

## INTERLANGUAGE RESTRUCTURING IN LEGO-MEDIATED GRAMMAR LEARNING AMONG YOUNG EFL LEARNERS

Restrukturisasi *Interlanguage* dalam Pembelajaran Simple Present Tense Berbasis Lego pada Pembelajar EFL Usia Muda

Ni Luh Desy Suari Dewi<sup>1a\*</sup>, I Gede Neil Prajamukti Wardhana<sup>2b</sup>, Ni Nyoman Tri Sukarsih<sup>3c</sup>

<sup>123</sup>English Literature Department, Dhyana Pura University, Padang Luwih Street, Bali, Indonesia

\*[desysuaridewi@undhirabali.ac.id](mailto:desysuaridewi@undhirabali.ac.id)

[trisukarsih@undhirabali.ac.id](mailto:trisukarsih@undhirabali.ac.id)

[neilwardhana@undhirabali.ac.id](mailto:neilwardhana@undhirabali.ac.id)

(\*) Corresponding Author

[desysuaridewi@undhirabali.ac.id](mailto:desysuaridewi@undhirabali.ac.id)

**How to Cite:** Dewi, N.I.D.S., Wardhana, I. G. N. P. & Sukarsih, N. N. T. (2026). Interlanguage Restructuring In Lego-Mediated Grammar Learning Among Young Efl Learners. . doi: 10.36526/js.v3i2.8271

Received :23-04-2026  
 Revised :20-05-2026  
 Accepted : **22-06-2026**

### Keywords:

interlanguage restructuring,  
 Lego-mediated learning,  
 SLA,  
 grammar acquisition,  
 young EFL learners

### Abstract

Grammar acquisition remains one of the most challenging aspects of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly for young learners who often experience difficulties in understanding English morphosyntactic systems such as the Simple Present Tense. This study investigates how young EFL learners demonstrate interlanguage restructuring during Lego-mediated grammar learning through visual-symbolic learning activities. A descriptive qualitative design with classroom action research procedures was employed in this study. Data were collected through classroom observation, learners' sentence construction tasks, interviews, and questionnaires. The analysis focused on identifying interlanguage features such as auxiliary misuse, subject-verb disagreement, verb inflection errors, and sentence transformation difficulties. The findings revealed that learners initially produced various interlanguage forms, including incorrect auxiliary usage and incomplete subject-verb agreement. However, after participating in Lego-mediated learning activities, learners gradually demonstrated more target-like grammatical constructions. The use of color-coded Lego structures appeared to increase learners' grammatical awareness by making morphosyntactic relationships more visually salient. The findings further suggest that visual-symbolic mediation facilitated learners' noticing of grammatical patterns and supported interlanguage restructuring during Simple Present Tense acquisition. Therefore, Lego-mediated grammar learning may provide valuable support for young EFL learners in developing English morphosyntactic competence.

## INTRODUCTION

Grammar acquisition remains one of the most challenging aspects of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly for young learners whose exposure to English is largely limited to classroom interaction. In many Indonesian EFL contexts, grammar is commonly taught through rule memorization and formula-based exercises. As a result, learners frequently experience difficulties in constructing grammatically accurate sentences despite repeated exposure to grammatical instruction. One grammatical aspect that is often considered problematic is the Simple Present Tense because learners must simultaneously understand subject-verb agreement, auxiliary systems, verb inflections, and sentence transformation patterns.

Previous studies have shown that EFL learners commonly experience grammatical difficulties related to Simple Present Tense construction. Masruddin (2019), for example, found that learners frequently omitted grammatical markers and demonstrated inaccuracies in verb usage

during descriptive writing activities. Similarly, Siregar and Zuriani (2020) reported that EFL learners often produced subject–verb agreement errors and auxiliary misuse in Simple Present Tense constructions. These grammatical inaccuracies indicate that learners are not merely making random mistakes but are developing transitional grammatical systems during second language acquisition.

From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), learner errors represent evidence of interlanguage development rather than language failure. Selinker (1972) introduced the concept of interlanguage to describe the transitional linguistic system constructed by second language learners during the acquisition process. According to Selinker, learner language is systematic yet dynamic because it reflects interactions among first language influence, target language exposure, cognitive processing, and learning strategies. Interlanguage systems are commonly characterized by overgeneralization, language transfer, incomplete rule application, and grammatical restructuring as learners gradually move toward target-like competence.

In grammar acquisition, learners frequently demonstrate interlanguage features involving auxiliary confusion, incorrect verb inflections, and incomplete subject–verb agreement. For example, learners may produce forms such as *“I am wake up”* or *“Does Dina has breakfast?”* because they are still restructuring their understanding of English grammatical systems. These constructions indicate that learners are actively forming and revising grammatical hypotheses during the acquisition process. Ellis (1997) explains that grammatical acquisition develops progressively as learners reorganize linguistic knowledge through exposure, interaction, and cognitive processing.

Several SLA scholars have further emphasized the importance of conscious attention and input salience during language acquisition. Schmidt (1990), through the Noticing Hypothesis, argues that learners must consciously notice linguistic forms before acquisition can occur. In other words, grammatical features that remain unnoticed are unlikely to become fully acquired. Similarly, VanPatten (1996) explains in Input Processing Theory that learners process linguistic input by prioritizing meaning before grammatical form. Consequently, grammar instruction that increases the perceptual salience of grammatical relationships may facilitate grammatical acquisition more effectively.

One instructional approach that potentially supports this process is the Silent Way Method developed by Caleb Gattegno (1972). The Silent Way emphasizes learner autonomy, discovery learning, and the use of physical objects as mediating tools in language learning. Rather than relying heavily on teacher explanation, learners actively construct grammatical understanding through interaction, experimentation, and problem-solving activities. Richards and Rodgers (2001) further explain that physical learning media in the Silent Way can function as visual and cognitive mediators that help learners organize linguistic structures more meaningfully.

In this study, Lego was used as a visual-symbolic learning medium during Simple Present Tense instruction. Different Lego colors represented grammatical categories such as subjects, verbs, auxiliaries, and objects. Through repeated manipulation of color-coded grammatical structures, learners physically organized sentence components while constructing affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms. The use of Lego therefore transformed abstract grammatical relationships into observable and manipulable structures.

Previous studies on Lego-mediated learning have primarily focused on instructional effectiveness, motivation, and classroom engagement. However, limited attention has been given to how learners demonstrate interlanguage restructuring during visually mediated grammar learning activities. Most earlier studies have discussed learning outcomes descriptively without closely examining the linguistic development reflected in learners' evolving grammatical systems. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how young EFL learners demonstrate interlanguage restructuring during Lego-mediated grammar learning. Specifically, the study focuses on learners' grammatical development, auxiliary restructuring, subject–verb agreement awareness, and syntactic transformation patterns during Simple Present Tense acquisition.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design with classroom action research procedures. The study focused on examining learners' interlanguage restructuring during Lego-mediated Simple Present Tense instruction. The participants were nine young EFL learners aged between 14 and 17 years old who attended semi-private and group English courses. The research was conducted in two instructional cycles consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages.

The instructional activities were designed based on the principles of the Silent Way Method. Lego blocks with different colors represented grammatical categories. Blue Lego symbolized subjects, yellow Lego represented verbs, pink Lego represented objects or complements, while additional colors represented auxiliaries such as "do," "does," "not," and suffix markers "-s/-es." Learners manipulated the Lego blocks to construct affirmative, negative, and interrogative Simple Present Tense sentences. Data were collected through classroom observation, learners' sentence construction tasks, interviews, and questionnaires. The primary data analyzed in this study consisted of learners' grammatical constructions before and after the Lego-mediated learning activities. The data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying interlanguage features such as auxiliary misuse, subject-verb disagreement, overgeneralization, verb misformation, and sentence transformation errors. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of grammatical restructuring across instructional cycles and interpreting these changes through SLA theories, particularly Interlanguage Theory, Noticing Hypothesis, and Input Processing Theory.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The data indicate that learners demonstrated several interlanguage features in their Simple Present Tense constructions before the implementation of Lego-mediated learning activities. The grammatical forms identified during the pre-instruction stage included. The data show that learners experienced difficulties in: auxiliary usage, subject-verb agreement, verb inflection, negative transformation, and interrogative transformation (**Table 1**).

**Table 1.** The Grammatical Form before the implementation of Lego-mediated learning

Learners' Utterances	Error Type
"I am wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning."	Auxiliary misuse
"My mother prepare breakfast for me."	Subject-verb disagreement
"Does Dina has breakfast every day?"	Incorrect verb inflection
"I am not have lunch at home."	Negative transformation error
"Are you learn English at school?"	Interrogative transformation error

The findings further reveal that learners frequently inserted auxiliary *be* into verbal sentence constructions. In addition, omission of third-person singular markers *-s/-es* appeared consistently in several learners' productions. After the implementation of Lego-mediated learning activities, learners gradually demonstrated more target-like grammatical constructions. Several learners produced sentences such as:

**Table 2.** The Grammatical Form after the implementation of Lego-mediated learning

Learners' Utterances
"I wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning."
"My mother prepares breakfast for me."
"Does Dina have breakfast every day?"
"I do not have lunch at home."

---



---

### Learners' Utterances

---



---

"Do you learn English at school?"

---



---

The data indicate that learners demonstrated increasing awareness of : auxiliary placement, base verb usage, subject–verb agreement, and sentence transformation patterns. Although several grammatical inaccuracies remained during the second instructional cycle, the frequency of interlanguage forms appeared to decrease progressively throughout the learning process.

## DISCUSSION

### *Interlanguage Development in Simple Present Tense Acquisition*

The grammatical constructions produced by learners reflect several interlanguage features commonly found in second language acquisition. According to Selinker (1972), interlanguage refers to the transitional linguistic system developed by second language learners during the acquisition process. Learners' grammatical productions are systematic yet dynamic because they represent evolving linguistic competence rather than random mistakes.

The forms "*I am wake up*" and "*I am not have lunch at home*" illustrate auxiliary confusion in which learners inserted auxiliary *be* into verbal sentence constructions. These constructions indicate that learners had not fully differentiated nominal and verbal sentence systems in English grammar. Such interlanguage forms commonly emerge when learners attempt to construct grammatical rules based on incomplete linguistic understanding.

Similarly, the construction "*Does Dina has breakfast every day?*" demonstrates overgeneralization and incomplete auxiliary-triggered verb normalization. Learners successfully recognized the interrogative function of auxiliary *does* but simultaneously retained singular verb inflection. Ellis (1997) explains that learners often acquire grammatical subsystems unevenly during SLA processes, causing partial grammatical restructuring.

### *Visual Mediation and the Noticing of Grammatical Forms*

The findings suggest that Lego-mediated learning supported learners' grammatical awareness through visual-symbolic representation. Different Lego colors represented grammatical categories such as subjects, auxiliaries, verbs, and objects. Through repeated manipulation of these visual structures, learners gradually developed greater awareness of grammatical relationships and syntactic sequencing during Simple Present Tense construction.

This process can be explained through Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which argues that learners must consciously notice linguistic forms before acquisition can occur. In this study, the visual salience created through color-coded Lego structures appeared to help learners notice important morphosyntactic features, including subject–verb agreement, auxiliary placement, verb form changes, and negative as well as interrogative transformation patterns.

Schmidt further explains that linguistic forms which remain unnoticed are unlikely to become fully internalized within learners' developing interlanguage systems. In the context of Simple Present Tense learning, learners may repeatedly encounter grammatical markers such as auxiliary *do/does*, third-person singular *-s/-es*, and sentence transformation patterns without fully recognizing their syntactic functions. Consequently, learners often continue producing interlanguage forms such as "*She go to school*" or "*Does Dina has breakfast?*" because the grammatical relationships have not yet become sufficiently salient during language processing.

Similarly, VanPatten (1996), through Input Processing Theory, explains that learners naturally prioritize meaning over grammatical form when processing linguistic input. During communication, learners tend to focus first on understanding meaning rather than analyzing morphosyntactic features such as verb inflections or auxiliary systems. Consequently, grammatical markers such as *-s/-es* or auxiliary *do/does* are often overlooked during language processing. In this study, the use of color-coded Lego structures appeared to increase the perceptual salience of grammatical relationships by transforming abstract grammatical patterns into visually observable structures. Different Lego colors representing subjects, auxiliaries, verbs, and grammatical markers

enabled learners to notice syntactic relationships more consciously during sentence construction activities. Therefore, the Lego-mediated activities potentially facilitated grammatical acquisition by supporting learners' noticing and processing of English morphosyntactic patterns more effectively.

### ***Interlanguage Restructuring through Lego-Mediated Learning***

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Lego-mediated grammar learning supported learners' interlanguage restructuring processes. Through repeated visual-symbolic manipulation, learners gradually reorganized their grammatical systems and produced increasingly target-like Simple Present Tense constructions. Importantly, the findings suggest that grammar learning became more cognitively accessible because grammatical relationships were transformed from abstract formulas into observable structures. Learners no longer processed grammar solely through memorization but through visual categorization and syntactic manipulation. Therefore, the study supports the argument that visual-symbolic mediation may facilitate grammatical restructuring during SLA processes, particularly in learning English morphosyntactic systems among young EFL learners.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated how young EFL learners demonstrated interlanguage restructuring during Lego-mediated grammar learning. The findings revealed that learners initially produced various interlanguage features involving auxiliary confusion, subject-verb disagreement, overgeneralization, and incorrect sentence transformation patterns. Through Lego-mediated visual-symbolic manipulation, learners gradually reorganized their grammatical understanding and demonstrated more target-like Simple Present Tense constructions. The visual representation of grammatical categories appeared to support learners' noticing of grammatical relationships and facilitate syntactic restructuring processes.

The findings further indicate that interlanguage restructuring occurred progressively across instructional cycles. Although some grammatical errors persisted, learners demonstrated increasing awareness of auxiliary systems, verb normalization, and subject-verb agreement patterns. This study suggests that visual-symbolic grammar instruction can support SLA processes by helping learners externalize and reorganize grammatical systems cognitively. Therefore, Lego-mediated learning may provide valuable pedagogical support for young EFL learners experiencing difficulties in acquiring English grammatical structures.

### **REFERENCES**

- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Gattegno, C. (1972). *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way*. Educational Solutions.
- Junanah. (2014). Silent Way: Metode pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang mendorong peserta didik lebih kreatif, mandiri, dan bertanggung jawab. *Jurnal El-Tarbawi*, 7(1), 41–50.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2021). *How Languages are Learned* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Masruddin, M. (2019). Omission: Common simple present tense errors in students' writing of descriptive text. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 6(1), 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.64>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ortega, L. (2009). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Routledge.

- Paivio, A. (1991). Dual coding theory: Retrospect and current status. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 45(3), 255–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0084295>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 129–158. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.2.129>
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1–4), 209–231. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209>
- Siregar, H., & Zuriani, M. (2020). Students' error in using simple present tense. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 3(3), 379–383. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v3i3.p379-383>
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Newbury House.
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog1202\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog1202_4)
- VanPatten, B. (1996). *Input Processing and Grammar Instruction in Second Language Acquisition*. Ablex Publishing.
- VanPatten, B., & Benati, A. G. (2015). *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.