

SYNTACTICAL INTERFERENCE FOUND IN EFL STUDENTS' ENGLISH COMPOSITION

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to analyze syntactical interference found in EFL Students' English composition of IAIN Salatiga. The objectives are to find out type of interference, frequency of each type, the most dominant type, and the factors contribute to language interference in EFL students' composition. This is a descriptive-qualitative research. The data were taken through elicitation technique, and then analyzed by using theory of language interference. The findings of this study showed that EFL students made five categories of interference error that belong to syntactical interference: the use of L1 structure in target language, the use of L1 structure in English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form.

Keywords: *First language interference, EFL students, English composition*

INTRODUCTION

In foreign language learning, EFL students will always encounter some difficulties/problems in mastering it. When they are learning a foreign language, they often make mistakes whether in their speaking or writing. These problems are exactly caused by the different systems of mother tongue and those of foreign language especially English. Foreign language learners sometimes get difficulty in mastering English. It happens because of the interference of first language into English. So, what they find difficult will depend on the degree and maturity of what they have obtained on English. There are many factors which influence the problems in learning English; one of them is because of interference of first language.

Every country has different language used as a mother tongue or language which is used daily. Every language has different structure or grammar, likewise Indonesian and English. Both of them have different grammar in composing a sentence. In English every action is always related to the time when it happens and the time determines the correctness of sentence based on English grammar rule. While Indonesia language whenever action happens, it doesn't influence the correctness of sentence because it has no time difference in determining a deed.

As EFL country, Indonesia, English is learnt as the first foreign language. Learning a foreign language requires accuracy, especially when both native and foreign languages have different

structure. The differentiation of structure may cause errors or mistakes in learning a foreign language. In learning a foreign language learners are usually interfered by the elements of first or native language. Interference happens most of the time, and it has a big role in foreign language learning.

Interference is the change of language system used in other element of language which is regarded as a mistake because it deviates from the rules of language used (Chaer and Agustina, 1995, p.158). Weinreich (in Napitupulu, 1994, p.14), asserts interference is the deviation of language norm in usage as the effect of bilingual toward another language. The term of interference is firstly used by Weinreich to name the existence of different language system spoken by bilingual speaker in using a language. Interference happens when the speaker uses second language and ones which is interfered into second language is the first language or mother tongue.

According to Dulay et al (1982, p.98) interference is the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. Interference is the deviation of target language as a result of their familiarity with more than one language. They differentiate interference into two parts, the psychological and sociolinguistic. The psychological refers to the influence of old habits when new ones are being learned, whereas sociolinguistic refers to interactions of language when two language

communities are in contact. Therefore students will find it difficult in mastering the second language due to the interference, which is influenced by old habit, familiar with mother tongue and interaction of two languages in the communities.

This study is conducted to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the types of interference found in EFL students' English composition?
- b. What is the frequency of each type of first language interfere found in EFL students' English composition?
- c. What is the most dominant type of interference error found in EFL students' English composition?
- d. What are the factors contributing to first language interference found in EFL students' English composition?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many researchers from different countries who investigated language interference. For instance, Solano, et al. (2014) studied about Spanish interference in EFL writing skills: A case of Ecuadorian Senior High Schools. This research focused on native language interference toward English Foreign Language writing skills of Senior High School students in Ecuador. The objects of this research are some Ecuadorian Senior High Schools. There are 351 students and 42 teachers from second year senior high school as participants of this study. The instruments for collecting date are questioners and written test. The students were asked to write a narrative passage. The result showed

that most frequent first language interference are misuse of verbs, omission of personal and object pronouns, misuse of prepositions, overuse of articles, and incorrect word order.

Luo (2014) studied about mother tongue interference in pronunciation of college English learning in China. This research focused only on the interference of mother tongue pronunciation. This study examines mispronunciation caused by a mother tongue interference of the college English learners from more than twenty provinces in China. Based on the research findings, it can be known that the result of this study showed that many Chinese college students have problem of mother tongue interference. Many of them would unintentionally confuse the phoneme [n] with [l], or [f] with [h], or the aspirated sounds with the non-aspirated ones in the course of learning English pronunciation, including some teachers who speak their hometown dialects instead of the standard Chinese. Both students and teachers might hardly avoid the mother tongue interference in learning or teaching a foreign language.

Somchai and Sirluck (2013) studied about Thai English Foreign Language (EFL) students' writing errors in different text types: "The interference of the first language". They focused their research on EFL students' writing error due to first language interference. Result of this study showed that in narration genre the participants made some interferences of using verb tense, word choice, sentence structure,

article, and preposition. While in descriptive writing the participants made some errors in using article, sentence structure, words choice, singular/plural form, and subject-verb agreement. And the last in comparison writing the participants made some errors in using singular/plural form, word choice, article, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, and preposition.

Kaweera (2013) studied about writing error: A review of interlingual and intralingual interference in EFL context. She focused her research on writing errors made by Thai EFL students. Based on the result of the research, she concluded that errors are found in students' writing caused by both interlingual and intralingual interference. It is clearly understood that writing errors are assumed as being not only a result of the native language interference habits to the learning of second language or foreign language, but also inadequate acquisition of the target language. This is because writers depend on the structures of their own native language and transfer those structures to produce their written language.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Language interference has become one of crucial discussions on language learning. Many language scholars have conducted a research on mother tongue interference. It has become one of major issues in learning a second language or foreign language since foreign language learners are highly dependable the structure of second

language on the structure of first language.

There are some definitions of interference promoted by language scholars. The term of interference is firstly used by Weinrich to name the existence of different language system spoken by bilingual speaker in using a language. According to Weinrich (1994, p.14) interference is the deviation of language norm in usage as the effect of bilingual toward another language.

More specifically, Weinreich says interference is defined as a deviation to the norm of both languages which occurs in the speech of a bilingual speaker. Interference appears on all language levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical. Numerous examples can be quoted to show how interference works. It is always present when a bilingual speaker includes elements of another language into the one he is speaking, mostly not being aware of it. The two language systems interfere with one another on the part of the listener this is perceived as a foreign intonation or accent, a wrong inflection, an unusual word order or an unfamiliar metaphor.

According to Dulay et al (1982, p.98) interference is the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. Interference is the deviation of target language as a result of their familiarity with more than one language. They differentiate interference into two parts, the psychological and sociolinguistic. The psychological refers to the influence of old habits when new

ones are being learned, whereas sociolinguistic refers to interactions of language when two language communities are in contact. Therefore students will find it difficult in mastering the second language due to the interference, which is influenced by old habit, familiar with mother tongue and interaction of two languages in the communities.

Meanwhile, according to Hayi (1985, p.8) referring to Valdman's point of view in 1966 theorized that interference is an obstacle as a result of speaker's habits on first language (L1) in the study of language acquisition of second language (L2). Consequently, there are some transfers of negative elements from the mother tongue into the target language. In other word, the speaker uses negative elements of first language in target language or second language. Nababan (1991, p.35) says interference only happens to speakers when they use second or foreign language in their speaking or writing. It can be receipted interference (the use of second language receipted by the elements of first language) and productive interference (the use of first language by using element and structure of second language), exactly when they use both languages. A person who is bilingual may be said to be one who is able to communicate, to varying extents in a second language.

While Ellis (1997, p. 51) refers to interference as 'transfer', which he says is the impact that the learner's native language exerts over the acquisition of target language. He asserts that transfer is governed by learners' perceptions about what is

transferable and by their stage of development in target language learning. He raises the need to distinguish between errors and mistakes and makes an important divergence between the two. He says that errors reflect gaps in the learners' knowledge; they occur because the learners do not figure out what is right. Mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learners are unable to perform what they know.

Basically, the emergence of interference occurs to the level of bilingual interpreter especially oral interpreter, how far he or she knows and masters source of language and target language well and correctly, and how often he or she uses and changes from one language into another. It causes interference. The main factor of interference is because of the difference of grammar or structure between source of language or first language and target language or second language (Yusuf, 1994, p.70).

Lott (1983, p.256) defines interference as errors in the learner's use of the second language or foreign language which can be traced back to the mother tongue or first language. In other word, language learners use the structure of first language in target language. According to Lott (1983, p. 258 -259) there are three factors that cause language interference as follows:

a. The interlingual factor. Interlingual transfer is a significant source for language learners. This concept comes from contrastive analysis of behavioristic school of learning. It

stresses upon the negative interference of mother tongue as the only source of errors. The construction 'I like to read' is uttered as 'I read to like' by many Hindi speakers. In Hindi, the verb is pre-positioned while in English it is post positioned. This type of error is the result of negative transfer of first language rules to target language system.

- b. The over extension of analogy. Usually, a learner has been wrong in using a vocabulary caused by the similarity of the element between first language and second language, e.g. the use of cognate words (the same form of word in two languages with different functions or meanings). The example is the using of month and moon. Indonesian learners may make a mistake by using month to say moon in the space.
- c. Transfer of structure. There are two types of transfer according to Dulay et.al (1982, p.101), positive transfer and negative transfer. Negative transfer refers to those instances of transfer, which result in error because old habitual behavior is different from the new behavior being learned. On the contrary, positive transfer is the correct utterance, because both the first language and second language have the same structure, while the negative transfer from the native language is called interference.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive qualitative research. It is about first language interference made by EFL students. Denzin and Lincoln (2012, p.4) give

definition about qualitative research as follow:

“Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.”

The definition above means that qualitative research has focus on multi methods that comprise an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It means that those who conduct a research using qualitative method study the things in their natural setting and try to interpret the meaning based on phenomenon people bring. Qualitative research involves some varieties such as personal experience, introspective, life story, interview and so on to explain about problematic moment and meaning in individuals' lives.

The subject of this research is English Foreign Language (EFL) students of IAIN Salatiga. They are second semester students. The writer used technique of random sampling. The writer took thirty students randomly, eleven boys and nineteen girls, as the subject of this research.

The object of this research is first language interference found in

EFL students' English composition of State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga. The interference is classified into two types, namely lexical interference and syntactical interference. Then both types of interference are broken down into several kinds of interference errors based on mistakes made by students. However, the writer just discussed the interference at syntactical level.

In this research, the data were taken from the wrong sentences because of interference made by English Foreign Language (EFL) students in their English composition. The wrong sentences were taken from students' English composition in the form of essays or paragraphs on thirty sheets of paper. The data sources were from EFL students' composition of Salatiga State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN).

Having all the data been collected, first the writer displays all the data found in English Foreign Language (EFL) students' composition and then analyzes them by identifying and criticizing the mistakes of the interference. After that he explains and classifies the type of interference. The writer then corrects the mistake based on English rules commonly used in detail. It aims at classifying the types of interference frequently happen in learning a foreign language. The last, the writer draws conclusions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Types of Interferences made by EFL Students of IAIN Salatiga. In this research, the researcher found five categories of error that belong to syntactical interference, they are: the

use of L1 structure in target language, the use of L1 structure in English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form.

- 1) Interference error in the use of L1 structure in target language, the writer found 23 types of error. The followings are the examples:
 - a) *Usually I and my friends learn in the mosque* *Usually my friends and I learn in the mosque*
 - b) *We often find language English on internet* *We often find English language on internet.*
 - c) *I hope the tree fast grow* *I hope the tree grows fast*
 - d) *I and my friends can study together* *My friend and I can study together*
 - e) *We more know material* *We know more the material*

The sentences above seem very clear that they are results of literal translation from first language into target language. It happens since English structure is different from Indonesian structure.

- 2) The use of L1 structure in English noun phrase. In this case the writer found 10 errors made by EFL students. Look at the examples below:
 - a) *Teacher can give us explanation clear if we don't understand* *Teacher can give us a clear explanation if we don't understand*
 - b) *In the library I can read book a lot* *In the library I can read a lot of books*

Teacher can give *material interesting* for students *Teacher can give interesting material for students*

- c) *We can learning English in room is very comfortable* *We can learn English in very comfortable room*
- d) *I can't see beautiful tree big in campus* *I can't see beautiful big tree in campus*

From the examples of English noun phrase in two sentences above are very clear that EFL learners used L1 structure in English noun phrase. It happens because both languages have different structure. So, some of the EFL learners who still have limited linguistic knowledge of target language were inclined to use L1 structure.

- 3) Literal translation in negation of verbal sentence. Interference error at this level, the writer could find 19 errors made by EFL students. Look at the following examples:
 - a) *I can ask question I not understand.* *I can ask question I don't understand*
 - b) *Students not study in the classroom* *Students do not study in the classroom*
 - c) *We can question what we not know.* *We can ask question we don't know*
 - d) *Sometimes students not do task* *Sometime students don't do the task*
 - e) *Many students not focus.* *Many students do not focus*

The sentences above are very clear that EFL students translated Indonesian sentences into English literally. In Indonesian, there is no auxiliary verb, so some students made mistake in making verbal sentences of negative form in

English. They didn't insert auxiliary verb *do/does* before *not*. They just translated literally.

4) Literal translation in negation of nominal sentence. At this level, the writer found 17 errors made by EFL students. Look at the following examples:

- a) My writing *not good*
My writing *is not good*
- b) Students *not lazy* to come to campus
Students *are not lazy* to come to campus
- c) Learning English from internet *not easy bored*
Learning English from internet *is not easily bored*
- d) Now I *not active* again
Now I *am not active* again
- e) Many students *not interested* with internet
Many students *are not interested* in internet

The sentences above are very clear that EFL students translated Indonesian sentences into English literally. In Indonesian, there is no auxiliary verb, so some students made mistake in making nominal sentences of negative form in English. They didn't insert auxiliary verb *is, are, or am* before *not*. They just translated literally.

Literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form. The writer found 22 errors made by EFL students. Look at the examples below:

- a) They **very nice* to me
They *are very nice* to me
- b) The location and facility **good enough*
The location and facility *are good enough*

- c) The students **also friendly and diligent*
The students *are also friendly and diligent*
- d) They **very patient* teach the students
They *are very patient* to teach students
- e) There are some students who **very busy*
There are some students who *are very busy*

The examples of nominal sentences of affirmative form above are very clear that EFL students seemed to translate Indonesian sentences into English literally. Since in Indonesian there is no auxiliary verb, some students made mistakes in making nominal sentences of affirmative form in English. They didn't insert auxiliary verb *is, are, or am* before adjective, noun, or adverb. They just translated from Indonesia into English literally.

Frequency of Each types of Interference

There are five categories of interference error, the use of L1 in target language, the use of L1 in English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form. For more detail, look at the table below:

Table 1
Frequency of Each Type of Interference Error

No	Category of Interference	Example	Frequency	Percentage
1	The use of L1 structure in target language	<i>Usually I with my friends learn in the mosque</i>	23	25,27 %
2	The use of L1 structure in	<i>I can't see tree</i>	10	10,98

	English noun phrase	<i>beautiful big in campus</i>		%
3	Literal translation in negation of verbal sentence	We cannot ask something we <i>not</i> understand	19	20,90 %
4	Literal translation in negation of nominal sentence	We <i>not</i> lazy to come to campus	17	18,68 %
5	Literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form	The students * also friendly and diligent	22	24,17 %
	Total		91	100%

The table above shows that English Foreign Language (EFL) students of IAIN Salatiga made mistake at syntactical interference with the detail; the use of L1 structure in target language 25,27%, the use of L1 structure in English noun phrase 10,98%, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence 20,90%, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence 18,68%, and literal translation in nominal sentence of positive form 24,17%. So, the most frequent interference error made by EFL students of IAIN Salatiga is in the case of the use of L1 structure in target language (25,27%).

The Most Dominant Type of Interference Error

Based on the result of data analysis described in the table above, it can be known that EFL students of IAIN Salatiga made interference error at syntactical level. Syntactical interference consists of the use of L1 in target language, the use of L1 in English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form.

Based on the frequency of each type of interference error shown in the table above, there are five

types of interference errors made by EFL students of IAIN Salatiga. And the most frequent type is the use of L1 structure in target language. Thus, the most dominant type of interference error is the use of L1 structure in target language which belongs to syntactical level.

Factors Contribute to Language Interference

There are many factors contribute to language interference. According to Weinreich (1970) in his study, there are five factors; they are speaker's bilingualism background, disloyalty to target language, limited vocabularies of target language mastered by language learners, need of synonym, and prestige and style. According to Lott (1983) in his research, there are three factors contribute to language interference; they are interlingual error, over extension of analogy, and transfer of structure. While according to Jianhua (2007) there are two factors of language interference; language and cultural differences and modes of thinking.

Having analyzed all the data of this research, the writer could draw the conclusion of factors contribute to language interference. Based on the data found in EFL students, and the underlying theory, the writer has assumption about factors contribute to language interference made by EFL students of IAIN Salatiga as follows:

First, some EFL students seem to still have superficial linguistic knowledge since they are still at the beginning of their study. *Second*, students seem to still have limited vocabulary, so they cannot

distinguish between verb and noun such. *Third*, some students may have different modes of thinking. Many of EFL students seem to think in Indonesian style when they make English sentences, so many of them made English sentences with Indonesian structure, they used prepositions by translating literally from first language into target language, they made adverb of manner and comparative degree just by translating literally word by word, and they made English sentences by translating literally from first language into target language word by word. *Fourth*, students are disloyal to the rules of target language.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with research finding and discussion elaborated above, it can be concluded that:

There are five categories of interference error that belong to syntactical interference, they are: the use of L1 structure in target language, the use of L1 structure in English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form.

The frequency of each type of interference errors are: the use of L1 structure in target language 25,27%, the use of L1 structure in English noun phrase 10,98%, literal translation in negation of verbal sentence 20,90%, literal translation in negation of nominal sentence 18,68%, and literal translation in nominal sentence of positive form 24,17%.

The most dominant type of interference error is the use of L1 structure in target language which is about 25,17%.

Factors contribute to language interference are: *First*, some EFL students seem to still have superficial linguistic knowledge since they are still at the beginning of their study. *Second*, students seem to still have limited vocabulary. *Third*, some students may have different modes of thinking. *Fourth*, the students are disloyal to the rules of target language.

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