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FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCES INTO ENGLISH WRITING SKILL OF THE XIITH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA NEGERI 1 KUPANG IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018

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Abstract

This project entitled "FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCES INTO ENGLISH WRITING SKILL OF THE XIIth GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA NEGERI 1 KUPANG IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018." This research is aimed at; 1) figuring aspects of first language (L1) interferences; and 2) the affecting factors of L1 interference into English writing skill. By applying descriptive qualitative approaches, there were some strategies using in both compiling and analyzing data. In collecting data, triangulation was applied such as interviewing teacher and students, classroom observation, and students' writing assessment. The data were obtained by interviewing students and teacher and assessing writing skill of students of SMA N 1 Kupang in academic year 2017/2018 in the third grade of language program. Typology was applied in analyzing data using contrastive analysis. The result of this investigation proved that there are four levels of L1 interference found in students' English writings. They are phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. There are also four affecting factors that cause the occurrence of L1 interferences. They are mental process happening in students' brain, students' L1, Teaching and Learning Process (TLP) model in classroom, and under-frequency of English use. Mental process in Students' brain and students' L1 are novelty dimensions of this research.

Keywords: First Language; Second Language; Language Acquisition; Language Learning; Interferences; Linguistics.

1. Introduction

English has been taught in Indonesia since its independence. In other word, Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) has come to seven decades. However, there are still a lot of challenges and problems to face both by teachers of English and learners. One of the obstacles encountered by teachers and learners is language transfer [1]. Language transfer has some

terminologies. They are first language (L1) interference, linguistic interference, and cross meaning [2].

Linguistic interference refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second language (L2). It is defined that interference as the change of language system used in other element of language which is regarded as a mistake because it deviates from rules of language used [3]. Language interference is also considered as an 'intruder' of a second language learning [4]. The term 'intruder' is used since L1 always appears in certain level of language and impacts the disorder in L2.

Linguistic interference is always found in every L2 learner including students of senior high school in Kupang city who learn English as foreign language (EFL). Citizens of Kupang are bilingual as well as senior high schools students [5]. In view of the fact that the city dwellers of Kupang are multi ethnics, there is more than one language used in communication. They speak their local languages, Kupang Malay (KM), and Bahasa Indonesia (BI) [5]. Yet, KM and BI are the most frequent spoken language seeing as this language is operated in daily communication [5].

Cross meaning is identical to bilingualism [6]. The transfer among languages happens if a person masters more than one language and or is learning a second language [6] [7]. Since there are languages in his mind, language contact occurs and mostly engages the knowledge of L1 [8]. This case is faced by senior high school students in learning EFL process. In case of language transfer, the result of L1 influence can be identified by observing English productive skills; speaking and writing of students [9].

These following examples of linguistic interference case in L2 learning are found in some English composition assignments done by a group of language students in a state senior high school in Kupang city.

(English)   *In the past, when I am a child, I usually went to my grandmother's house together with my father*
(KM) *Dulu, waktu beta masih kacil,beta biasa pi nene pung rumah sama-sama dengan beta pung mama*

The above case point of linguistic interference can be perceived from the use of diction, sentence structure, tense, and expressed meaning in English sentence. The word and phrases in the brackets indicate as the results of Kupang Malay obstruction to the production of English sentence in case of composition. The phrase 'in the past' can be ignored as manner of time of the event which in English is not efficient. The use of 'am' indicates inappropriate tense in English which is not found in KM. The same situation is also found in the phrase 'usually went' which actually means 'used to go' in English. The phrase 'together with' shows the use of literal translation of KM into English which is not oriented to the suitable orientation of meaning in English.

The obscurity of English sentence production as illustrated in the case above arises when learner processes the language in mind. This is regularly labeled as *encoding process* where someone

administers language in his head involving grammatical, semantic, phonological, and morphological aspect of language [4] [10]. Consequently, this quandary has an effect on the progress of learning EFL indicated by English productive skills and mastery of ESL [10]. The circumstance depicted by the instance above also occurs in speaking considering the *encoding process* results production of oral language [4].

2. Objectives

The information provided in the previous part indicates problems containing linguistic interferences of L1 into English writing skills. It means that problems regarding English writing are found on linguistic levels. Therefore, this writing is aimed at figuring levels of language which are interfered by L1. Further, the investigation is meant to elaborate the affecting factors that cause the occurrence of L1 interferences into the skill of writing in English.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Related Studies

A research on language interference based on the perspective of language teaching was done with the similar topic [11] by Lekova. In other word, first language is seen as an affecting factor in teaching and learning second language [12]. He states that the dominant factor is on interference where can be found on the levels of linguistics such as phonetics, lexical, and grammatical levels. By using contrastive and error analysis, Lekova compared the structure of English as second language and French as the first language. The analysis was done on the level of phonology, morphology, and syntax by identifying errors made by students who learned English formally. Lekova's result of research indicated that the most affecting factor of language interference is bilingualism. It said that students who learned English as second language are active interlocutors of French and their local languages. Then, interference of French cannot be ignored.

Lekova also concluded that teacher should know the system of both languages (first and second language) very well to minimize the occurrence of language interference among students second language learning [11].

A similar a research on mother tongue influence in English communication which is more specific than what Lekova did was conducted by Sripabha [13]. In his project, Sripabha wrote about the use of English in communication. However, specific identification on language interference was not clear enough whether it was on the level of phonology, morphology, syntax, or semantics, or not. Moreover, Sripabha scrutinized the overcoming of mother tongue influence without focusing on certain level[13].

The two previous researches were done in the domain of language interference. One was related to language teaching and learning, and the other was about English communication [14]. Both of these writings identified first language interference into both teaching (and learning) and communication. In spite of this, both of those researches are limited on the data and discussion. Thus, this project is designed to be done in the field of linguistics interference found on every

language level, in teaching and learning process of second language (English) by compiling data from English productive skills; writing and speaking[14]. Furthermore, this writing will cover qualitative approach with triangulation of data collection (interview, test, and observation) and also will investigate the affecting factors of linguistic interference. Along these lines, this task will be done to complete the previous studies on this field.

3.2. Psycholinguistics

Since this study investigates errors in language learning, it is necessary to relate this topic with psycholinguistics which provides concepts of language acquisition, language learning, language transfer, and encoding and decoding process[4][8][15][16][17][18]. The first thing to see from psycholinguistics is encoding and decoding. These two concepts are related to how language is transferred by undergoing mental and physical processes [19][20]. Mental process involves semantics, grammar, and sound of the language[4][15]. Encoding and decoding are related by physical process containing uttering or transmitting meaning by using organ of speech that produce sound and caught by partner of speaking[21]. This process happens in social communication[3].

3.3. Second Language Acquisition and Language Learning

Second language acquisition (SLA) is included into psychology[22][23]. It talks about how second language is mastered by those who already possessed first language[4][24]. In SLA, there are two processes called competence and performance. Linguistic competence covers phonology, syntax, and semantics [25]. There are three stages of acquisition based on the process[26]. They are the acquisition of phonology, grammar, and semantics [24][27][17][28][29].

Language learning is also considered in investigating first language interference. Language learning is labeled as the process of mastering second language by conscious process [4][12]. It is totally different with language acquisition, since language acquisition happens in subconscious process. However, there are some experts who use the term of *language acquisition* for language learning[10]. It is based on their assumption that second language can also be master by learning in formal and informal situation. For bilingual people, informal language acquisition naturally happens[30][31].

3.4. Language Interference

In addition, interference as the object of psycholinguistics and linguistics is affected by communication between two language (or more) systems [32][33]. From the point of view of psycholinguistics, it is a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to another foreign language[6]. From a linguistic point of view, interference is an interaction or a change in linguistic structures and structural elements[34][35]. It appears to be a deviation from linguistic norms in the spoken and written language[36].

Interference is closely related to bilingualism. Bilingualism differs in character[37]. In correlative bilingualism both language systems exist together in the individual's mind and are independent of one another[38]. When an individual has good command of the two languages

there is no interference[7][39][40]. In the case of subordinate bilingualism, the second language is not mastered to the degree the first language is[41]. Here, mother tongue dominates and influences the second language leading to interference[33].

4. Method

This research is classified into descriptive qualitative for some reasons. Philosophically, most of social research are qualitative since the most common technique of compiling data is observation and interview which demands researcher's interpretation [42][12]. Moreover, the object of social research is language that needs descriptive analysis [43]. The data were compiled by observing Teaching and Learning Process (TLP), interviewing teacher of English, interviewing students, and conducting writing tests for 25 students of SMA Negeri 1 Kupang in Academic Year 2017/2018 more specifically those who are in the XIIth grade of language program. The method applied in the analysis of data was typology. It is about how to classify the data into groups based on their characteristics [42][43]. The types of linguistic interferences were classified based on language levels. They are phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics [37][44][45][46][47].

5. Discussion

5.1. Students' L1, LL1, and FL

It is compulsory to clarify the languages mastered by the students in order to correctly determine and use the term of first language. Based on the interview, there are two languages which are students' first languages. They are Kupang Malay and Manggarai. Kupang Malay is the first language of 24 students of 96% of the total students, while the rest 4% or only one student who has Manggarai language as his first language. Bahasa Indonesia becomes the first language learning, while English becomes their foreign language learning. This following figure depicts the sequence of language mastery.
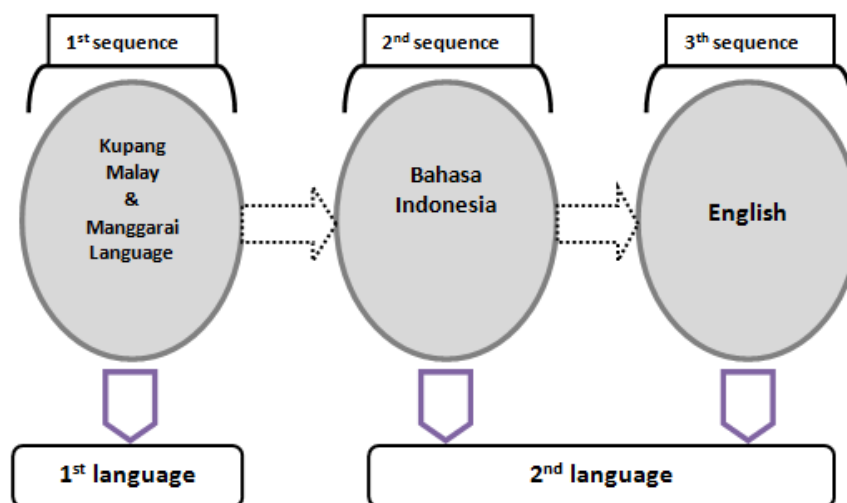

Figure 1: Obtained Languages Based on the Sequence of Obtaining Process
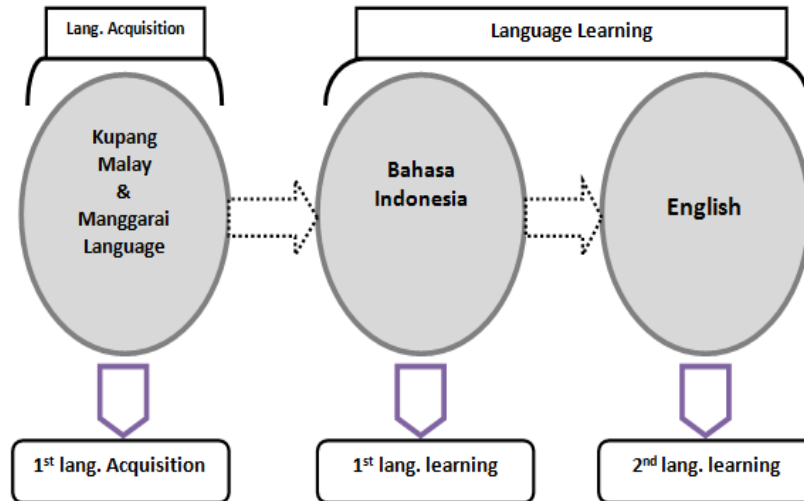
Figure 2: Obtained Languages Based on the Types of Obtaining Process

The above figures (1 & 2) describe that students have undergone the process of gaining languages including their first language acquisition, language learning, and foreign language learning. However, this following figure helps us in determining and using the term first language. In short, Kupang Malay and Manggarai languages are students' first language in terms of the sequence, while Bahasa Indonesia is students' first language based on learning process.

5.2. Linguistic Levels of First Language Learning into English Writing Skill

There are four levels of linguistics which are interfered by students' first language. Those levels are phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The first level is phonology. The interference on phonological level, however, only occurs on two sentences or cases from the total sentences which show that this kind of interference is also found in written expression even in a small number of cases. Nonetheless, this is a phenomenon to explore regarding first language interference, and to confirm that first language, no matter in few or many numbers, interferes the second language and it is proven by the cases found in students' works.

1) Just like the movie we saw earlier *thet* the person is very likely to use his mobile phone.

Sentence (1) provides example of phonological interference into English writing of student. The word *thet* written by student is interfered by the first language (BI or KM) in the way it is sounded. This word is actually associated with the sound of how it is produced in English /THæt/, which influenced students into the way they wrote. In other words, they wrote it the way they the word is pronounced.

2) About the problems that *pack* gave and *pack* explaining the problem thoroughly provide direction for us to understand the problem teaching that make us

Data (2) above indicates interference occurring on word level. This kind of interference can be drawn in this following figure.
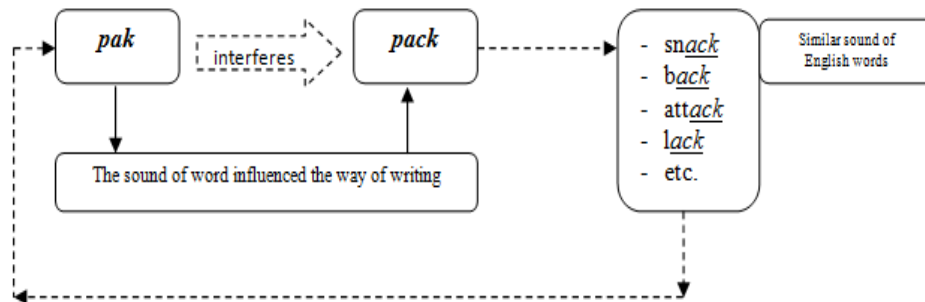
Figure 3: Interference of the Word pack

Interference is also found on grammatical level. On this level, influence of students' first language occurs mostly on English sentence construction that is similar to and affected by students' first language. The following example of comparison of English sentence and its Indonesia and Kupang Malay versions proves that interference exists.

Table 1: Comparison of Sentence Construction.

	S	P				
Eng.	I	like	English	*from*	when	I sitting in junior high school
BI	Saya	suka	Bahasa Inggris	*sejak*	waktu	Saya duduk di SMP
KM	Beta	suka	Bahasa Inggris	*dari*	waktu	Beta masih duduk di SMP
	N	**V**	**NP**	**Prep**	**Adverb of manner**	

Semantics is the level of linguistic which causes all errors in terms of interference. It involves phonology, morphology, and grammar levels of language that are interfered by students' first language. The reason is that students always think the meaning of sentence they are going to produce translate it inside their mind before they write. The process of how semantics influence other levels is pictured bellow.
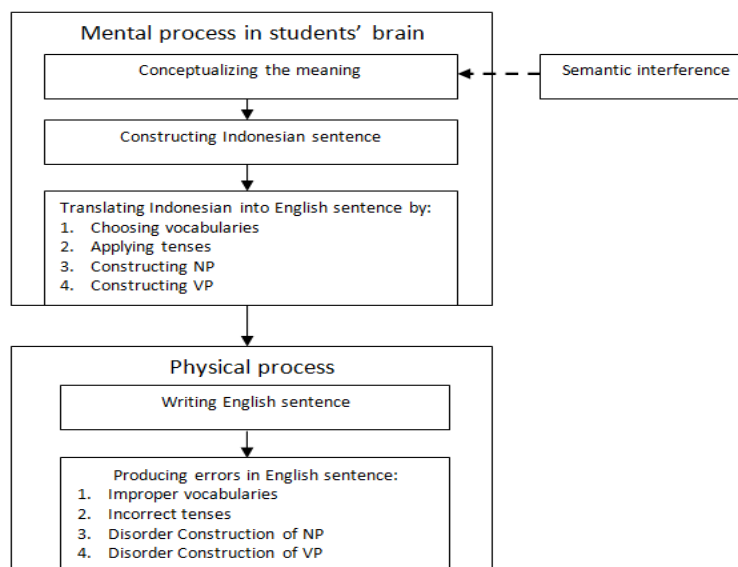

Figure 4: Semantic Interference

Figure 4 shows that semantics is also found as a level that is interfered by students' first language and influences other levels of English in terms of writing. The interference happens inside students' mind because they think about Indonesian meaning of the sentence and then translate it into English.

5.3. Factors Affecting First Language Interferences into English Writing Skill

Based on the data, there are two main affecting factors of first language interference into English writing skill. They are mental process and students' first language. Mental process is a process happening inside the students' mind involving conceptualizing the meaning, constructing Indonesian sentence, translating Indonesian sentence into English by choosing vocabularies, applying tenses, constructing Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase.

It is true that meaning organization is the first thing to do and recognize before utterance (through oral and written form). In encoding process, meaning conceptualization is found in the first place. Thus, before speaking or writing everybody thinks about the correct meaning and then formulate it in language by considering grammatical and phonological form of language. If the encoding happens to written language, the form of message is in form of written text. In the process of decoding message, people will try to recognize sounds produced in encoding process and or written text, consider the grammatical structure of language, and then relate the meaning intended by the speaker or writer.
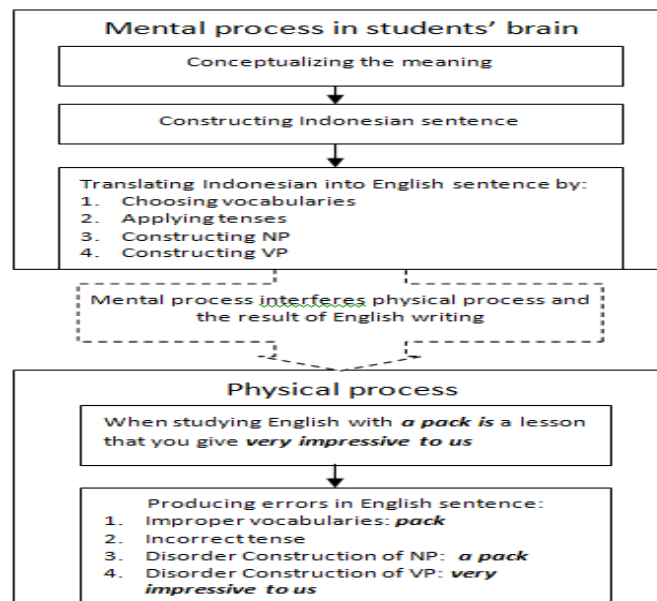

Figure 5: Example of Mental Process

Figure 5 above presents evidence of mental process that happens in students' brain. This process impacts interference which occurs on four levels of language. This process can be proved by asking the students what they do in writing English sentence. They said that they always think the meaning of sentence in Bahasa Indonesia, translate it into English, and then write it in English. This is also supported by the evidence of interference found on four levels of language that are caused by meaning conceptualization in their mind.

Furthermore, most of the data show that Bahasa Indonesia interferes English writing even though the frequency of using Bahasa Indonesia is much lower than Kupang Malay. One of the items of questionnaire points on the reason why students do not think in Kupang Malay. They said that they only use Bahasa Indonesia in formal activity and situation like school. Since English writing is only at school, they also think in Bahasa Indonesia before writing in English. It means that Bahasa Indonesia is the formal language that should be considered before writing in English and since both of Bahasa Indonesia and English are formal, they never use Kupang Malay to write or even think (conceptualizing the meaning).

The explanation of this part is highlighted since this is claimed as a new finding in terms of L1 interference into English writing skill. Based on the data gained in research process, students' first language acquisition does not fundamentally influence English writing skill because of students' awareness of situations using Kupang Malay. It is proven that Bahasa Indonesia interferes students' English writing skill in all aspects of language since both Bahasa Indonesia and English are used by the students in formal situations or activities. In short, students' English writings are not interfered by their first language acquisition (FLA) but by their first language learning (FLL).
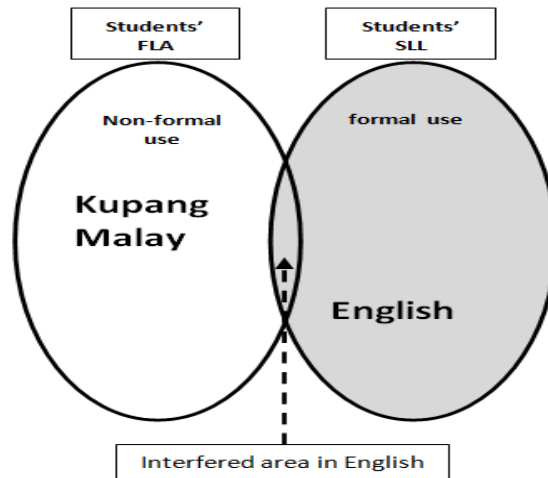

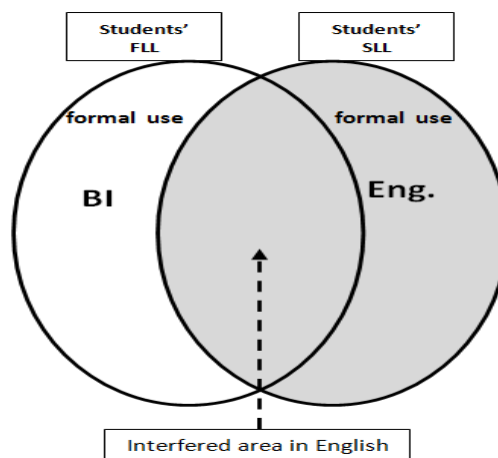Figure 6: Kupang Malay Interference into English

Figure 7: Indonesian Interference into English.

The figures (6 & 7) above show that the area of interference is larger in Bahasa Indonesia interference into English that Kupang Malay into English. This is caused by the same characteristic of both Bahasa Indonesia and English are the same in terms of situation when they are used. Since bahasa Indonesia and English are used in formal activity, Bahasa Indonesia is more potential to interfere English.

Kupang Malay, which is spoken most frequently, is only used in daily-informal and non-formal communication. Therefore, the students do not consider Kupang Malay in conceptualizing the meaning and writing English sentences. To sum up, Bahasa Indonesia affects the interference in writing English sentence because Bahasa Indonesia is always used in formal activities like writing in school.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data, it is uncovered that there are four levels of linguistics where first language interferences are found. Those levels are phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. There are also two affecting factors that cause the occurrence of first language interference into English writing skill. They are mental process and students' first language. Mental process involves conceptualizing meaning, constructing Indonesian sentence, and translating it into English inside students' mind. In addition, students' first language refers to the use of Bahasa Indonesia as their first language learning in the same-formal situation like English. It means that Bahasa Indonesia is much more potential in interfering English writing skill than Kupang Malay.

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