

Interlanguage Verb Tense Systems of Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Among aspect of studies on second language acquisition, interlanguage is one of the most important one. To date research on interlanguage features has provided benefits to the study of second language learning in particular to EFL classroom. The present study explored inter language verb tense system to indicate present, past, and future events employed by Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language. Empirical data were 444 ill-formed utterances elicited through free compositions from the EFL learners. Error analysis and interlanguage analysis were used as analytical tools for data analysis. The results indicate the students have developed their own grammatical system to express present, past, and future events. Whilst their interlanguage system was typified by a number of non-targetlike variants, this study provides evidence of the systematicity of interlanguage as well as a model of particular interlanguage systems, i.e. of Indonesian EFL learners.

Keyword: interlanguage, verb tense system, EFL learners

1. Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA henceforth), according to Saville-Troike (2006, p.2), refers “both to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language.” The additional language is called a second language or a target language. The learning may take place in a tutored or untutored environment and in a second or foreign language setting. SLA also refers to “the learning of another language (second, third, foreign) after acquisition of one’s mother tongue is complete” (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005, p.3). SLA studies have much concern not only the process of acquisition but also the product, i.e. the learner’s language known as interlanguage (Selinker, 1997; Saville-Troike, 2006; Tarone, 2006). They believe that an interlanguage is characterized by systematicity, permeability, dynamicity, variability, and fossilization.

Since the first interlanguage conception in 1972 by Selinker, the methods of interlanguage study have undergone a series of reformulations to avoid the ‘comparative fallacy’ of target language comparisons (Bley-Vroman, 1983). This shift has prompted the alternative term, ‘learner language’, ‘the oral and written language by second language learners’ (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005, p.4). In this study, however, both terms—interlanguage and learner language—are used interchangeably.

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According to Selinker (1997) and Tarone (2006) interlanguage is a natural language which is systematic through its development. It reflects the learners' attempts to construct a linguistic system moving toward the target language system.

It develops overtime as the learners get more and more target language input and try to produce the language in speaking and/or writing. It is believed to be diverse from both the learner's native language and the target language and it is conceived as the product of an interaction between the two language systems. Therefore, it has certain features of both. In this connection, Smith (1994, p.7) affirmed that interlanguage is "the systematic linguistic behavior of learners of a second or other language; in other words, learners of non-native languages". The word "language" suggests that it is an autonomous system which has specific characteristics different from other natural languages; it is idiosyncratic in nature. Whereas "inter" suggests that this version is supposed to be an intermediate stage in the learner's linguistic development. Saville-Troike (2006, p.40) suggests that "learner language has empirically been found to be systematic, dynamic, variable and simplified, both formally and functionally, relative to the target language and the learner's native language".

Whilst learners' second language utterances may be deviant by comparison with target language norms, they have their own systematic systems. The deviations are patterned or systematic. If interlanguages are natural languages, then systematicity should mean the existence of an internal consistency in the linguistic rules which makes up the interlanguage. Like all natural languages interlanguage contains an organized set of rules and basic elements (i.e. lexical items, phonological units, grammatical categories, etc.) as learners actively and systematically construct their own language systems. Learners continually create, test, and refine their hypotheses about the new language they are learning. Thus, interlanguage is a rule-governed, independent system worth studying in its own right (Brown, 2000; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

To date there have been growing numbers of studies on interlanguage with various levels of education, learner's ages, and language background. The results of the studies have structured an insight that interlanguage has been featured by being systematic, permeable, dynamic, and variable (Selinker, 1997; Saville-Troike, 2006; Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor, 2006).

With regards to systematicity, Ellis (1992, p.123) suggests that "interlanguage which the learner has constructed at any stage of development as an internally consistent system". Interlanguage must contain a structured set of rules and basic linguistic elements rather than a random collection of entities. Saville-Troike confirms that "at any particular point or stage of development, the interlanguage is governed by rules which constitute the learner's internal grammar. These rules are discoverable by analyzing the language that is used by the learner at that time" (2006, p.41). Although interlanguage is systematic, differences in context result in different patterns of language use (Saville-Troike 2006, p.41).

Permeability is a specific property of interlanguages which allows the penetration of first language rules and the distortion or overgeneralization of target language rules. Interlanguage system can be influenced by both learners' native language and the target language. In certain conditions in which their target language system has not yet developed, learners may take benefit from the linguistic rules or items of their first language or they may overgeneralize or simplify rules of the target language in their effort to convey the intended meanings. Both processes (native language transfer and overgeneralization) reflect the basic permeability of interlanguage. Permeability is a unique property of interlanguage, which may be different from natural language systems (Selinker, 1997; Song, 2012).

Interlanguage is dynamic in the sense that "the system of rules which learners have in their minds changes frequently, resulting in a succession of interim grammar" (Saville-Troike 2006, p.41). The system of interlanguage is thought to be incomplete and in a state of flux. In this connection, Ellis (1994, p.352) states that "these mental grammars are perceived as dynamic and subject to rapid change". The learner's language system is dynamic or approximated in nature.

Variability refers to a condition where “each interlanguage which the learner forms contains alternative rules for performing the same function. On one occasion one rule is used, on another a different rule (Ellis, 1992:123). For example, English learners use two variants for expressing negation: No look my card/ Don't look my card (Ellis, 1992, p.128). A number of factors might be involved in language acquisition and might vary from person to person, e.g., the nature of input, the environment, and exposure to language.

There have been increasing numbers of research on interlanguage features in home country setting, i.e. Indonesia (e.g. Fauziati, 2010 and 2011; Riyanto 2012; Sutopo, 2013). The studies have in particular focused on learners' foreign language production and they generally found interlanguage errors in the learners' written works at linguistic levels, e.g. phonology, morphology, and syntax. Fauziati (2010) in particular confirmed that the learners' interlanguage grammars were not fossilized. Despite the enlightening findings, these studies, however, did not particularly investigate any of the interlanguage properties such as systematicity, permeability, dynamicity, and variability. In addition, Long's (1990) study on interlanguage concluded that learners' interlanguages exhibit systematicity which manifests itself in many ways, including the regular suppliance and non-suppliance of both targetlike and nontargetlike features in certain linguistic contexts and in the persistence of the same errors. Thus, interlanguages appear to be rule-governed. Martínez and Cabrera (2002) in their narrative qualitative analysis of the interlanguage of compulsory secondary education students in the canary islands found that overgeneralisation of grammatical rules and principles was very common. That is why the learners' interlanguage errors are systematic. The present study is meant to extend the previous studies by focusing more on the interlanguage verb tense system to denote present, past, and future events.

Most studies provide evidence that interlanguage is systematic, however, none of them tried to depict the typical linguistic systems which characterize learners' interlanguage. The current study would like to address this particular area by exploring Indonesian EFL learners' interlanguage system denoting present, past, and future events. Furthermore, very few studies on Indonesian learners' of English has been carried out, hence, it would be crucial to conduct research within this area. This study will make up for the previous ones. It is expected that this study gives a contribution to SLA research in Indonesia and it encourages further research in this area. The main objectives of this study were to investigate and establish the Indonesian EFL learners' interlanguage verb tense system to denote present, past, and future events and to draw patterns of their interlanguage verb tense system to represent present, past, and future events.

2. Method

2.1 Research Type

This is a qualitative research of second language acquisition in classroom context. Chaudron (1990) called it classroom second language acquisition while Ellis (2006) instructed second language acquisition. The framework used in this study is error analysis. This was carried out on the students' composition to identify and collect data on the interlanguage errors shared by all the learners, to describe, and explain the data.

2.2 Research Subjects

The research participants were 90 students of grade eleven of Muhammadiyah Senior High School of Surakarta, central Java, Indonesia. All students spoke Indonesian as native language and they had studied English for at least five years through formal secondary education. Their average age was 17 to 18 years. They were homogeneous in terms of nationality, language background, level of education, level of English proficiency, and age.

2.3 Data and Data Collection Technique

Data were elicited through free composition. The basic reason for the use of free composition as data elicitation was that it is one of the best forms of closely observed language production. The learners could use freely any patterns or rules they had learned or acquired for their own communication purposes. Thus, their free written composition was a free faithful record of their second language production (Allwright and Bailey 1991).

The collection of free composition was a task directly performed by the subjects in the classroom. The students were supervised by the researcher when writing their free composition and submit them in class. The free composition was based on three topics (My Self and Daily Routine, Past Experience, and Future Idea). Each was around 250-300 words.

Data identification was a kind of contrastive activity; the students' interlanguage system was contrasted with the target language which made it possible to identify the learners' interlanguage system. As an experienced teacher with more or less similar social background to those of the learners', the writer had no difficulty to understand the meanings the learners intended to convey. Furthermore, the researcher had direct access to the learners who were at hand and could help her understand their utterances. The learners' language productions included in the data were those which exhibit ill-formed, either ungrammatical and/or unacceptable forms. There were about 444 ill-formed utterances collected from the students' composition, consisting of those which denote present, past and future events. And these were used as the primary data of this research. In addition, this research also used secondary data in the form of information dealing with what was going on within the students, namely, the production of interlanguage. This was collected through classroom observation.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using interlanguage framework to describe and explain the students' interlanguage system in the following procedures: (1) identifying the learners' interlanguage verb tense system to denote present, past, and future events; (2) drawing patterns of the learners' interlanguage verb tense system to represent present, past, and future events; (3) and providing conclusion and explanation to the data.

3. Results

3.1 The Students' Interlanguage Verb Tense Systems to Indicate Present Event

A sentence is presented in simple present tense when it describes actions that are factual or habitual, events occurring in the present but not necessarily happening right now. The result of this study indicates that the students have their own verb tense systems to denote present events, consisting of five patterns as shown below.

3.1.1 Subject + Verb-ing (I going to school)

The students under the study were much more familiar with the *Verb-ing* compared to other verb forms. This could be the result of transfer of training, the interlanguage elements which derive from the way in which the learners were taught. During vocabulary session, the teachers habitually asked the students: "What is the English word for *belajar*"? and the students replied "studying"; "What is the English word for *membaca*?" and the students replied "reading". This classroom technique might have induced the constructions of their interlanguage system in which they often used Verb-ing rather than present Verb-(s/es) to express present events as in "Every day, I going to school with my high spirit". What follows are other examples found in the data:

- (1) At school *we studying* many subjects like English, Mathematics, and Biology.
- (2) *My sister cooking* rice in kitchen every morning.
- (3) *I watching* TV and then I take a bedroom.
- (4) *I jogging* in the morning with my best friend.
- (5) *I watching* TV every night. I love Bollywood movie.

3.1.2 Subject + BE + infinitive Verb (I am study)

Unlike English, Indonesian language does not have BE which serves as a connector between the subject of the sentence and some sort of modifier.

When learning English BE, students tend to perceive it as inseparable part of pronoun and they learn it in binary list of English and Indonesia pronouns, i.e. I am = *saya*, You are = *kamu*, they are = *mereka*, we are = *kita*, she is = *dia perempuan*, he is = *dia laki laki*, etc. Such understanding results in the creation of interlanguage system as they frequently used BE in sentences which needs none, such as in the sentence, "In the morning I am always take a bath". Other examples taken from the data are as follows:

- (1) Every day *I am study* in school.
- (2) And in the night *I am study* the last lesson.
- (3) My *father is work* in Bank BCA.
- (4) My mother *is go* to market every morning.
- (5) In the evening *I am still study* at school".

3.1.3 Subject + to Infinitive Verb (I to study)

To develop students' vocabulary repertoire the teachers habitually implemented explicit vocabulary instruction, i.e. memorization. The students were supposed to memorize irregular verbs in the following manner: *to go-went-gone*, *to come-came-come*, *to buy-bought-bought*, etc. This habit led them to the assumption that *to go* was an inseparable base form. This results in the production of interlanguage verbal sentence such as "Sometimes, my father to help my mother in the market". Other examples taken from the data were as follows:

- (1) Sometimes, *my father to accompany me* to school.
- (2) As long as *my parent to work hard* for our education.
- (3) In school *I to hate* English because it is very difficult.
- (4) We *to go* to school at 7 every morning.
- (5) We *to visit* my grandmother in Kampung on Sunday.

3.1.4 Subject + Past Verb (Every morning I wake up at 04.30)

Tense—"a set of verb forms that indicates a particular point in time or period of time in the in the past, present, or future (Sinclair, 1991:245)—is very important in English. Most of the learners had the knowledge of the various verb forms, i.e. English verb should be changed its form to be in harmony with the tense aspect system. This grammatical rule was still problematic for the students which resulted in the conflation of the present with the past tense form as in "I always got up at seven o'clock in the morning". Other examples can be seen below:

- (1) Every morning I *wake* up early and got dress to school.
- (2) In the morning I *took* a bath and have breakfast at 7 o'clock.
- (3) Every day we usually *got* up early and help my mother in the kitchen.
- (4) I *got* up at seven o'clock in the morning
- (5) Every day *I met* with my close friend Indah from secondary school.

3.1.5 Subject + Complement (She beautiful)

In English, BE is crucial to denote state of being, a quality of one's present experience, for example, "He is my teacher". This system does not occur in Indonesian. This dissimilarity often leads to the creation of interlanguage as in "He very discipline (*Indonesian: dia sangat disiplin*) but he humorist (*Indonesian: dia humoris*). The students' interlanguage system was colored by the non existence of BE in nominal sentence. This was very likely since BE is dummy in such sentence, having a grammatical function but no specific lexical meaning. This dummy BE was often unnoticed by the students. As a result they consistently omitted its occurrence in their nominal sentences as the examples taken from the data below:

- (1) My *mother old* but *she still strong*.
- (2) My *little sister very beautiful* and nice.
- (3) I like him because *he very nice* and funny.

- (4) *All my teachers in school very kind* to me.
 (5) *I angry* with my nephew because he almost hit a car.

To sum up, the data described above indicated that there were five patterns of the students' interlanguage verb tense systems to denote present event. These patterns represent the current created system which accounts for the regularities being apparent in the learner's use of English as a foreign language as shown in figure 1 below.

Table 1: The students' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate present event

NO	Patterns
1	Subject + Verb-ing
2	Subject + BE + infinitive Verb
3	Subject + to Infinitive
4	Subject + Past Verb
5	Subject + Complement

3.2 The Students' Interlanguage Verb Tense Systems to Indicate Past Event

A sentence is presented in simple past tense when it describes actions or situations that started and finished at a definite time in the past. In English the past event is represented with past verb for all subjects. The analysis indicates that the students have their own language system to denote past event, consisting of three patterns described below.

3.2.1 Subject + Present Verb (*We go to Parangtritis by bus yesterday*)

Forming the simple past in English is still a tricky business for the students. Among other things, this could be due to the non existence of verb tense system in Indonesian. This results in the creation of a plethora of non-target-like forms or interlanguage when they expressed their ideas about past event for example, "Last month, I and my friends play sport". The students were repeatedly unaware of the verb forms that should be used in the past tense while they focused more on the message conveyed, as shown in the data below.

- (1) I and my friends *get* punishment yesterday.
 (2) I *have* an unforgettable experience last year.
 (3) I *go* to Pangandaran with my family last week.
 (4) Last Sunday, I with my sister, mother, and father *go* to grandmother's house.
 (5) Moment I never forgot is when I *meet* my boyfriend.

3.2.2 Subject + Present BE (*I am very sad that night*).

BE is the most important verb in the English language. It is used as a main verb, an auxiliary, as well as in the passive voice. BE constantly changes form in accordance with the subjects and the tense. The students frequently failed to select the right BE to go with the subject and the tense. This brought them to the creation of interlanguage as in "There are some friends in my house yesterday for birthday party". They used present BE for the past events and this represents their current knowledge of BE, as exemplified in the data below.

- (1) I *am* angry with my nephew because he *is* naughty.
 (2) It *is* Sunday when happen I in Pangandaran with my family.
 (3) The weather *is* foggy and cool last week.
 (4) That day is Sunday when I go to Bali.
 (5) He *is* my friend when I *am* in Junior High School.

3.2.3 Subject + Irregular Verb-ed (I felled in the bathroom)

Most English verbs have past tense and past participle in *-ed* (e.g. produced, worked, used). However many of the most frequent verbs are irregular in which the formation of the simple past and past participle is not consistent. This becomes a tricky business for the students as they created irregular past tense verb by adding *-ed* ending as in for the irregular verbs. They appeared to overgeneralize the rule of Verb-ed, as in "She broke her glasses when falled in the street". Which follows are other examples found in the data:

- (1) *I leaved* my school early because I wanted to go to shopping with my mother.
- (2) She *wearred* beautiful sun glasses in the beach.
- (3) At that time *I telled* her that I loved her.
- (4) Until one day my best *friend telled* him that I love him.
- (5) I *forgetted* when the experience happened

In summary, the data indicate three patterns of the students' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate past event. These patterns represent the learners' current knowledge of English verb tense system as shown in figure 2 below.

Table 2: Learners' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate past event

NO Patterns	
1	Subject + Present Verb
2	Subject + Present BE
3	Subject + Irregular Verb-ed

3.3 Learners' Interlanguage Verb Tense Systems to Indicate Future Event

English does not have inflected forms specifically used to express future events or actions which have not occurred yet and will occur in future. Instead, the future tense employs the modal auxiliary verb *will* or *shall* with the base form of the verb as in "I will visit my mother next Sunday". This rule for futurity is not yet fully acquired by the students; especially with the verb form following the modal auxiliary.

There are two patterns of futurity found in the data. The first pattern is *Subject + Will + To infinitive Verb* as found in the data below:

- (1) When finish SMA *I will to study* at university".
- (2) After graduate I will to work in the Bank BCA.
- (3) I think I *will to study* hard to enter university.
- (4) I will always to visit my friends in Junior High School.
- (5) After I arrive home I will to take arrest and sleep.

The second pattern is *Subject + Will + Verb-ing* as in the following examples:

- (1) After that *I will washing* dresses and dishes.
- (2) After breakfast *I will going* to school.
- (3) I *will doing* my homework and watching TV.
- (4) I *will always listening* radio if I am bored.
- (5) After graduate from Senior High School *I will studying* at University.

In a nutshell, the data indicate that there are two patterns of the students' interlanguage systems to indicate future event. These patterns characterize the learners' own language system at the current moment as depicted in figure 3 below.

Table 3: Learners' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate future event

NO	Patterns
1	Subject + Will + To infinitive Verb
2	Subject + Will + Verb-ing

4. Discussion

Research findings reported in Table 1, 2, 3 show the students' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate present, past, and future event. Their interlanguage verb tense system deviates from the target language (English); however, it is systematic as a result of inevitable learning process. This corresponds to the interlanguage theory discussed by Corder's (1982), Selinker (1977; 1997), Gass and Selinker (1994), Ellis (1999), Ellis & Barkhuizen, (2005), and Saville-Troike (2006). Tables 4, 5, and 6 below show how the students' interlanguage system deviates from the target and native language system.

Table 4: Students' interlanguage, native language, and target language verb tense system to indicate present event

NO	Interlanguage System	Native Language System	Target Language System
1	Subject + Verb-ing	Subject + Verb	Subject + Present Verb
2	Subject + BE + infinitive Verb	Subject + Verb	Subject + Present Verb
3	Subject + to Infinitive	Subject + Verb	Subject + Present Verb
4	Subject + Past Verb	Subject + Verb	Subject + Present Verb
5	Subject + Complement	Subject + Complement	Subject + Present Copula BE

Table 5: Learners' interlanguage vs. target language verb system for past event

NO	Learners' Interlanguage System	Learners' Native Lang	Target Language System
1	a. Subject + Present Verb	Subject + Verb	Subject + Past Verb
2	b. Subject + Present BE	Subject + Verb	Subject + Past Verb
3	c. Subject + Irregular Verb-ed	Subject + Verb	Subject + Past Irregular Verb

Table 6: Learners' interlanguage vs. target language verb system for future event

NO	Learners' Interlanguage System	Learners' Native Language Sy	Target Language System
1	Subject + Auxiliary + To infin	Subject + Auxiliary + Verb	Subject + Auxiliary + infinitive Ver
2	Subject + Auxiliary + Verb-ing	Subject + Auxiliary + Verb	Subject + Auxiliary + infinitive Ver

Several ideas can be drawn from the tables above. For one thing, the tables show the students' interlanguage appears to be rule-governed, adhering to certain regulation of their own. The rules are different from those of native as well as the target language. This indicates a strong cognitive contribution on the learners' part as they constructed for themselves a grammar of the target language. As they were exposed to the language input then they began to form mental representations of the target language and it's structures which surface characteristics the language they previously learned. The students currently have reached a particular state during the process of foreign language learning where the target language (English) has not been acquired completely. In line with Ellis (1997) and Saville-Troike (2006) such deviation from the target language represents the the learners' efforts in organising the language input.

All English verb systems are largely periphrastic (a phrase of two or more words used to express a grammatical relationship) except for the simple present and simple past. English present and past tense are formed by the inflection of a single word where as future tense is expressed through modal verbs, specifically *will* and *shall*.

Such verb system does not exist in Indonesian and this certainly brings potential problems for the students learning English as a foreign language. The rules in the learners' interlanguage verb system can be the result of incomplete learning process passed by the learners when they learned the English as a foreign language.

The second idea is that the students' interlanguage verb system varies. They frequently used different structures to denote the same message. For example, the students under the study had four variations of verb system to indicate present events (i.e. Subject + Verb-ing, Subject + BE + infinitive, Verb Subject + to Infinitive, and Subject + Past Verb). Of these four verb systems, "Subject + Verb-ing" is most frequently used by the learners.

This result is consistent with Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982), Pica (1984) and Ellis's (1994) well-known morpheme studies which sought to establish the general order in which the major grammatical morphemes of a language (including verb morphemes) were acquired by learners of different age categories and in different learning contexts. The logical explanation for the current result is that the students were more familiar with *Verb-ing* form than other three verb tense systems to indicate present event.

The variation in the learners' interlanguage system also occurs in verb tense systems to indicate past events since forming English past tense is still problematic for the students. Past tense is complex; different morphological patterns mark the same grammatical feature. Irregular past tense form adds the complexity of this system. The reason behind this problem is that Indonesian (the students' native language) does not have tense system nor regular and irregular verbs. This causes a plethora of non-target-like forms produced by the students when expressing their ideas in the simple past in English. They consistently used present verb form in expressing their ideas of past event. In addition, they were not aware of the irregular form as they employed the ed-rule event to the irregular verbs. Based on my 30 years experience in teaching English I found that the students acquired the irregular verbs long after the acquisition of the-ed rule. This is consistent with Brown (1998, p.142) who claims that irregular verbs are more complicated and cause many difficulties for language learners, and many of them are still poor in understanding irregular forms even those in universities. Meanwhile, Pinker & Ullman (2002), Jaeger et al. (1996), and Housen (2000) explain that the acquisition of English regular verbs needs more attention as they are rule-based, whereas irregular verbs are learned and stored in the mind like other lexemes.

The variation in the learners' interlanguage system occurs in tense systems to indicate future events as well. One of the ways to express the futurity in English is through auxiliary *will* or *shall* + infinitive Verb and according to Quirk (1991, p. 213) this is the most common way of expressing futurity. The use of the auxiliary will or shall was not problematic for students, however, they were still confused in selecting the verb form following the auxiliary. This confusion is the result of the students' unfamiliarity of English verb tense system since it does not occur in Indonesian. There are two variations in their interlanguage systems of futurity, namely, "Subject + Will + To infinitive Verb" and "Subject + Will + Verb-ing". The results of the study does not corresponds with Poorhamedani and Rezaei (2015) who indicated that the English learners have the least difficulty in the acquisition of simple future. In conclusion, among the various patterns, the followings were most frequently used by the students, i.e., *Subject + Verb-ing* to express present event, *Subject + Present Verb* to indicate past event, and *Subject + Will + To infinitive Verb* to denote future event

Tables 7, 8, and 9 below show the variations and the number of instances of verb tense systems to indicate present, past, and future events.

Table 7: Learners' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate present event

NO	Learners' Interlanguage System	Total number of instances: 227
1.	Subject + Verb-ing	65
2.	Subject + BE + infinitive Verb	52
3.	Subject + to Infinitive	44
4.	Subject + Past Verb	37
5.	Subject + Complement	29

Table 8: Learners' interlanguage verb tense systems to indicate past event

NO	Learners' Interlanguage System	Total number of instances: 145
1.	a. Subject + Present Verb	68
2.	c. Subject + Irregular Verb-ed	55
3.	b. Subject + Present BE	22

Table 9: Learners' interlanguage tense systems to indicate future event

NO	Learners' Interlanguage System	Total number of instances: 72
1.	Subject + Will + To infinitive Verb	38
2.	Subject + Will + Verb-ing	34

Overall, the investigation indicates that the students created their own verb tense system to denote present, past, and future events. The language components in their verb tense system were mostly taken from the target language. It appeared that they tried to apply the target language linguistic rules but failed. The result also indicates that their language system had several non-target like variations which Ellis (1982; 1992) believed as the result of the existence of competing rules in the learner's competence.

5. Conclusion

This research paper has shown that the Indonesian EFL learners had their own grammatical system, an interlanguage, to express present, past, and future events. Their interlanguage system was characterised by particular patterns unique to the students. The students' interlanguage system was also featured by variability, versions of language construction which was more or less targetlike variants. It appeared that the students possessed two or more forms of verb tense systems to indicate present, past, and future events. These non-target language variants were the representation of their current knowledge of English.

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