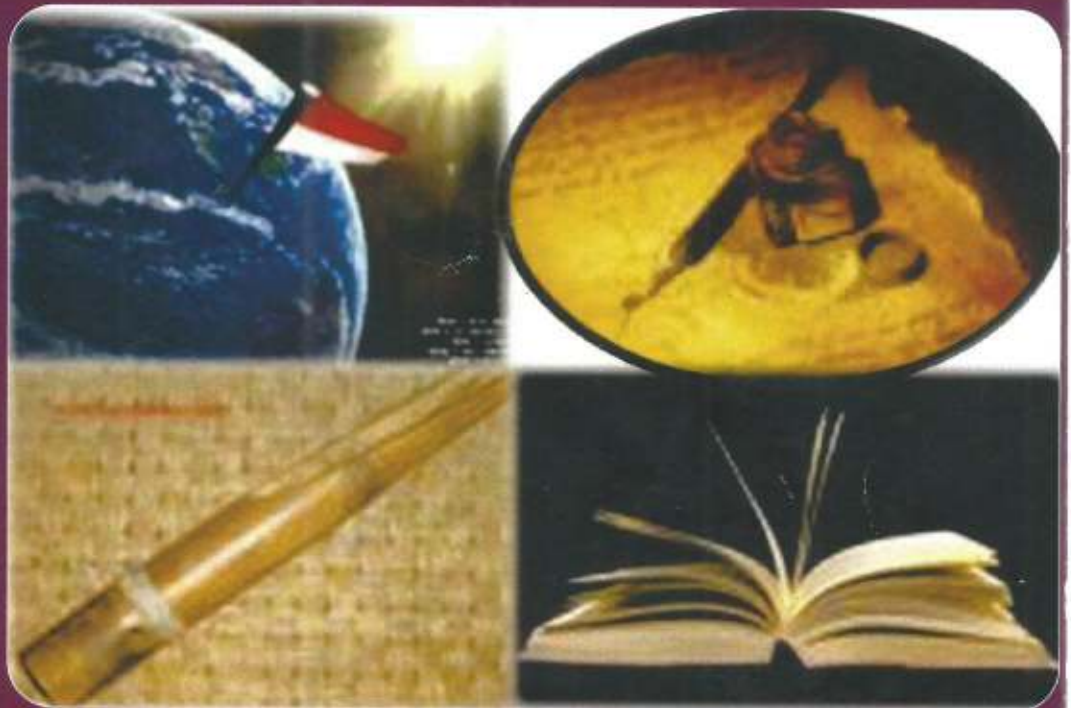


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DAFTAR ISI

Karakteristik Bahasa Buru Everhard Markiano Solissa	(97-103)
Struktur Fonotaktik Bahasa Gorong (SFBG): Kajian Deskriptif Sinkronis Iwan Rumalean	(104-111)
Representasi Budaya dalam Puisi "Di Benteng Orange" Karya Zawawi Imron: Kajian Antropologi Sastra Jafar Lantowa	(112-119)
Konjungsi Antarkalimat dalam Bahasa Gorontalo Dakia N. DjoU	(120-133)
Nilai Kearifan Lokal dalam Struktur Teks Leningo, Puisi Lisan Gorontalo Ellyana Hintu	(134-142)
Linguistik dan Pengajaran Bahasa Adriansyah A. Katili	(143-147)
Meningkatkan Kemampuan Mengidentifikasi Struktur dan Unsur Kebahasaan Teks Tanggapan Deskriptif melalui Metode <i>Discovery Learning</i> pada Siswa Kelas VII SMPN 3 Telaga Tahun Pelajaran 2015/2016 Asna Nteli	(148-159)
English Tense Marking of Indonesian Speakers and Its Implication to Language Teaching Education Nonny Basalama	(160-170)
Sosiologi Sastra dalam Novel <i>Belenggu</i> Sance A. Lamusu	(171-178)
Analisis Sosiologis Novel <i>Bukan Pasar Malam</i> Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer Zilfa Achmad Bagtayan	(179-188)

ENGLISH TENSE MARKING OF INDONESIAN SPEAKERS AND ITS IMPLICATION TO LANGUAGE TEACHING EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to test Indonesian Learners of English for their knowledge and skill of tense marking redundancy in English. As a part of qualitative study, four Indonesian learners were interviewed and tested. This study revealed that there are many different reasons for the use of incorrect English by Indonesian learners. Firstly, there are errors that are the result of a direct translation from an Indonesian context. Errors related to the tendency to use lexical markers are also found in this study and the use of lexical markers makes the speech sound unlike English enough to be considered an error. This study also discovers that the Indonesian tends to frequently express present tense in their speaking. The most interesting reason for errors was interlanguage which seemed to account for most errors in the production test. It is hoped that the results can provide insight to not only in Indonesia context but also to other various contexts in English foreign language learning and teaching.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is trying to cover discussion of the reason why Indonesian speakers of English are often accused of using too many words when they express their thoughts, using repetitions and redundancy. It is argued that the problem happens because Indonesian language does not have grammatical tenses, thus the language marks its tenses lexically. When Indonesians try to apply English rules to their expression they end up using more words than necessary to express themselves.

As a part of a qualitative study, data were obtained from some adult learners. Four Indonesian learners who were living in Australia were interviewed and tested. It was assumed that the learners who were studying would have more exposure to correct English tense marking. Analyzing the way how they use English tense marking, several theories of why Indonesian tends to use more words in their communication is critically reviewed in this article. The issue of first language interference and inter lingual error are also brought into discussion in this part. The participants were interviewed to obtain natural data of the English use as a production test. The

participants were also asked to answer a multiple choice test to see if they recognize correct English tense marking. The resulting data has been analyzed for tense marking, and from this analysis an attempt would be made to find reasons of the unique expression of English by Indonesians, and its implication for teaching Indonesian language to the learners, and English foreign language context including in Indonesia.

Some theoretical perspectives are considered useful to be incorporated into discussion such as tense markers in Indonesian language and why redundancy takes place for Indonesian speaker, which those all are highlighted in the following.

Indonesian is a grammatically tense less language. This does not mean that it cannot express tenses. This is done in other ways. The tenses in Indonesian can be shown by some adverbial time markers and key words. There are many languages which share this lack of grammatical tense markers as what has been underlined by Lyons in the following statement; "Malay and Chinese languages do not grammatically distinguish between present and past events or between

present and future events" (Lyons, 1995 p, 312). The Indonesian language in particular distinguishes tenses by using some adverbial times such as : kemarin (yesterday), sekarang (now), besok (tomorrow), setiap hari (everyday) and some key words; telah, (action finished) sedang, (action in progress) and akan (will [future tense]). This implies that in order to stress when the action happen, a lexical marker rather than a grammatical marker is used. This can subsequently brought the understanding that because Indonesian does not have grammatical tenses, the Indonesians tend to use many words to express their feelings and ideas, in spoken and written language. The following examples are drawn to support the argument.

Keluarga Brown sedang bersiap-siap menerima tamu-tamu.

family Brown are ready-ready receive guest-guest

The Browns are getting ready to receive the guests.

John akan belajar Bahasa Indonesia besok.
:John will study language Indonesia tomorrow.

John will study Indonesian tomorrow.

(Danoesoegondo, 1996, p. 66)

In sentence number 1 and 2, we can see that Indonesian use many more words in their expression than they do in English. There are about eight words in the first sentence and six words in the second sentence. The words in the first sentence, for example 'the Browns' is said as 'keluarga Brown', furthermore the word 'sedang' in Indonesian is a key word which can indicate that the event is in progress, the last words 'tamu-tamu' which in English is only represented by one word 'guests' We can also examine this phenomenon through a short conversation (below) and then compare it with English:

- John, apakah Bob ada di rumah?
- John is Bob home?
- Ya, tetapi saya kira dia sedang tidur siang.

- Yes, but I think he is taking a nap.

The first sentence of the conversation above clearly shows that Indonesians use more words than English. On the other hand, the second sentence has the same number of words; eight words for every sentence, but if we analyze the sentence, we can find that the two words in Indonesian; 'tidur siang' are only represented by English with 'a nap.' The articles in English make it seem as though there are as many words in the English expression, however, if you just count the subjects, and objects, Indonesians use more words.

When Indonesian learners speak English, they tend to use many words in order to stress meaning. This happens because Indonesians are influenced by their mother tongue. Indonesian uses repetition to apply lexical tense markers to the action of a sentence. First language interference deals with the problems encountered due to the incompatibility of the two languages. This difference will result in the non-native speaker using elements of their mother tongue incorrectly in the second language. Aitken (1992) has discussed of the influence which affected by the learner's mother tongue as one of the problems occurs in language learning. In accordance with this, Barzegar (2013, p 323) classified this type of error as 'interlingual error', which is the error takes place due to the learner's mother tongue interference. However, this does not mean that all errors are a result of this first language interference, as behaviorists believe, for they could occur for many other reasons such as lack of vocabulary or incomplete education, or the complexity of the target language (Lightbown and Spada 2006).

The other theory which has helped the researcher to better understand her study is the interlanguage hypothesis theory as proposed by Selinker in 1972 (Selinker, 1972; Gas and Selinker, 1994). Selinker proposed that when using a target language the learner follows a system of rules which are different from the native language and the target language (cited in Eckman 1981).

In relation to this theory, this study found that the errors that the participants made in this study analysis could be also linked to the concept of interlanguage. This will be further incorporated in the data analysis and discussion below.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to test Indonesian Learners of English for their knowledge and skill of tense marking redundancy in English. There are four Indonesian learners were interviewed and tested of their English use. To ensure a varied background in experience of English, two of the interviewees were studying academically in Australia, and the others two were not studying but had completed an English course. It was assumed that the learners who were studying would have more exposure to correct English tense marking. The purpose of the interview was to gather spontaneous data, the interviewees were asked to talk about their experiences when they came to Australia for the first time. Specifically they were asked about their feelings when they came to a new country and what was different about Australia compared to their own country. As the interviewees English was obviously less than perfect, their expression has been inspected only for errors of tense and lexical markers.

The test was designed to test the learners' ability to recognize tense and tense marking redundancy in English. The learners were asked to choose possible correct sentences from four different sentences. More than one sentence used correct English and one of the correct sentences would include a redundant lexical marker. As the English way of adding suffixes (e.g. -ing, -ed) to the end of words to indicate past tense can be confusing to English learners, incorrect application of suffixes (e.g. goed instead of went) have been included in the questions as distractions. It was assumed that the learners, who were particularly studying English in private course, would have more exposure to correct English tense marking. The purpose of the interview was to gather

spontaneous data, the interviewees were asked to talk about their experiences in English learning. Specifically they were asked about their feelings in learning the language. But the focus of analysis lied on understanding of the use of tenses in their expressions and lexical markers.

The test conducted was designed to test the learners' ability to recognize tense and tense marking redundancy in English. The learners were asked to choose possible correct sentences from four different sentences. More than one sentence used correct English and one of the correct sentences would include a redundant lexical marker. As the English way of adding suffixes (e.g. -ing, -ed) to the end of words to indicate past tense can be confusing to English learners, incorrect application of suffixes (e.g. goed instead of went) have been included in the questions as distractions.

For example,

Choose the correct sentence:

- a. Yesterday I went to the shops. (correct grammar, redundant lexical marker)
- b. Yesterday I go to the shops. (incorrect grammar)
- c. I goed to the shops. (distraction)
- d. I went to the shops. (correct grammar, no redundant lexical marker).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Through the data analysis and interpretation some themes emerged as critical for further discussion including The Use of Lexical Markers and Substitution of Present Tense for Past Tense. They all are discussed in the following.

The Use of Lexical Markers

This study reveals that all the participants tend to use more lexical markers (adverbial times) in their English communication. There are various expressions from the participants indicate the using of these adverbial times such as 'from beginning', 'from time to time', 'now I come again, which all of

those are not necessary in appropriate English expression.

Substitution of Present Tense for Past Tense

The substitution of present tense for past tense also occurred in the use of English by Indonesian speakers. For example Sunaryo in expression numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, Parman in numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, Deni in numbers 1-4, 8 and Syamin in numbers 1-5, 7-9. The result shows that the substitution they made of present tense for past tense do not occur all the time in their speaking. This leads to assume that the participants show their cognition of the English tenses and structures. It seems that Indonesian learners tend to use present tense for everything they communicate in English as this might be easier for the learners to simply using lexical markers to stress when the events take place. This could mean that speaking does not allow them time to convert tenses and so they use only the present tense.

Some of the results from the interviews were surprising. I expected that the two English learners who were studying in Australia would have better grammatical tense marking in their spoken English. This was not the case because the results in percentage of grammar correct are as follows:

Deni (non-student, pseudonymous name) 62%
 Sunaryo (student, pseudonymous name) 53%
 Syamin(non-student, pseudonymous name) 31%
 Parman (student, pseudonymous name) 26%

The recognition tests followed the same general pattern except that Parman's recognition skills were better than Syamin's.

Deni (non-student)	100%
Sunaryo (student)	100%
Parman (student)	80%
Syamin (non-student)	45%

The above results indicate that only Deni is close to mastery of tense marking in English as he obtained 62% for the production test and 100% for the recognition test, while the other three performed poorly in the production test and

seemed to be in the process of emergence. However, since Sunaryo and Parman score highly for the recognition test we might assume that the mistakes in the production test were due to nervousness - their being under pressure to speak at the time. Syamin does not score well in either test, so it could be said that he is definitely still in the process of learning the language.

There could individual and social reasons for the unexpected results. It becomes clear when I examine Deni's back ground why his English is so good. He worked as a Hotel Manager in Indonesia, a position which might require him to speak English with native speaking guests. This would give him a reason to become familiar with the language before he started his English course in Australia. He also brings the story into the present so it is right according to the context, which might be why he got better mark in the spontaneous data. Sunaryo was an English teacher in Indonesia, who is studying for his Ph.D. in Anthropology in Australia. His experience with English helps him score well in both tests. Parman was a chemistry teacher in Indonesia who is studying for a Ph.D. in Education. His grammar is good but he has trouble applying tense in context, hence his low score in the production test and high score in the recognition test. It seems that when he is not under pressure to do it quickly like in speaking, he does well. Syamin has had no contact with English before coming to Australia and is not exposed to English in an academic environment. When more is known about the interviewees' background it becomes clear why the results were surprising.

In all cases tense marking in the production test was not as good as tense recognition. They are still influenced by their mother tongue, Indonesian, which is a grammatically tenseless language, and tends to mark tense lexically. But it does not mean that Indonesian language cannot be distinguished linguistically between present and past events or between present and future events(Lyons, 1995, p 312). The problem is that when

they are asked to express themselves verbally in English, there is no time to wonder about tense markers as they feel they must speak as quickly as they can. The interviewees who have a good knowledge of English should result less lexical marking. Thus, if they have the knowledge, they will be able to make their sentences shorter, and use grammatical tense marking. Because Indonesian tend to use many words and tenseless language, they distinguish the various events grammatically or could be because the complexity of the English language itself.

There is a theory which could explain why tense recognition was better than the use of tense in the production test. In Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis (1985) there are two ways to learn a language, one is to acquire it in meaningful interaction, the other is to learn it by learning its rules such as in a classroom setting (Krashen, 1981;1982). Further to that, Krashen says that only language that is acquired is available for natural, fluent communication (Krashen cited in Lightbown and Spada, 1994, pp. 26). The learners that were examined could have learned English more than acquired English which would explain why tense recognition was better than the use of tense in the production test. The xamples of natural data obtained and analyzed from the four participants highlighted in the following table

Table 1
Data Classification and Analysis

Sunaryo

No	Expression	Obligatory Context	Lexical Markers	Correct Grammar	Incorrect Grammar	Should Be
1.	Okay, thank you, I think. It is very nice experience with I have here.	Present thought about the past.		think	is have	was have had
2.	So since the first time I came or arrived in Australia,	Past events	since	came arrived couldn't	is plan	was planned

	so oh it is a kind of surprise thing to me, something that I couldn't believe it so because I never plan actually to go to Australia.					
3.	So I think that the Almighty God has already decided, where to go and He knows actually the best place to go, to study.	Present thought about past	already	has decided	knows	knew
4.	So, ah, flying from Jakarta ...right by Garuda Indonesia, a very very huge airplane, Garuda Indonesia, so it was very very interesting journey you know to go to Australia with a couple of friends	Past		was go	flying	flew
5.	So on the plane, okay I... I... feel that uhm to go or to leave our home town is a very nice experience actually, to find another kind of knowledge, or experience, different from we have in our home town.	Past			feel is have	felt was had

6.	But the problem that I had ...I think I have the same problem as you because we are I mean we have families, we have children,	Past and then switch to present		had have	have had	
7.	so I am also thinking about my wife, I am also thinking about my two children, I believe that not only I myself missed them but they also miss me very much.	present		I am believe misses	miss	
8.	During the first six months actually it is very difficult to adjust with a new	past	during	is	was	
9.	although Australia is very different from Indonesia, I like it very much but sometimes ah you know I have think my family, I have to think my my two kids two children in my home town, so sometimes I missed them very much.	Past		missed is like I have think	was liked I thought of	

10.	But now I am already, I am already settle to live in Australia, And then I have no problem with the weather here, although it is spring, although it is winter or summer, no problem for me.	Past and present	now already	is is	I am already settle have	I have already settled had
11.	It is not very ... I mean it is not very extremely cold when it is in winter and it is not extremely hot when it is in summer.	present		is not when it is when it is		

Deni

No	Expression	Obligator y Context	Lexica l Marke rs	Correct Grammar	Incorrect Grammar	Should Be
1	I was here in 1991 and I find that it is very hard time for me to adjust with the situation Australia.	Past	1991	was	is find	was found
2	If you compare with the Indonesian situation specially for the culture, I got the culture shock at the time, after few months later I don't use	present thought about past		got	don't use	wasn't used

	to for the Australian situation, specially for the weather, and the way how to communicate among us.					
3	My experience at the time I was working at a restaurant and then it's very hard for me to change behavior because I was worked in Indonesia as hotel manager and then become to a chef in Australia.	present thought about past	at the time	was change was worked	it's become	it was became
4	Cooking, yes very difficult. It doesn't matter is life.. ha.. ha that's life.	present		doesn't		
5	For me the lot of experience, I think some advantage to learn uhm... because not many people know in Indonesia ... uhm so many things I can learn here.	present		think can		
6	And now I come again in Australia, uhm as usual also from beginning from month to month I get the culture shock.	Past	now from beginning, from month to month	come get		came got

7	Ya... now I will be used to with and I hope that can improve my ability, to looking surrounding Australia.	present	now	used can	will be	am
8	That my experience .. I can see uhm I can saw that Australian people more free to express something to us, if you say something no, or say yes or no, it's different with	Past and then present		say say it's say	that my... I can see I can saw people more free	that was I could see people are more free
9	To express yes or no like Australia especially for us is very hard, but Indonesian people can think to take the advantage of the express like Australian.	present		s can		
10	'yes' is straight forward and 'no' is straight forward also, but it is not easy for Indonesia n people to set behavior like that.	present		s s		

Parman

No	Expression	Obligator y Context	Lexica l Marke rs	Correct Gramm ar	Incorrect Grammar	Should Be
1	If you ask me my first experience to come to Australia,	Present, explains can't remember			to come to couldn't	coming to can't

	it was long long time ...okay, I'll you but I believe I couldn't remember all.						actually is dealing with my chemistry area ...					
2	Oh yes I think basically we have similar feeling at the beginning. When I just arrive here so I am so happy because that's one of my dream To study overseas, right.	Present thought about past	at the beginning	think	have feeling at arrive am that's	had feelings in arrived was that was	7	but this one is more advanced and more specific area, school of chemistry ... so in term of knowledge that I have, before I came here eh just so different	past		advanced have	was had
3	So, I just everything for me so wonderful, so I have no problem because Everything that I saw just exciting, right.	Present thought about past		saw	have	had	8	I have to say just not enough to follow eh eh to follow the lecture or all of the subject in chemistry area.	Past		have	
4	But after few month eh I don't know how to explain that.. a lot of thing just Make me uncomfortable.	Present thought about past		don't	make	made	9	and on the other hand I really have a problem with with linguists and as you know I am not an English teacher and that time my English so, I can say that is horrible, it is not enough..	Past, addresses interview er in present, then past	that time	know have am can is is	had was could was was
5	I try to think about the thing why say for instance, in dealing with my study ..my background is a chemistry I am a chemistry teacher	Present thought about past		think	try is I am	tried was I was	10	luckily I can pass (pass) on the ELT's tests so I can come here but I don't think that my English enough at the time. so when I was attending the lecture you know what	Present thought about Past Addresses interview er in present tense		don't was couldn't couldn't	can can could could
6	and I am doing eh.. I am continue my study in another...	past			am am continue is	was was continuing it was						

	happen ? just unbelievable, I couldn't I couldn't understand at all, right?				
11	beside the term use is quite different and also the English use is quite different it seem that for me I didn't join any English course before	Past		is is seem seems	was was seemed seemed

	need more time to practice, but actually I am not very active or...				
5	The first thing I am can be to support of my wife study and the second thing is for my sons. ...may be and I can get good experience from Australia	past to present	the first thing	I can get is	I am can be is I came was
6	And for me may be I want to look the activity may be uhm useful for my country . there are many positive things better than our country , this mean if I am uhm a business of of ourselves eh eh employment my country it many thing for me .	present		want to look there are I am	..useful is useful
7	In the first time I get job in the upside motel and I just call from the local Newspaper .and then I mean I mean eh the Boss, they ask me for the come	Past	in the first time	I mean	get call ask got called asked
8	and then the first time just clean, dishwasher, kitchen. It is better than no working.	Past and then present	the first time	is	clean cleaned
9	This experience for me that time I very happy, and then actually I work casual	past	that time	I very work	I was very worked
10	This weather is make very very trouble for me . very different uhm and sometimes one	present		is make	makes

Syamin

No	Expression	Obligator y Context	Lexic al Marke rs	Correct Gramm ar	Incorre ct Gramm ar	Should Be
1	On the first time I came in Australia on 1992. my English is minim, my language is very bad.	past	1992	came	is is	was was
2	This make difficult to everything my feeling is ..uhm I don't know uhm maybe very dark or something	past		I don't	make I don't ..very dark	made I didn't was very dark
3	But for the second month eh I a chance for the course, English course that ..uhm I mean I really happy about that.	past	the secon d month	I mean	I. a.. chance. I really	I have a chance I was really
4	But the study language for me that's very difficult	past			that's need I am not	that was needed I was not

	day three time different seasons,					
11	sometimes ..dry, wind and cold make me uhm uhm a little bit confuse because I don't know how to ... for the seasons.	present		I don't		
12	It's look sunny, and bright warm and we go to the city or somewhere and then the weather coming rain, windy like funny eh.. make us cold and wet	present			it's look make us	it's looking makes us

Further to the discussion. Several limitations of this study would be pinpointed through this paper. First, the test and analysis could have been improved by more preparation beforehand. More specific knowledge about the learner's back ground in English would have been useful in order to assess their level of competency. It also would have been useful to have had a detailed list of grammatical tense errors and lexical markers to look for in the production test. This would have made the results for the production test more accurate and consistent.

The other aspect that needs to be further considered is it was difficult finding errors of tense marking when each learner had such a different style of English. These different styles also made it difficult to decide who used too many words in spoken English. Testing learners of English who speak other languages would have made it clear whether the problem of repetition and redundancy was unique to Indonesians. A judgment test could have been given as well as the recognition test to support the conclusions of the other tests as the judgment tests the ability to correct grammar as well as recognize it. The last one is in regard to sample size which is to gain definitive results. Despite the limitations above, I believe this study has facilitated a pilot study. The results obtained from this study indicate that the subject warrants further investigation.

CONCLUSION

Although this study needs more evidence to support why Indonesian speakers of English are often accused of using too many words, using repetition and redundancy, when they express their thoughts, this study revealed that there are many different reasons for the use of incorrect English by Indonesian learners.

Firstly, there are errors that are the result of a direct translation from an Indonesian context. Secondly, there are errors related to the tendency to use lexical markers. The use of lexical markers makes the speech sound unlike English enough to be considered an error. Thirdly, the Indonesian tends to frequently expresses present tense in their speaking. The most interesting reason for errors was interlanguage which seemed to account for most errors in the production test. In interlanguage the Indonesian leaves out both grammatical and lexical tense markers meaning that tense is often lost in speech. When tense is taken out of a dialogue, often the focus for the action is lost, this makes it difficult for English listeners to understand. While this report does not prove that interlanguage without tense is the cause of many misunderstandings and errors, it is evident from the production tests that it is a possible cause. Further testing of this theory could give more evidence to support this claim. It is hoped the results can give insights for language teachers in understanding more about the diversity of their learners and latter influence the ways how language approach their grammar teaching, and the contribution can be also extended to broader communities needs and knowledge enhancing language learning and teaching, and more specifically teaching English in foreign language classroom where problems arising are quite complex and dynamic.

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