove the assumption that IL errors were stabilized just temporarily, I asked the learners to rewrite C1 (producing C3) 2 months after the Project. The result shows that the learners produced fewer errors than before (from 142 in C2 to 94 in C3), as seen in the chart below. It means that the stabilized errors could be eliminated (destabilized).

The qualitative analysis also shows that there are observable classroom aspects/activities contributed to the error destabilization. Based on the research findings, I can make a conclusion that some classroom events were believed to have contribution to the error destabilization, since these classroom activities could be seen as language learning or language acquisition opportunities. In the classroom, the learners got adequate input, feedback, frequent exposure, explicit grammar explanation, and the opportunity to practice the target language. These five aspects were the content of day-to-day activities during the grammar instruction. These could improve their TL linguistic knowledge and this gave contribution to the error destabilization.

Chart 7: The Comparison of Error Frequency in C1, C2, and C3

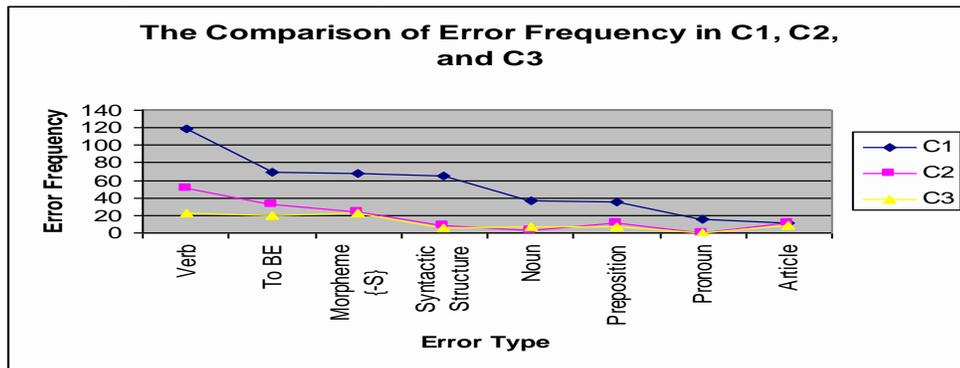
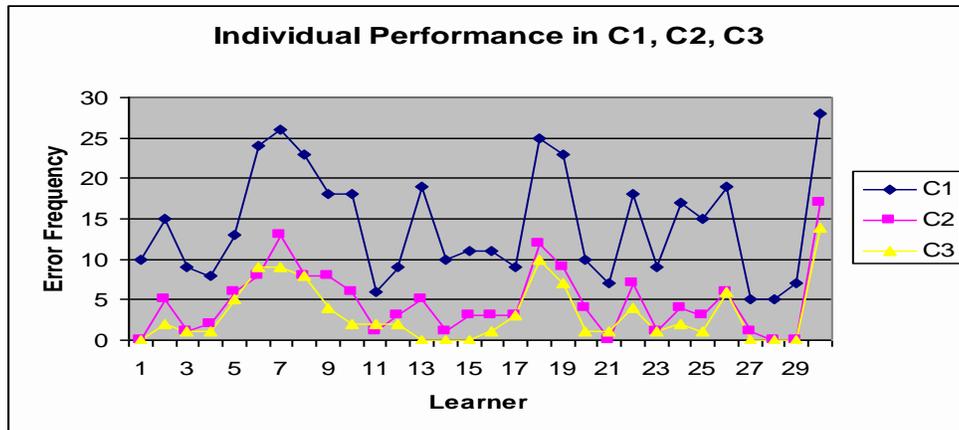


Chart 8: The Individual Performance in C1, C2, and C3.



In addition, I also asked the learners to write another composition (C4) with a new topic, because I assumed that the learners would make new types of errors (different from the above mention) as they started learning to use new grammatical items. The result was obvious. The learners made 6 other types of error (adverb of manner, Preposition –with, *The-*

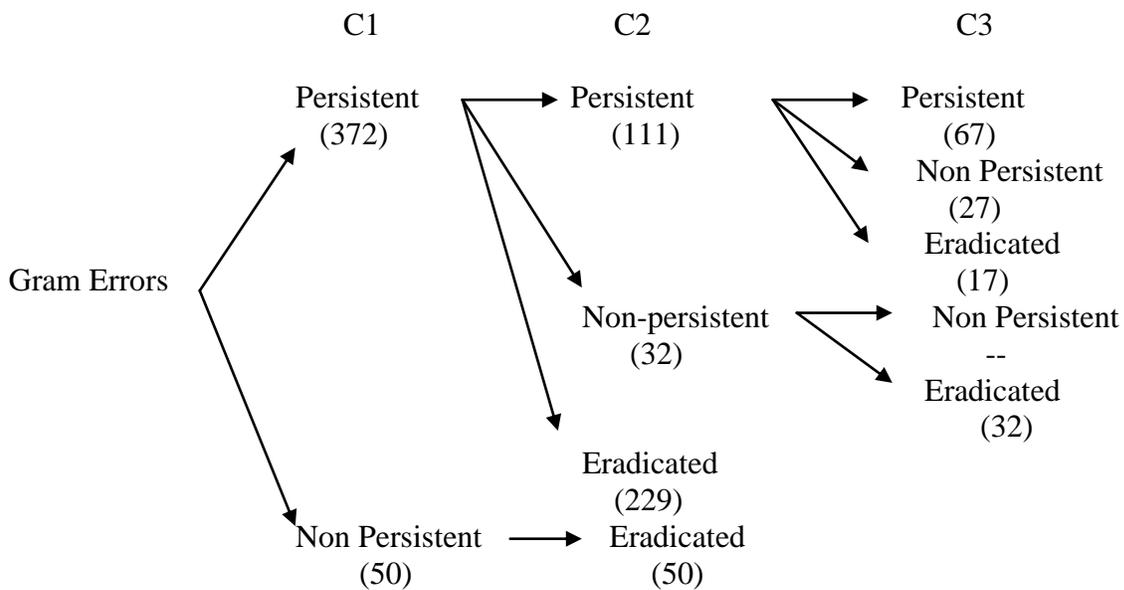
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deletion in superlative adjective, that-Clause, the use past tense instead of the past continuous form, and passivized ergative verb).

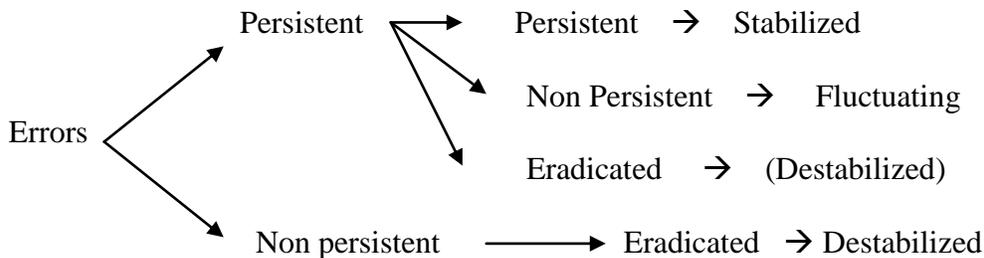
Further surveillance to these data (collected from C1, C2, C3, and C4) shows that as a result of the pedagogical intervention, the persistent errors changed their state: some were still persistent, others were non-persistent (appeared only once within one composition); and the rest were eradicated. The non persistent errors were finally eradicated, as shown in the diagram below.

Diagram 1: The Change of State of the Grammatical Errors



Further data surveillance also provides information that the persistent errors tended to stabilize just temporarily since they would change their nature as the result of pedagogical intervention. The non-persistent errors tended to fluctuate; whereas the eradicated errors were prone to destabilize, meaning that they did not reoccur (backslide).

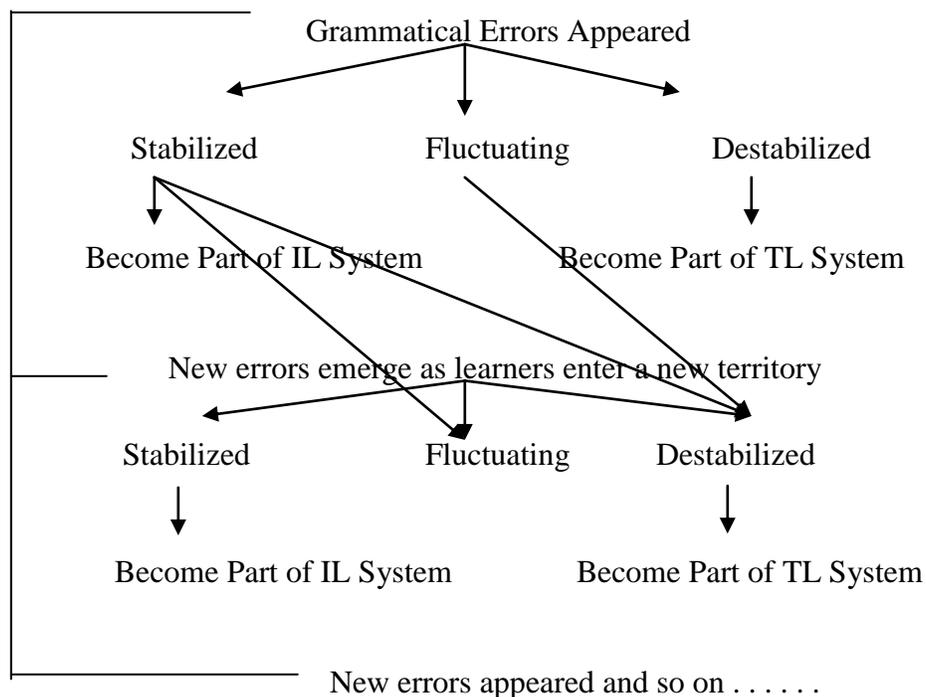
Diagram 2: The Behavior of the Learners' Grammatical Errors



Thus, the data analysis shows that the learners' grammatical errors appeared to be so dynamic. They once appeared then due to the pedagogical intervention, some were destabilized, some were fluctuating, and others were stabilized. The fluctuating errors tended to be destabilized and the stabilized errors were also likely to destabilize. New error types appeared as learners entered unfamiliar territory of communication purposes. I strongly believe that this would go on and on and on as the learners continue learning the TL. The following are some examples (taken from C1, C2, and C3), showing how the learners IL grammar develop into more TL system:

- (1) *My father name is RBK Pramulianto and my mother name Meiliana*
My father's name is RBK Pramulianto and my mother name is Meiliana.
My father's name is RBK Pramulianto and my mother's name's Meiliana.
- (2) *I am school at SMA 7 Jakarta. I am like English because I want to go around the world.*
I am study at SMA 7 Jakarta. I like English because I want to go around the world
I study at SMA 7 Jakarta. I like English because I want to go around the world
- (3) *I like study math because that is very interesting and making us can think creativity.*
I like studying math because that is very interesting and make us can think creative.
I like studying math because it is very interesting and it make us can think creatively.
- (4) *My father is entrepreneur and my mother house wife.*
My father work is an entrepreneur and my mother a house wife.
My father working as an entrepreneur and my mother is a house wife.

The dynamicity of the learners' grammatical errors can be depicted in the diagram below.
 Diagram 3: The Dynamicity of Grammatical errors



CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be derived from the research findings. Firstly, grammatical errors are dynamic not static (fossilized). They can be eradicated (de-stabilized) through external pedagogical interventions such as grammar instruction. At a particular stage of L2 learning, grammatical errors appear. As a result of pedagogical interventions, some errors become destabilize; some tend to stabilize; and others fluctuate. The fluctuating errors finally are likely to destabilize; even the stabilized errors are likely to destabilize. Other new error types are very likely to appear when learners start learning to use new grammatical items. Grammatical errors remain dynamic as the learners continue learning the language. In this way, the learners' IL system develops into TL system.

Secondly, grammar instruction contributes to the error destabilization since it provides the learners with input, feedback, grammar explanation, and the opportunity for the learners to practice. All these classroom activities are facilitative for the error destabilization process. The persistent errors in the learners' IL grammar are merely a temporary plateau. It is theorized that stabilized errors can be good candidates for fossilization; nevertheless, this can only happen under the condition that learners stop learning the language or having inadequate input and exposure to the TL. Language exposure and input are very critical for IL grammar to develop. When learners stop learning the language, the destabilization process stops and the IL errors become fixed; errors then become permanent features of the learners' IL system. On the contrary, when learners continue learning the language, the destabilization process keeps on going; IL errors change their nature, which finally can become part of TL system.

Thirdly, stabilized grammatical errors are de-stabilizable, meaning that they are learnable at post puberty. The learners, aged 17 in average, have the capability to acquire grammar. Their persistent grammatical errors are likely to destabilize when requirements for SLA are fulfilled (i.e. grammar instruction). This is an accord with the hypothesis which states that there is no CP for the acquisition of syntax. Finally, I conclude that the learners' grammatical errors are not fossilized. They may get stuck (stabilized) temporarily due to the learners' individual differences or due to the nature of the grammatical features themselves. Stabilization and destabilization commonly occur in SLA as long as learners have not yet reached the TL system. They are clearly inevitable part of learning process. Such a natural persistence to the new system can be overcome by further exposure to and hours of practice of the grammatical items involved. Thus, following Selinker and Lakshamanan distinction between fossilization and stabilization, I prefer to use the term *stabilization*, rather than *fossilization* to describe the learning condition of L2 learners who cease to develop their IL system.

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