

A Case Study Of Indonesian Interference Towards English In Student Essays In The Writing Class

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Abstract

Contacts of two different languages often lead to some grammatical errors, especially if the source language and target language are from different language families. This study deals with the interference of Indonesian with English found in student essays in the Writing class. The purpose of this study is to uncover cases of language interference carried out by students. The research data is in the form of sentences containing grammatical errors caused by Indonesian interference with English. Data were collected from 35 essays written by students participating in The Writing Course 03 (Class A) from August – December 2021 in the English Literature Department - Faculty of Humanities - Jember University. Once collected, the data are classified and analyzed using an error analysis framework and a sociolinguistic perspective. The results show that there are nine types of grammatical interference which comprise: plural noun forms, the conformity of the subject-verb form, tenses, word forms, prepositions, article, conjunctions, word pairs (mismatch), passive form. These grammatical errors prove the interference of Indonesian towards English because students are still very strongly influenced by the rules of their native language (Indonesian) when they write essays in English.

Keywords: Language Interference; Grammatical Error; Transfer.

The use of Indonesian behavior in the use of English by Indonesian speakers can be studied using two perspectives, namely the perspective of applied linguistics and sociolinguistic studies. In the study of applied linguistics, or language learning, this phenomenon is referred to as the transfer of the mother tongue or first language (L1) into the target language or second language (L2). Meanwhile, from a sociolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon is referred to as language

interference or the influence of one language on another language. Interference is understood as a deviation that often occurs in bilingualism which is still in the stage of learning a second language. Interference arises due to the strength of the first language system that affects the use of the second language in communication events, emotions, sensitivity and attitudes of speakers. Language contact events that occur will not cause interference as long as the first language system has similarities with the second language

system. On the other hand, if the system of the first language and the second language are very different, it can cause language deviations or cause language errors due to the influence of the first language on the second language which is known as language interference. It is in accordance with Ali Derakhshan's opinion, He (2015) stated that it is a popular belief that first language (L1) has an effect on the second language acquisition, and it is claimed that L1 can interfere with the acquisition of L2. It is also believed that the role of L1 in the L2 depends on some similarities and differences between the two languages.

Interference is basically a linguistic symptom that commonly occurs in a language, especially those used in bilingual or multilingual societies, such as in Indonesia, where the population masters at least two or more languages. Interference is a deviation from language norms that occurs in bilingual speech as a result of the introduction of more than one language or because of language contact (Weinreich, 1970; Appel and Muysken, 2006). Interference is common in spoken language, but interference can also occur in written language. If interference occurs in written language, the error will not easily disappear and will even last as long as the writing (essay) is still there.

Regarding the occurrence of interference from Indonesian into English, many experts have conducted previous research. Fauziati (2010) examines the effect of mistakes made by students (English learners) as the influence of Indonesian on English whether it is permanent (fossil) or dynamic (can change) after learning. The results of this study indicate that the recovery of grammatical errors after learning is able to change the condition of students to be more dynamic. Subsequent research on Indonesian-English interference was conducted by Budiarti (2016) who described the forms and types of Indonesian-English interference in abstracts of scientific journal articles. There are 13 scientific journals that are the subject of study. The method used in

this research is descriptive with distributional and equivalent studies. The data are taken from abstracts of scientific journals published by several universities in the period 2003 - 2008. The results of this study indicate three forms of interference, namely morphological, syntactic, and semantic. Morphological interference includes reducing the function of inflectional morphemes in the formation of verbs for the third person singular, plural and belonging relationship. Syntactic interference includes the reverse of the arrangement of English phrases, parallelization, the absence of articles, the absence of to be, and the imperfection of the passive sentence structure. Semantic interference is found in the semantics of adding and replacing meaning. Next, Fauziati and Maftuhin (2016) studied the interference of the Indonesian verb system on English (as a foreign language) learners. The results of this study indicate that they develop their own grammatical system to reveal events that occur in the present, past, and future.

Still related to the interference of Indonesian into English, Sukarno (2016) analyzed grammatical errors in first-year student essays. This study seeks to find and describe grammatical errors as a result of the influence of the mother tongue (Indonesian) into English. There are ten types of errors and six of them (plural errors, subject-verb conformity, tenses, omission of subjects or verbs, and passive forms) are the main errors and therefore the six errors are analyzed in the discussion of this study. The results of this study indicate that grammatical errors are caused by differences in linguistic principles (interlingual transfer) and generalization of rules (overgeneralization).

Although research on the interference of Indonesian to English has been carried out by several previous researchers, grammatical errors due to interference of Indonesian into English in student writing, especially the students who joined the Writing Class 03, have never been carried out. In the Writing Class 03, students should no longer struggle with

grammatical problems, but rather devote their attention to organizing and developing ideas in their essays, the fact is that they are still found among those who make grammatical errors as a result of interference from the mother tongue (L1) on the target language. (L2). Therefore, this research is considered important to be carried out so that the problem of grammatical errors as a result of direct transfer between languages (inertlingual transfer) can be avoided, and reduced, and teaching materials in the Writing course can be focused more on developing ideas and writing techniques that are more organized (well-organized) , so that the students' written work will be easier to read (readable) and easily accepted (acceptable) by English speakers.

Method

This research is a qualitative research using a case study approach that investigates some grammatical errors made by students (Denscombe, 2007). The total population of this study was 35 people, namely all participants who took Wrting 03 Class A in the English Literature Department in Semester III of the 2021/2022 academic year. They have studied English at the Department of English Literature for one year, and have studied English for 6 years in middle and high school, where English is taught as a foreign language. In addition to Indonesian, students generally also speak one or more regional languages.

Technique in this study applies the documentary method using student writing materials as a database (Blaxter, and Tight, 2006: 154). This research is based on grammatical errors found in student essays.

Results and Discussion

In this section, first, the data in the form of English grammatical errors caused by Indonesian interference in the essays of students participating in the Writing 03 course are presented. Furthermore, each type of data is analyzed for errors (*error analysis*) and the error analysis is associated with language

interference (sociolinguistic study).

Result

In this subsection, the results of research on grammatical errors caused by Indonesian interference on the use of English by students in their essays are presented. After being identified and selected, the data obtained from the 35 student essays were classified based on the type of grammatical error into nine types. Table 1 presents all research data related to grammatical errors and is sorted by type, number and percentage of grammatical errors produced by participants in their writings (essays).

Table 1: Data on Grammatical Errors Caused by Language Interference

No.	Type of Error	Amount	%
1	Plural Noun Form	230	19.96
2	Subject and Verb Mismatch	173	15.01
3	Tenses	168	14.60
4	Word Form	123	10.67
5	Preposition	115	9.99
6	Article	108	9.37
7	Conjunction	93	8.07
8	Incorrect word pair (<i>Mis-match</i>)	75	6.51
9	Passive Form	67	5.81
		1.152	100.00 %

Table 1 shows that grammatical errors caused by Indonesian interference with the use of English are dominated by errors in the use of plural noun forms (19.96%) then the suitability between subject and verb forms (15.01), tenses (14.60) , and the least is errors in the use of the passive voice (5,81). Furthermore, each error caused by the interference of the Indonesian language to the use of English is discussed in order to explain why these errors can occur.

Discussion

According to Ellis (1997), two languages that have different linguistic *features* are very likely to cause *grammatical errors* in the target language as a result of L1 interference with

L2. This condition is called an interlingual transfer error. In relation to the word formation system, English is an inflectional language or a fusional language, which is a type of language that tends to have inflectional characteristics or the attachment of a morpheme to a root word (free morpheme) so that the two become an inseparable unit. The inflectional system can be related to plural meaning markers in nouns, tenses markers in verbs, passive in verbs, adverb form markers (derived from adjectives), markers of comparative meaning in adjectives and adverbs and so on.

In contrast to English, Indonesian tends to be agglutinative, which is a type of language in which grammatical relationships and word structures are expressed by a combination of language elements freely. With regard to nouns, for example, Indonesian does not have plural markers, does not have tenses markers on verbs, and does not have comparison markers (attached to the root word) in adjectives and adverbs, but the meaning of the comparison is expressed by its own element, for example by the word 'more', or 'most' which is placed in front of an adjective or adverb.

Interference and errors related to plural nouns

Indonesian, like most other Austronesian languages, tends to be agglutinative, that is, a type of language in which grammatical relationships and word structures are expressed by a free combination of language elements. Regarding nouns, for example, Indonesian does not have a plural marker. Therefore, there is no difference in form between singular and plural-meaning nouns because both have the same form. The noun *student*, for example, can have a singular meaning as in the sentence 'He is a new **student**', and it can also have a plural meaning as in the sentence 'They are new **students**'. On the other hand, English is an inflectional or fusional language, so that to mark the plural meaning of nouns, it is expressed by a plural marker attached to the noun either regularly, for example using the suffix '-s' or

'-es' (for regular nouns) and using suffixes. certain forms, such as '-ren' or '-en', as well as special forms such as 'tooth' becoming 'teeth' (for irregular nouns). Basically, the form of a noun with a plural meaning is different from the form of a noun with a singular meaning. The difference in the linguistic system in these two languages (referring to Ellis 1997) can have an effect on grammatical errors in the target language (L2). In other words, the linguistic system (noun form markers with plural meaning) that is not found in Indonesian (L1) can interfere with English usage (L2), as shown in the following data.

1. *They are from *many different **country** (countries)*.
(They come from different countries)
2. *She has *a number of **book** (books)* of economics. (He has a number of economics books)

Indonesian interference with English, as shown by the two data above, namely the use of nouns which have plural meaning in English, 'country' (negara) in data (1), and 'book' (buku) in data (2), not marked with the plural marker 'a plural marker' '-es' and '-s' respectively. Following the rules of English, the two nouns should be in the form of 'countries' and 'books' (as printed below). In fact, the two objects clearly show a plural meaning because they are preceded by a number word which shows a plural meaning, namely: 'many' and 'a number of'. This proves that the 'feature' or linguistic principle of Indonesian has significantly interfered to the linguistic features of English, namely by removing the plural meaning marker.

Interference and errors related to the conformity of the subject-verb form

English is an inflectional language that is bound by a conjugation system in the form of verbs, namely the form of the verb can change due to the number (subject) and temporal (kala). This type of verb is called a finite verb (a finite verb, see Sukarno, 2015). Regarding finite verbs, the English verb form is bound by the subject form. The relationship between

the suitability of the two forms is known as the subject-verb agreement (SVA) (Philips, 2001, Chele, 2015). On the other hand, Indonesian language tends to be agglutinative, its verb forms are free from subject and tempo bonds. Differences in linguistic features of Indonesian verb forms (which are independent) often interfere with English finite verb forms, thus violating the SVA rules, as demonstrated by the data below.

3. **The book* on the table in room 6 **belong** to me.
4. **A teacher* with his ten students **leave** the classroom.

As shown in the two data above, the finite verbs 'belong to' and 'leave', each subject to the third person singular, do not change form. According to the SVA rules, both verbs must be marked with *the third person singular subject morpheme* in the form of the suffix '-s' to '**belongs** to' and '**leaves**'. However, due to differences in linguistic principles in L1 and L2, it causes language interference, namely the linguistic principles of Indonesian (L1) are simply transferred into English (L2).

Interference and errors related to tenses

As explained above, Indonesian is a language that tends to be agglutinative, that is, it is not bound by the conjugation system (the relationship of the verb form to the tempo or time, which is known as 'tenses'). Therefore, English learners are often influenced by the agglutinative Indonesian language system and transfer it into English as shown in the data below.

5. *I **have done** the home work **yesterday**.
6. *I **go** to Surabaya **yesterday**.

As shown by the data above, students make grammatical errors because they transfer their habits from L1 (Indonesian) into L2 (English). In data (5), they mix both activities that show **results** with activities that emphasize **a certain time in the past** in one sentence. In English this is not possible. Unlike Indonesian,

English only chooses one of the both (**the perfect tense** only which emphasizes the result), or (**the past tense** which emphasizes at a certain time) but not both (Murphy, 1994: 14) In data (6), students do not change the form of the verb '**go**' to the past tense '**went**' in the case that the adverb '**yesterday**' clearly indicates an activity that occurred at a certain time in the past.

Interference and errors related to Word Forms

Word forms can vary from one language to another even though they refer to the same meaning. For example, adverbs and adjectives in Indonesian are usually expressed in two words. Adverbs start with the word 'with', or 'by' such as: (with *quick*), (with *careful*), (by *slow*), and (by *fair*). On the other hand, in English, adverbs are expressed by adding the suffix -ly to the adjective (King da Stanley, 1989) and not by adding the word 'with' or "by" in front of the adjective. Following this rule, the four adverbs when expressed in English become: *quickly*, *carefully*, *slowly*, and *fairly*. The habit of expressing adverbs by adding the word 'with' or "by" in Indonesian affects English learners, as revealed in the data below.

7. The mother closed the door of her son's room **with very careful* because he was still sleeping.
8. Hariadi speaks English **with very quick*.

As seen in the data above, the error in the use of the word form is due to the habit of expressing adverbs in Indonesian which is still carried over in English. In other words, the error is a form of interference from Indonesian into English

Interference and errors related to the use of prepositions

The use of prepositions in the target language that has not been fully mastered is not easy. Therefore, the use of prepositions in the target language is very easily influenced by the source language (L1). In Indonesian, verbs

such as 'join', and 'ask' are always followed by the prepositions 'with' and 'to' respectively. On the other hand, in English the equivalent of the two verbs is 'join' and 'ask' and they are not followed by a preposition. The difference in linguistic principles or features has the potential to cause interference of Indonesian to English, as shown in the data below.

9. Please **join with** my football club.
10. The teacher asked **to** the students.
11. He lives **in** here.

As seen in the data above, the verbs 'join' and 'ask' which should not need to be followed by a preposition, 'with' and 'to' respectively. This happens as the impact of the Indonesian interference to English carried out by students who usually use the verbs 'join with' and 'ask to' in Indonesian. Likewise, the adverbs of 'there' or 'here' in English should not require the preposition 'in' but in Indonesian the form 'here' or 'there' is followed by "in" namely "in here", "in there".

Interference and errors related to the use of the article

The role of articles in Indonesian is not as important as in English. Even the rules for its use in Indonesian are not as stringent as in English. This phenomenon often has an impact on grammatical errors. When speaking English, native Indonesian speakers often omit (forget not to use) articles in the English sentences they produce, as "Yesterday I bought new book of English animal story" or "Sun shines very brightly today."

As exposed in the data quote above, a noun 'book' and 'story' which is mentioned for the first time (general in nature) should be preceded by an *indefinite article* 'a' or 'an', while the noun 'sun' (the sun) which is an incomparable object in the world, a definite article is required (*a definite article*) 'the'. Following the English grammar, the two sentences should be written as follows.

12. Yesterday I bought **a** new book of **an** English animal story.

13. **The** sun shines very brightly today.

Interference and errors related to the use of conjunctions

At the sentence level, conjunctions or connecting words are often used to connect one clause to another, so that an equivalent *compound sentence* or a *complex sentence* is formed. In this combination, it is necessary to pay attention to the relationship meaning between the two combined clauses. For example the conjunctions 'but' and 'if'. The conjunction 'but' in English is used to connect two clauses that indicate opposite things. On the other hand, in Indonesian, the conjunction 'but' is often used to indicate something that is not opposite, but indicates a relationship that has additional meaning.

Furthermore, the conjunction 'if' is used to connect two unequal clauses (main clause and subordinate clause) which indicate the meaning of the terms. In Indonesian, the conjunction 'if' is sometimes used to connect meanings that are not requirements. This habit can affect English learners when they produce English sentences, as shown in this data "(12) My name is Suhartono, **but** my friends call me Nono." and "(13) It's better **if** we play games there."

In data (12) the conjunction 'but' is used, in which the two clauses combined (*My name is Suhartono and my firends called me Nono*) do not show contradictory meanings, but show additional meanings. Likewise, the combined data (13) is not a clause that shows the meaning of the terms, so the conjunction 'if' is not appropriate in this sentence. The conjunction in the two sentences should be replaced with 'and' for data (12), and the 'if we play games there' clause in data (13) should be replaced with the phrase 'for us to play games there'. The two sentences above should be written as follows:

14. My name is Suhartono and my friends call me Nono.
15. It's better for us to play games there

Interference and errors related to word pairs (Mismatch)

A word is often paired with another word (collocation) because the relationship between the two meanings is well established. The word 'say' (*bersabda*), for example, collocates with the word 'prophet', 'rosul' or 'king', while the word 'say' (*berfirman*) collocates with the word 'God' or 'Allah'. Thus, if a word is used with a word that is not a partner, it will cause an awkwardness. Word pairs can differ from one language to another. The use of words that are considered paired in one language may be considered inappropriate in another. This condition can affect Indonesian speakers when speaking English as shown in this data "It rained day after day, the **weather** felt **cold**." and "Tuti cannot join us today because **her body** is not **delicious**."

The two pairs of words in the two sentences above feel strange in English. They should be expressed as follows:

16. It rains every day, the air is cold.
17. Tuti cannot join us today because she is not well.

It means that 'we' who feel cold, not the weather, so the expression should be changed into "we felt cold". Likewise, the word *delicious* 'tasty' in English cannot be paired with the word 'body', so the expression should be changed to 'because she is not well'.

Interference and errors related to the passive form

Indonesian uses the passive form more often than English. This habit can also affect the use of English for beginners. Let's consider two examples of passive sentences in this data: "(18) *My book is still borrowed by Anton. (*Bukuku masih dipinjam oleh Anton*)" and "(19) *The accident was happened in front of the Faculty of Economics. (*Kecelakaan itu terjadi di depan fakultas ekonomi*)"

It can be seen in the Indonesian equivalent (printed in brackets) the passive form is indicated by the prefix *di-* in the verb

'borrowed' (data 18) and prefix "ter" in the verb "happen" (data 19). However, the use of the passive form in the two sentences is not appropriate because the perpetrator of the action (actor) can be easily identified, on the other hand the verb 'happens' does not indicate a passive sentence. Both sentences should be expressed in active sentences in English, as written below.

18. Anton still has my book.
19. The accident happened in front of the Faculty of Economics.

The passive form in English is mostly used to express an activity whose perpetrator (actor) is not stated in the sentence. So, if the culprit is clearly stated in a sentence (such as Anton, data) it will be expressed in the form of an active sentence (18) in English.

Conclusion

Referring to the contact of two languages of different families can result in language interference, namely habits that have been attached to the language that was previously mastered (mother tongue/original language or L1) can affect the use of the language learned later/target language (L2). Based on the data collected from 35 student essays, it was found that 1,152 errors were caused by interference from L1 to L2. Based on the type, these errors can be classified into nine groups related to the noun form, the suitability between the subject and verb forms, tenses, word forms, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, wrong word pairs and passive forms. Based on the frequency of occurrence, noun form errors (plural noun forms) occupy the top position, namely as many as 230 errors or almost 20% of all types of errors. On the other hand the passive form is the type of error that occurs the least, which is 67 errors or about 5.8 percent. Each type of error shows that there are significant differences between Indonesian and English in various aspects of linguistic features that students have not been able to completely abandon (participants

of the Writing 03 course). When students speak English, they are still very influenced by the rules that usually apply in Indonesian, whereas, English has different rules from those of Indonesian.

Based on the facts above it is necessary for the lectures of writing class to inform their students that something very important in this class is that the English grammar applied by the students in writing an Essay should be acceptable and understandable. For example, some students possibly write a sentence: “ I went to Bali every year”, this sentence is understandable but it is not acceptable in English grammar. It is a proof that a such grammatical error happened because Indonesian has no Tense, and it is one of the language interferences done by the students. Therefore, the lecturers need to remind them about it besides introducing them the writing process.

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