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Levels of Linguistic Understanding of Foreign Language Lecturers in Indonesia

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Abstract:
Background*:In teaching a foreign language, lecturers are required not only to become proficient in the foreign language they teach, but also to be able to explain linguistic phenomena of the foreign language during the learning process. Linguistic competence possessed by learners can aid them learn a language. This study aims to investigate the English lecturers' levels of understanding of linguistics. The understanding of linguistics encompasses the knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.*
Materials and Methods*: The research participants were 50 English lecturers from various universities. A survey was conducted to collect the data, assisted with the use of the four-fold Likert scale. Data were analyzed using a descriptive statistic method with categorization technique*
Results*: The results of the study show that 50% and 42% of the participants have low and moderate levels of understanding of linguistics respectively. These results suggest that most lecturers do not understand or are not able to explain linguistic phenomena of the foreign language they teach. The results of interviews with the lecturers also show the same finding that most lecturers highly focus on the grammar of the foreign language structurally, but are not able to explain the all-grammatical processes linguistically*
Conclusion:*These results indicate that the majority of lecturers do not understand or unable to explain linguistic phenomena of the foreign language they teach.*

Key Word*:Linguistics; Foreign Language; Levels of Understanding*

I. Introduction

There are several competencies that a foreign language lecturer must possess, such as the competence in developing learning methods (Astuti, et al., 2018; Make & Yonas, 2018; Yusri, et al., 2017; Mantasiah& Yusri, 2018; Anwar et al., 2020), in grading students' learning results (Nurdin, et al., 2018; Othman, 2019), in communicating with students (Hargie, 2018; Margić& Vodopija, 2018), in developing syllabuses of the curriculum used in the learning process (McGregor & Reed, 2018; Sari, 2018), and other competencies that affect the performance of an English lecturer in delivering learning materials.

It cannot be denied, however, that one of the essential competences that English lecturers must have been the reasonable level of competence in English (Taufiqulloh, et al., 2018; Faez & Karas, 2019; Villegas, et al., 2018; Abrar, 2018). Consequently, an English lecturer should have a certificate of proficiency in English that is recognized with excellent grades. However, English proficiency is not a single factor in the success of learning process. This is because some other contributing factors are necessary to achieve the successful learning process, such as learning methods, syllabuses, and teaching materials, lecturers' communication ability, and supporting facilities for students to be used in the learning process.

The results of the study conducted by Mantasiah, et al, (2018) prove that in teaching a foreign language, lecturers are required not only to become proficient in the foreign language they teach, but also to be able to explain linguistic phenomena of the foreign language during the learning process. This is in line with the results of studies by McDonough (2017), Litosseliti (2017), Aronoff (2017), Linares & Morton (2017), Aydinli&Ortactepe (2018) that linguistic competence possessed by learners can aid them learn a language. The results of observation show that many foreign language teachers assume that linguistics and the foreign language they teach are two separate fields. As a result, they believe that they can choose not to comprehend linguistics. In principal, however, linguistics is inextricably linked with language teaching because language teachers are expected to be able to explain a number of linguistics phenomena that occur in a language to their students.

One of the advantages of comprehension of linguistics is that lecturers are able to enlighten their students as to mistakes they often make by using a linguistic approach. The following is an example of the students' common mistake:

(1) Ican seea scenery beautifulin my hometown

S   Verb   Object   Adverb
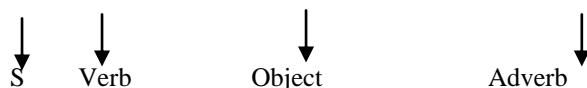
Sentence (1) contains an error because it uses Indonesian grammar to make an English noun phrase. The object of the sentence is a noun phrase that consists of noun (scenery) + adjective (beautiful). If English grammar is used, the noun phrase should consist of adjective (beautiful) + noun (scenery). By using linguistic approach, it can be understood that the cause of the above error is language interference from Indonesian to English. An example of the use of linguistics to explain English grammar can be seen in the table below.

Table 1.*Nominalization Process Derived from Verbs*

Verb	Noun	Type of affixation
Perform	Performance	Suffix #ance
Write	Writer	Suffix #r or er
Participate	Participation	Suffix #ion
Move	Movement	Suffix #ment
Widen	Widening	Suffix #ing
Deliver	Delivery	Suffix #y
Employ	Employee	Suffix #ee
Call	A call	Zero derivation

Some verbs in English can be changed into nouns by adding affixes. Without the knowledge of linguistics, teachers will not be able to explain this phenomenon. On the contrary, linguistics helps teachers convey the phenomenon of nominalization. Nominalization in English occurs when suffixes, such as *–ance, -er, -ion, -ment, -ing, -y, -ee*are added to a word. In addition, nominalization can also happen without adding affixes which is called zero derivational which refers to a derivation process of a word without changing the form of the word; the only thing that changes is the word class and the meaning of the word as the example above in which the verb *call* is turned into a noun *a call.*

Based on the explanation above, this study is aimed at examining the levels of linguistic understanding of the English lecturers. In this regard, the understanding of linguistics encompasses the branches of micro linguistics, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics because those branches are more closely related with teaching English than the branches of macro linguistics. The results of this study can be used as a recommendation for universities, especially for study program of English or other foreign languages, to teach linguistics to students who will teach foreign languages in the future

II. Material And Methods

A survey was conducted in this study to describe respondents' understanding of linguistics. The respondents were 50 English lecturers selected randomly from different universities in Indonesia. Data were collected through questionnaire and interview. The respondents' levels of linguistic understanding were measured using four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The indicators in the instrument were comprised of four aspects: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Each indicator consisted of three or four question items so the total of the question items was 14. The instrument to gather the data can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. *The Research Instrument*

Aspect	No	Statement Item
Phonology	1	I can identify the phonemes of the foreign language I teach.
	2	I understand suprasegmental and segmental phonemes.
	3	I understand types of sounds of a language, such as bilabial, labiodental, palatal, and other sounds.
	4	I understand the process of sound production by human speech organs.
Morphology	5	I understand the nominalization and deverbalization processes of a language.
	6	I understand the differences between inflectional and derivational

		processes.
	7	I understand types of phonemes and the examples in the foreign language I teach.
	8	I understand the types of affixes, such as prefixes, suffixes, interfixes, and confixes.
Syntax	9	I understand the process of compounding in the foreign language I teach.
	10	I understand types of phrases, such as verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and other phrases.
	11	I understand the differences between phrases and clauses in a language.
Semantics	12	I know analytical approach of semantic features in language teaching.
	13	I can distinguish between denotative meaning and connotative meaning of a sentence.
	14	I can distinguish between lexical meaning and grammatical meaning.

After collected, data were analyzed using descriptive statistic method and categorization technique. Descriptive statistic was conducted in order to determine the average and the standard deviation of the variables which were later used to make categorization according to Azwar (2010) presented in the following table:

Table 3.*Categorization of Linguistic Understanding*

Score Range	Categories
X ≤ M - 1,5 σ	Very Low
M -1,5 σ <X ≤ M- 0,5 σ	Low
M - 0,5 σ < X≤ M + 0,5 σ	Moderate
M + 0,5 σ < X ≤ M +1,5 σ	High
X >M +1,5 σ	Very High
M : Hypothetic Average Score	
σ: Hypothetic Standard Deviation	

Prior to the use of the research instrument, test validity and reliability were performed. In regard to the test validity, *corrected item-total correlation* was used in which the minimum value of *corrected item-total correlation* (*correlation value*) each item must have to be valid was 0.25. Therefore, if an item was found to have correlation value <0.25, it was not considered valid and needed to be rectified. On the other hand, the reliability value was measured by using *cronbach alpha* method. If the alpha value was higher than 0.7, the items had sufficient reliability, but if the alpha value was higher than 0.8, all items were strongly reliable (Rainsch, 2004).

III. Result and Discussion

Test Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

Table 4. *Results of Test Validity of the Research Instrument*

Number of Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ITEM1	31.90	8.921	.325	.725
ITEM2	31.33	8.092	.295	.763
ITEM3	31.93	7.789	.340	.752
ITEM4	31.60	7.490	.467	.628
ITEM5	31.80	8.441	.258	.887
ITEM6	31.87	7.706	.423	.839
ITEM7	32.07	8.133	.288	.777
ITEM8	30.53	7.913	.429	.844
ITEM9	30.97	8.447	.289	.706
ITEM10	30.30	8.010	.323	.858
ITEM11	30.40	7.697	.454	.835
ITEM12	31.97	7.551	.399	.739
ITEM13	31.77	9.909	.291	.864

ITEM14	30.97	8.447	.262	.879

Based on Table 4, it can be clearly seen that all items have correlation value > 0.25. This indicates that all items of the instrument meet the specified validity standard. Furthermore, according to the results of analysis using SPSS, *cronbach alpha* value 0.75 was obtained, meaning that the reliability value of the instrument was sufficient. Therefore, the instrument that was developed was used because it had met validity and reliability standards.

General Levels of Understanding of Linguistics

Table 5. *General Levels of Understanding of Linguistics*

Score Range	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
X ≤24,5	Very Low	0	0
24,5<X ≤ 31,5	Low	25	50
31,5< X≤ 38,5	Moderate	21	42
38,5< X ≤ 45,5	High	4	8
X >45,5	Very High	0	0
Total		**50**	**100**

Table 5 illustrates the levels of understanding of linguistics of foreign language lecturers measured through four aspects of linguistics – phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The results of study suggest that 50% of the lecturers are categorized low and 42% are categorized moderate. This shows that most lecturers do not understand or are not able to explain linguistics phenomena of the foreign language they teach. Results of interviews also show that the lecturers focus their attention on teaching the grammar of the foreign language structurally, but they cannot explain the whole process of grammar linguistically.

Levels of Understanding of Phonology

Table 6. *Lecturers' Levels of Understanding of Phonology*

Score Range	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
X ≤7	Very Low	11	22
7 <X ≤ 9	Low	30	60
9 < X≤ 11	Moderate	9	18
11 < X ≤ 13	High	0	0
X >13	Very High	0	0
Total		**50**	**100**

Four indicators were used to measure the lecturers' levels of understanding of phonology: 1) ability in identifying the phonemes of the foreign language they teach, 2) ability in distinguishing between segmental and suprasegmental phonemes, 3) ability in distinguishing sounds of a language, and 4) ability in explaining the process of sound production by human speech organs. The results of interviews indicate that phonology is one of the most complicated aspects of linguistics for the lecturers so that they found it difficult to explain it to their students in the learning process. This is in line with the results of questionnaires that 60% of the lecturers had low understanding of phonology. In fact, 22% are categorized to have a very low understanding of phonology. Among the four indicators, lecturers consider that the most difficult part is to distinguish sounds of a language, such as bilabial, labiodental, glottal, and other sounds.

Levels of Understanding of Morphology

Table 7. *Lecturers' Levels of Understanding of Morphology*

Score Range	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
X ≤7	Very Low	4	8
7 <X ≤ 9	Low	29	58
9 < X≤ 11	Moderate	15	30
11 < X ≤ 13	High	2	4
X >13	Very High	0	0
Total		**50**	**100**

The results of the study indicate that lecturers have a good understanding of morphology because they can fulfill the four indicators: 1) able to explain the nominalization and deverbalization processes of a language, 2) able to distinguish between inflectional and derivational processes, 3) able to explain types of morphemes with examples, and 4) able to distinguish types of affixes, such as prefixes, suffixes, interfixes, and confixes. Table 7 shows that although only 4% of the lecturers are categorized high, the majority of lecturers (58%) still have low understanding of morphology. It is found that the nominalization and deverbalization processes as well as inflectional and derivational processes are considered more difficult to be understood compared to other two indicators.

Levels of Understanding of Syntax

Table 8. *Lecturers' Levels of Understanding of Syntax*

Score Range	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
X ≤5,25	Very Low	0	0
5,25<X ≤ 6,75	Low	0	0
6,75< X≤ 8,25	Moderate	7	14
8,25< X ≤ 9,75	High	19	38
X >9,75	Very High	24	48
Total		**50**	**100**

Compared to other aspects, syntax is the easiest aspect for lecturers to understand. There are three indicators in this aspect: 1) able to understand the process of compounding of the foreign language they teach, 2) able to understand types of phrases, such as verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and other phrases, and 3) able to distinguish between phrases and clauses of a language. According to the results of interview, it is found that some lecturers are able to explain linguistic phenomena at the syntactic level. It is evident in Table 8, indicating that 48% of lecturers are categorized very high and 38% are categorized high. Thus, it can be concluded that lecturers did not find any obstacles in giving explanation about linguistic phenomena at the syntactic level to their students.

Levels of Understanding of Semantics

Table 9. *Lecturers' Levels of Understanding of Semantics*

Score Range	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
X ≤5,25	Very Low	7	14
5,25<X ≤ 6,75	Low	13	26
6,75< X≤ 8,25	Moderate	28	56
8,25< X ≤ 9,75	High	2	4
X >9,75	Very High	0	0
Total		**50**	**100**

The indicators of semantics consist of three items: 1) able to explain analytical approach of semantic features in language teaching, 2) able to distinguish between denotative meaning and connotative meaning of a sentence, and 3) able to distinguish between lexical meaning and grammatical meaning of a sentence. Table 9 shows that the majority of lecturers (56%) are categorized to have moderate level of understanding of semantics. However, some lecturers are also indicated to have a lack of understanding of semantics of a language in which 26% and 14% of lecturers are categorized low and very low respectively. The importante of semantics understanding was shown by Mannahali et al. (2020) proving one of methods in translation is semantic translation method, and it can be implemented properly when the lecturer grasps the concept of semantics.

Levels of Understanding of Each Indicator

Table 10. *General Levels of Understanding of Each Indicator*

Aspects	Mean	Categories
Phonology	8.4	Low
Morphology	9.04	Moderate
Syntax	9.54	High
Semantics	6.62	Low

Table 10 shows the levels of understanding of the lecturers observed from the average score of each indicator and the categories. The results of the study signify that among the four indicators, phonology and

semantics are viewed as the most difficult aspects of linguistics to be understood by the lecturers. Thus, they are not able to fully explain the linguistics phenomena of the two aspects in the process of foreign language teaching. In regard to morphology, despite being categorized at the moderate level, most lecturers viewed that morphology is also a difficult subject to understand. Different from other aspects, syntax became the easiest subject for the lecturers to understand. Therefore, lecturers are able to explain linguistic phenomena at the syntactic level in the teaching process.

The low understanding of linguistics of the lecturers is apparently caused by their educational background. Most of them have master's degree in English education so that they focus their attention on learning English for teaching it. In addition, they did not study linguistics in depth during their bachelor's and master's programs because of the curriculum designed to give less emphasis on linguistics. Results of interviews suggest that some respondents feel difficult to answer students' questions regarding linguistic phenomena in the process of learning grammar, such as nominalization, deverbalization, compounding, and others. This indicates that some respondents realize that they lack understanding of linguistics of English.

Implications of the Results of Study in Teaching Foreign Languages

The results of this study can be applied globally not only for teaching English, but also other foreign languages. Linguistics discusses general theories, especially micro-linguistics which is needed to explain linguistic phenomena of English and other foreign languages. Through this study, universities as the executors of education are expected to design the curriculum of foreign language teaching that is based on linguistic approach. Furthermore, lecturers should be equipped with sufficient understanding of linguistics. Additionally, each study program of English should hire lecturers with an educational background in linguistics in order to be able to provide satisfactory explanation about the linguistics of English. As a result, students sufficiently understand the grammar and the linguistic phenomena of the foreign language they learn.

IV. Conclusion

Linguistics should be understood and applied by lecturers in the process of foreign language teaching because linguistics is closely related with language teaching. Through this approach, students are more likely to be able to understand the grammar of the foreign language they are learning. Therefore, a lecturer is required to master not only the foreign language he/she teaches, but also theories of micro linguistics related to the process of teaching a language. However, the current study conducted to examine foreign language lecturers' levels of understanding of linguistics shows that 50% of the respondents are categorized low and 42% are categorized moderate.

These results indicate that the majority of lecturers do not understand or unable to explain linguistic phenomena of the foreign language they teach. Interviews yield the same results that teaching the grammar of the foreign language structurally becomes the main concern of the lecturers and they are not fully able to give satisfactory explanation about grammatical processes linguistically. Out of four indicators, phonology and semantics are viewed to be the most difficult aspects of linguistics to be understood by the lecturers; thus, they lack the ability to explain the linguistic phenomena of those two aspects to their students in the process of learning a foreign language. Different from other aspects, the lecturers find syntax the easiest aspect to be understood so that they are able to explain linguistic phenomena at the syntactic level in the process of learning a foreign language

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