



## BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED BY EFL STUDENTS IN LEARNING SYNTAX AT FIFTH SEMESTER IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF SORONG MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to describe kinds of barrier encountered by EFL students in learning Syntax at Fifth Semester in English Language Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. This research used a qualitative method in the form of a descriptive qualitative design. 6 students as were as participants of this research. The participants were taken using purposive sampling through the criteria: students had difficulty in learning syntax. An interview was done to gather research data. Before conducting the research, Pre-Interview and Pre-Participation Observation in the Syntax Class to find out Students' that have difficulties in learning Syntax were done. After that, the semi-structured interview used to know the barriers encountered by these students. Based on the data gained, the result of this research found that the students' barrier in learning Syntax in English Language Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong were an emotional barrier, motivation barrier, and learning disability. From those of three barriers, most of the students tended to have fear, shame and emotional sensitivity as a most encountered barrier. Another barrier was motivation barrier such as Procrastination and Learning Environment, in addition to learning disability like depression, and dysgraphia. There are two kinds of Barrier that have not encountered by students, they are Lack of Prioritization and Dyslexia.*

**Key words:** Barriers, Learning Syntax

### INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is the scientific study of human's language. Linguistics has some branches. One of the other linguistics branches is syntax. The syntax is the study of principles and process sentences are constructed in

particulars language (Wang:2010). The syntax is the one important thing in linguistics, by learning Syntax student can understand how to construct words into bigger linguistic units effectively.

Even though learning syntax is important for the student of English Language Education

Department, students found difficulties in learning it. It also happens in most Chinese University for Program Junior Majoring in English the introductory linguistics such as syntax chapter is seen as one of the important and difficult chapters of the course (Wang: 2010).

Wei & Zang (2013) have examined the difficulties encountered by surveyed students, analyzed the degree of barrier preventing the students, and found out the effective approach suited students in oral English learning and teaching in China. He found some barriers encountered by students, they were the autonomous ability, negative transfer of mother language, and how to choose the appropriate words in oral English Learning preventing the students in Chinese college into a great extent.

Then Nugroho (2016), found that the student barriers in following the physical education in Ma'arif Daarusholihin Village Sumberadi District Mlati Sleman Regency based on the internal factors of physical indicators by 50.77% and psychological by 49.23%, the external factor of teacher indicator are 33.82%, completeness of facilities amounted to 33.06%, and learning materials amounted to 33.11%. Firmansyah (2017), also had found that the student's resistance in studying Statistics of Mathematics Education FKIP Muhammadiyah University of Tangerang in general lies in the fundamental ability of the weak concept, having mistaken in process skills, misunderstanding problems, and errors in using notation.

Based on the Pre Interview done by the researcher about students' difficulties in learning syntax, The recent research was going to describe kinds of barriers are encountered by students in learning Syntax at fifth Semester in English Language Education Department of Muhammadiyah Sorong University in order to provide real data that can help the students to learn syntax better than before.

### **1. Kind of Barrier**

According to Merriam Webster (1828), Barrier that something (such as a natural obstacle or fence) preventing or blocking movement from one place to another; a rule, law, a problem that makes something difficult or impossible. It can be concluded that barrier is a situation prevents a goal to achieve.

According to Jun et al (2016), types of learning barriers are emotional barriers to learning, motivational barriers to learning, and disability to learning.

#### ***Emotional Barriers to Learning***

Emotional barriers to learning include Shame, Emotional Sensitivity, and fear. According to Jun et al (2016), A major emotional barrier to learning is fear. This could be a fear of Judgement and Criticism or a Fear of Rejection and Fear of Failure.

Emotional Fear is a defense mechanism, or martial arts mechanic. The point is that fear arises in a person because of the tendency to defend oneself from harm or just an unpleasant feeling for something. Fear is something rather

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complex, in which there are an emotional feeling and some physical feeling (Soelasmono:2011).

Another emotional barrier that prevents learning is a shame. Shame would come when students feel not doing well in school. Many students would be afraid of other people thought when seeing their work. The students always appeal themselves to others that think good or bright, and so do not even try to be a successful one. Shame seems the most self-destructive barrier to a student in learning. It was stated by Stephens (2014) that shame is ultimately self-destructive that cannot be a foundation for every healthy community.

Emotionally sensitive learners can lose control of their emotions and become overwhelmed at times. Because teenagers have various personalities, weaknesses, and strengths. Every people have their own strength lies in their emotion, others' strength to calculate and to organize. Students also can be sensitive emotionally. Although it helps a person to understand other people's and their own feelings, it can also overwhelm a person at times. Very passionate people sometimes can lose control of their emotions. Sometimes, they may be more easily brought to tears than others when exposed to other people's or their own pain. However, this passion also can turn into aggression, even when the person did not mean to be upset or angry.

### ***Motivational Barriers to Learning***

Motivation is a drive that is inside of the individual to channel the energy to a certain

goal. Many people overcoming social and emotional challenges and experiencing their first adult freedoms find difficult to do this. When coming to school, real difficulties can arise if homework has not done on time or tests are not studied for. Getting motivated is a hard job, and it presents many challenges for students.

Three kinds of motivational barriers to learning are often encountered by students, they are procrastination, lack of prioritization, and learning environment. Knaus (2010) Said that procrastination is a habit that procrastinating an important activity and not making the task in a timely manner. The Procrastination involves negative emotions and perceptions about an unpleasant activity. When they get consequences of the procrastination, they will make excuses to justify the procrastination. The procrastination can be a habit when done continuously and can interfere with one's productivity. According to Djamarah (2002), many students are anxious due to procrastinating completion of duties, such as sleep less soundly, sitting unquietly, running in a hurry and rest cannot be enjoyed.

Some people become overwhelmed by workload and Always put first things first. While learning environment stated by Samodra (2013), is such as facilities and infrastructure, wide environment, noise have a great influence on the assessment of whether or not the learning environment so it can affect the motivation and learning process. Comfortable classroom conditions will help students to concentrate

more easily, obtain maximum learning outcomes and enjoy learning activities well.

### ***Learning Disabilities to Learning***

There are three kinds of learning disability, they are Depression, Dyslexia, and Dysgraphia. Davison, et al (2006) contended depression is an emotional state usually characterized by grief, feelings of innocence, loss of interest in common activities. While the International Dyslexia Association (2017), Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with fluent and/or accurate word recognition and by decoding abilities and poor spelling. Typically, these difficulties result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to the provision of effective classroom instruction and other cognitive abilities. Secondary consequences may include a problem in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. Santrock in Sa'adati (2015: 17) stated that dysgraphia as a learning difficulty is characterized by the difficulty in expressing thoughts in the compositions of writing. In general, the term dysgraphia is used to describe very bad writing. Children with dysgraphia may write very slow, their writing can be very illegible and they may have many spelling errors due to their inability to combine sounds and letters.

## **2. Syntax**

The syntax is one of the linguistic branches which studies sentence Patterns of language. According to Crane et. al (1981:102), "Syntax is the way words are put together to form phrases and sentences". From the theory can be said that a study that studies the incorporation of words form phrases and Clauses is called syntax.

Phrases are formally classified according to the word class which functions as a head. As Morley (2000:53) said that, 'phrases are formally classified according to the class of words which functions as a headword.' In other word, a phrase is a sequence of words that can function as a constituent in the structure of sentences.

A clause is to express a single idea or proposition. There are two major types of clause, **main (or independent) clause** and **subordinate (or dependent) clause**. According to Morley (2000:59), 'Clauses which include a verbal phrase are called major clauses and those without a verbal phrase are called minor clauses.' The main clause is a clause that expresses a complete thought and can stand as a sentence.

According to Morley (2000:60), The main clause is one which, whether or not it can stand on its own without the assistance of a subordinate clause, is not dependent grammatically on a higher node (a node is a position in a diagram of the syntactic structure) or subordinate clause.

The subordinate clause is a clause which does not express a complete thought and depends on another clause (main clause) to

express a complete thought. The subordinate clause does not express a complete idea and cannot stand as a sentence. A sentence having a subordinate clause must have a main clause. Morley (2000:61) noted that the main clause is connected to another clause which is a subordinate clause that depends upon the main clause. Furthermore, functionally the subordinate clause plays an integral or a supplementary role in relation to the main clause.

### **Syntactic Categories**

Syntactic Categories is a set of words and/or phrase in a language which shares a significant number of common characteristics. Syntactic categories commonly include word classes, Phrases, clauses, and Sentences.

The basic units of syntax are words. 'Words are traditionally allocated to one of the following ranges of word classes: noun, pronoun, article, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection.' (Morley, 2000:3)

### **METHODOLOGY**

The method of this research was a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The participants in this research were six students in the fifth semester in the English Language Education Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Muhammadiyah Sorong University. The researcher took the students in the fifth semester as participants through Purposive

Sampling based on the characteristic. They were the students who have difficulty in learning syntax.

### **Research Procedure**

To know the participants, the researcher has conducted a Pre-Interview and Pre-Participation Observation in the Syntax Class to find out Students' that have difficulties in learning Syntax. After that, the researcher did the interview to know Kinds of Barrier encountered by students in learning syntax. Then the data were analyzed using data reduction, display data, and data conclusion drawing/verification.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument in this research was the interview guideline. The semi-structured interview conducted to gain the data needed. According to Sugiyono (2016:317) interview is a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through question and answer, so it can be constructed meaning in a particular topic.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Emotional Barrier to Learning**

The six students feel fear and shame. The students feel nerves, feeling inferior, fear was a misrepresentation, speaking did not fit with pronunciation, fear because they were not ready, because they did not understand the material. It was stated by DTA as below:

"If the Lecturer corrects me, I feel Nervous because I am afraid of being wrong. It will reflect

my ability then other people can judge me as low ability student"

The statement above shows that student fear of correction, fear of people judgment on her ability. It indicates that student emotional feeling in fear. Fear is something rather complex, in which there are an emotional feeling and some physical feeling (Soelasmono:2011).

Generally, according to Soelasmono (2011), Fear was a defense mechanism, or martial arts mechanic. The point was that fear arises in a person because of the tendency to defend oneself from harm or just an unpleasant feeling for something. Fear was something rather complex, in which there is an emotional feeling and some physical feeling. The students at the fifth semester showed fear with feelings that follow them such as nerves, laugh at a friend, inferior, hurt. it happens because of feeling about what others would judge them.

It can be seen on the AAT and DTA Statement below:

"I feel shame because my competence in doing syntax is still lower than other students. Being corrected or Changed by other students to answer, surely emphasize my shame feeling in the classroom. Because I still have a low understanding of it. And of course, I feel insecure because of afraid of their laughing at me."

Emotional sensitivity also found on AAT and JS Statement as below:

"I must be angry, if they correct me unpleasantly, they should give me a good solution or a good critic that can help me correct

my mistakes and motivate myself to learn more Syntax."

Based on the statement above, AAT and JS showed disagreement of the correction technique experienced. It rose a wave of anger. This showed an emotional sensitivity.

There are other emotional barriers experienced by students in learning syntax, they are fearful of critic because has no understanding, shame failure in front of the class, afraid of being a laugh when getting a correction, afraid of not being trusted by others to do task, and showed self-underestimating in doing exercise in learning syntax.

## **2. Motivational Barrier to learning**

Procrastination is the first motivational barrier to learning. Knaus (2010) stated that Procrastination is the habit of Procrastination an important activity and not making the task in a timely manner. Other things that happened were due to the uncomfortable class condition that affects their motivation to learn.

The Procrastination has been stated by AAT on this statement:

"I feel worried, because if the lecturer asked and I have not done yet or asked to work together and I have not done. If so, it can affect the value of my task."

The statement above indicates that the student is simply experiencing a concern, but doing it in time. This shows that there is Procrastination. (Djamarah:2002). JS, ANM, AM have also encountered this Procrastination.

Next motivational Barrier to learning is Learning Environment. According to Samodra (2013), Learning Environment is such as facilities and infrastructure, wide environment, and noise that have a great influence on the assessment of whether or not the learning environment so it can affect the motivation and learning process. Comfortable classroom conditions will help students to concentrate more easily, obtain maximum learning outcomes and enjoy learning activities well.

It was said by ANM, followed by the rest of the participant as below:

“I cannot learn in a noisy state I cannot concentrate.”

The statement above shows that students have no concentration on the noisy learning environment. (Samodra:2013)

Beside those motivational barriers to learning above, the students also experienced not enjoying the learning process. In relation to the learning environment, learning facility also becomes students concern in learning syntax.

### 3. Learning Disability

Most of the students worried when they did not do their assignment, presented on course, some of the students did not like reading because they did not understand the statement, lack of vocabulary, bored of reading.

Based on the Data gathered, JS said:

“Yes, I feel guilty, because the lecturer asked me to finish all while I can finish only two, or three. I feel disappointed too because I cannot finish my task. There are usually two

factors if I do not finish. First, I do not know the answer and secondly because the time is limited. If it is like that I gathered even if the results are not satisfactory.”

Not only JS but also the other 5 Participants show that students feel guilty and resigned. This shows the depression in the student. (Davison at all:2006)

Another statement comes from DTA below:

“I do not like to write, because I find it hard to develop an idea into an essay, such as narrative and descriptive text. I know what to describe but how to compose it in writing is difficult, maybe because I lack vocabulary.”

The statement above shows that the student experienced difficulty in writing. this shows that the student experiencing Dysgraphia. (Sa'adati:2015). As Santrock in Sa'adati (2015: 17) stated that Dysgraphia as a learning difficulty is characterized by the difficulty in expressing thoughts in the compositions of writing.

Based on the discussion above, all the barriers faced by the student have been classified in the table as follows:

Table 1. The Kinds of Students' Barrier encountered in Learning Syntax

Student barrier	Components
Emotional barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Emotional sensitive</li> </ul>
Motivation barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procrastination</li> <li>• Learning environment</li> </ul>
Learning Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Dysgraphia</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the data gained through the interview, the researcher concluded that students of the fifth semester of English Language Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong have emotional barrier as the most encountered Barrier, followed by Motivational Barrier and Learning Disability.

Most of the students tended to have emotional barrier by fear, shame and emotionally sensitive. Another barrier was motivation barrier such as Procrastination and Learning Environment, in addition to learning disability like depression, and dysgraphia. There are two kinds of Barrier that have not encountered by students, they are Lack of Prioritization and Dyslexia.

Based on the research conclusion, the researcher suggested that the further researchers need to find out the grammar or structure analysis ability of students who learn Syntax, Factors that influence students' barrier in learning syntax in order to develop the significance of the recent research. In addition, the next researcher can find out the learning strategy used by students in learning syntax that would be appropriate to help students in learning syntax as Tahang et al (2019) stated that the learning strategy is very significant to help students develop English Skill.

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