



**THE USE OF FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS  
IN EFL STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS**

(The Case of the Second Semester Students of English Study Program  
in Timor State University in Academic Year 2013/2014)

**THESIS**

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by

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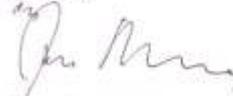
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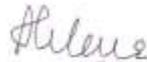
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Hesni Neno

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

(1 Corinthians 2:9)

To:

**Semarang State University**

**& Timor State University**

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## ABSTRACT

Hesni Neno. 2016. *The Use of Formulaic Expressions in EFL Students' Interactions (The Case of Second Semester Students of English Study Program of Timor State University in Academic Year 2013/2014)*. Thesis. English Language Education. Graduate Program. State University of Semarang. Advisor I: Dra. Helena I.R Agustien, M.A, Ph.D., Advisor II: Dr. Januarius Mujiyanto, M.Hum.

Key words: Formulaic Expressions, EFL Students, Students' Interactions.

Formulaic expressions are very important for EFL students to sound natural and fluent in speaking English. It is equally important to grammar and socioculture learning. If the students are really aware of this matter it can help increase their speaking ability. This study aims at describing types of formulaic expression and the most frequent types used by EFL students, describing students' problems when using formulaic expressions, and their strategies to cope with communicative demands.

This study was a conversation analysis which used descriptive qualitative approach. The research subjects were nine students from English Study Program in Timor State University in Kefamenanu, East Nusa Tenggara Province, who were divided into three groups consisting of three students each. The data were obtained by recording their interactions for one hour long each group. The video-recordings were transcribed. Besides, the video-recordings were observed as well as two speaking materials used by the teacher when teaching Speaking 1 and Speaking 2. After all data were collected they were classified, analysed based on Biber et al's (1999) framework, and described qualitatively.

This study shows that there are five types of formulaic expressions used by the students in their interactions. They are collocations, lexical bundles, inserts, idioms, and binomial expressions. The most common types revealed are collocations and lexical bundles since the students are more familiar with literal meanings instead of idiomatic ones. However, there were many unnatural expressions in their interactions therefore formulaic expressions have to get more attention in teaching instruction.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to introduce the readers to Celce-Murcia's formulaic competence which refers to formulaic expressions or fixed expressions which are frequently used by native speakers to produce natural and fluent speaking. It is revealed based on how a child acquires his/her first language. It remains the same with learning a second or foreign language. Many language learners find it difficult to express natural and fluent language including English as a foreign language (EFL) students in Indonesia. Celce-Murcia (2007:52) suggests that language learners must not only learn grammar and pronunciation but also formulaic expressions to communicate. This chapter is divided into six parts. It starts with background, followed by reasons for choosing the topic, statement of problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study and outline of the report.

### **1.1 Background**

This study investigates formulaic expressions in interactions among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Timor University, East Nusa Tenggara. There is an urgent need to investigate this matter since the ultimate goal of teaching and learning English is communicative competence aiming at how students create texts in appropriate context. One important component in communicative competence is formulaic competence which enables students to

create natural and fluent spoken and written texts. This competence refers to recurrent fixed chunks/expressions used by native speakers to communicate in daily life such as collocations, idioms, lexical frames and routines. Other competencies which are closely related to formulaic competence are linguistic and sociocultural competencies. In creating a text, students of course learn grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation but they also have to be aware of social factors by which the language is influenced, so that the text will be socially accepted.

I have mentioned earlier that this study will be conducted on EFL students in Timor University. This university is located in Kefamenanu, Timor Tengah Utara, East Nusa Tenggara. In this province, English is seen as an important language. Many people have a big desire to learn English, from the youngs to the adults. Some reasons have motivated this society to learn English for instance to apply for Australian Development Scholarship (ADS) and other study-abroad scholarships, and also to be a guide for Kupang sail or some other programs which need English speaking skill. Another reason is that they are likely to promote local things or culture to foreign people such as traditional woven cloth, traditional music instruments, traditional dances, traditional houses, and the like. Moreover, East Nusa Tenggara has Komodo island which is now one of the Seven Wonders which invites more and more foreign people to come.

However, in everyday life, the society is not really exposed to English. Only family of middle or high social/economic status and literate such as parents who work in the civil services or banks, etc., have more exposure to English since they indirectly connect to English through multimedia and sometimes use the language

at home to communicate with their children who go to bilingual or international schools. While there are lots of families coming from lower social/economic status and illiterate not exposed to English a lot since they can not afford multimedia or link to people that connect them to English directly or indirectly.

In some universities in East Nusa Tenggara, the demand for learning English rises from time to time which is indicated by the rising number of students who entered English study program. Eventhough the status of English is a foreign language in Indonesia and is therefore lack of genuine situation to speak the language, geographically this province is in between two states, Timor Leste and Australia. Timor University especially is in the capital city of Timor Tengah Utara (TTU) regency in the border area between Timor island and Timor Leste. This geography site obviously declares the important role of English to establish relationships among these three areas in terms of education, culture or crossculture. Here, the need for speaking English among students in East Nusa Tenggara is high. They really need to possess formulaic competence.

In everyday speaking, English native speakers tend to use lexical bundles, collocations, idioms, etc which I refer here to formulaic expressions. So, students must be exposed to formulaic expressions to be in natively like fashion. In fact, many EFL students in Timor University have great difficulties to produce formulaic expressions thus their utterances sound unnatural and foreign to English natives. Kecskes (2008:5) argues the reason why nonnative speakers find difficulties to produce natural expressions because nonnative speakers have different language experiences from English native speakers. Language

experience can not be separated from speaker's everyday reality and the reality of speaking in English culture tends to contain lots of formulaic expressions to communicate.

I observed that the students in English study program in Timor University merely think in Indonesian way to construct sentences. It might be because of time constraint to formulate English sentences in spontaneous situations and they are influenced by their mother tongues as well. But one interesting thing that I remember when I taught listening to the second semester students two years ago, there was a collocation that occurred in an expression, "I'm not really *good at Math*". This is an excerpt from a recorded dialogue. I was impressed that after the class was over some of the students used the collocation in their interaction to one another, and it made them sound native. From that experience I realized the importance of formulaic expression in terms of naturalness in speaking English.

Some researchers have studied formulaic expression as they realized the importance of it to communicate. Here are some findings based on those studies such as non-accurate expressions from Dickinson (2012:32) in his study on a group of students on an English language course at a Japanese university with the aim to improve their academic presentation such as *First, I will tell about; Today, I'll tell us*; and an inappropriate sequence *Then, I'll talk about* which is used by Japanese learners to shift topics in the middle of presentation. As a matter of fact, "*Now, I'll talk about..*" is more appropriate. There is also a finding from Kecskes (2008:1) about how two nonnative speakers involved in a conversation but failed to understand each other because the speaker used an expression which has

unfamiliar conventional connotation to the addressee who took the expression based on its literal meaning. It is not only about word selection, literal meaning or conventional connotation to determine formulaic expressions but also intonation is usually stereotyped. Van Lanker-Sidtis and Rallon, (2004:208) heard errors from second language speakers as in *No man is an island* sounds “wrong” with an accent on *man* or *is*; and “*I wouldn’t want to be in his shoes*” does not sound native, or well-formed, when *shoes* carries the accent.

Based on the above descriptions and comparison between written and spoken corpora done by experts who discovered that formulas are even more frequent in spoken rather than in written language (Ellis, et al., 2008:375), therefore I would like to conduct this study on spoken language entitled: **THE USE OF FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS IN EFL STUDENTS’ INTERACTIONS.** (The Case of the Second Semester Students of English Study Program of Timor University in Academic Year 2013/2014).

## **1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic**

The reasons I choose this topic are as follows.

1. Timor University students in English study program do not speak naturally.

The students tend to speak English but in Indonesian way or they construct word for word expression, therefore they sound unnatural or inappropriate. This habit of speaking then becomes patterns which are actually unaccepted socially especially in native speakers context.

## 2. Unveiling students' patterns in speaking

If the students use unnatural or inappropriate expressions, the results of this study will be able to unveil what patterns in speaking they display.

## 3. Drawing their attention to formulaic expressions

When I find the students' patterns, I will be able to help them by drawing their attention to formulaic expressions in order to improve their fluency and naturalness in speaking English.

### **1.3 Statements of Problems**

This study aims at answering the following questions:

- 1 What are the types of formulaic expressions used by the students in their interactions?
- 2 What are the most common types of formulaic expressions used by the students and why do they use the types most often?
- 3 What problems do they seem to have in using formulaic expressions?
- 4 What strategies do they use to cope with the communicative demands?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are meant to answer the research problems. As stated above, there are four statements of problems in this study, so the following are four objectives of the study as well:

1. To describe types of formulaic expressions in learners' interactions.
2. To describe the most frequent types of formulaic expressions used by the students and explain the reasons why they use them most often.
3. To describe problems that they seem to have in using formulaic expressions.
4. To describe the strategies they use to cope with communicative demands.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Theoretically, this study is intended to prove the theory proposed by Celce-Murcia (2007) about Formulaic Competence – refers to fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions – as one of six components in the new revised version of communicative competence for language teachers.

Practically, this study is carried out to give new insight to readers and through this I have a great opportunity to practice and improve my writing skill scientifically and to apply the knowledge as well from the lecturers or other credible sources.

Pedagogically, this study can raise teachers and students' awareness regarding the existence of formulaic expressions and its role to improve students' fluency and naturalness. Specifically in Speaking subject, the teachers should teach formulaic expressions such as lexical bundles and inserts (e.g. backchanneling) to help students create natural and fluent speaking.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to analysing formulaic expressions in the students' interactions such as collocations, idioms, lexical bundles, inserts, and binomial expressions in order to find out what types of formulaic expressions they use, the most common types which occur in their interactions, the problems they seem to have when using formulaic expressions and the strategies they use to cope with communicative demands.

## **1.7 Definitions of Key Terms**

In order to help readers understand the title of present study I provide the definitions of key terms in the title as follows.

### **1. Formulaic Expressions**

Formulaic expressions are "Those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions" (Celce-Murcia, 2007:47). They are collocations, lexical bundles, inserts, idioms, and binomial expressions.

### **2. EFL students**

English as a foreign language (EFL) students in present study refer to the second semester students in English Study Program in Timor State University in Kefamenanu, East Nusa Tenggara Province who learn English as a foreign language.

### **3. Students' interactions**

In present study, students' interaction is the core data. From the students' interactions, there are some aspects analysed based on research problems which

are types of formulaic expressions, students' problems when employing formulaic expressions and their strategies to cope with communicative demands.

### **1.8 Outline of the Report**

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter I is introduction. There are seven sections in the introduction. It starts with background, followed by reasons for choosing the topic, statement of problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, definitions of key terms, and outline of the report.

Chapter II is the review of related literature. It firstly presents two previous studies. After that it presents Celce Murcia's communicative competence diagram (2007) which is the basic theory of this study. They are formulaic expressions defined, the types of formulaic expressions, formulaic expressions and English native speakers, casual conversation analysis, language learners' strategies, formulaic expressions and linguistic competence, formulaic expressions and sociocultural competence, and the last section is theoretical framework to help the readers make logical sense of the relationships of the variables and factors that relevant to the problem.

Chapter III is the research methodology. It is dealing with approach of the study, design of the study, participants of the study, setting, instrument, techniques of obtaining data, type of data, units of analysis, and steps of data analysis. Chapter IV presents findings and discussion of findings related to formulaic expressions in the students' interactions and Chapter V presents conclusion and suggestions based on this study.