

## Negative Transfer of Indonesian into English (A Study in SMPN 01 Sungai Pinyuh in Academic Year 2021/2022)

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### ABSTRACT

First language plays an important role when it comes to learning second language. The process of first language interference in learning second language is called transfer. There are two classifications of transfer. The Positive transfer and negative transfer. This research was done to analyze the negative transfer of Indonesian into English of beginner students who learn English as foreign language. The method of the research was in qualitative descriptive study with the participants of grade-7 students in SMPN 01 Sungai Pinyuh in Academic Year 2021/2022. The data were collected by interviewing the participants and collecting worksheets from the participants. The researcher analyzed the data by using content analysis and transcription. The finding of the study showed that there were many errors made by the students that related to negative transfer and students tended not to realize that they were making mistakes. The results of this research were expected to be useful information for other teachers as a reference in teaching foreign languages and for other researchers with the same topic.

**Keywords:** L1, Mother Tongue, Negative transfer

### INTRODUCTION

Mother tongue is the first language that speakers acquire in their early childhood. It is commonly claimed that the mother tongue plays an important role in second language learning. The language learners may apply the properties of their mother tongue to express their second language. This process is known as the transfer of mother tongue. In the context of non-native language acquisition or use, Harlig & Sprouse (2018) defined the word 'transfer' broadly to the influence of the learner's native language.

The transfer from first language (L1) to foreign language (FL) can be positive and negative. The positive transfer happens when the property of the mother tongue is shared with and it produces the acceptable forms in the FL; the negative transfer, which is also known as interference occurs because the property of L1 transferred into FL is not shared with and it is not acceptable in FL. According to Harlig & Sprouse (2018) the interference turns up when the transfer of native language leads to errors in the target language. To

conclude, the interference means the use of the mother tongue properties in the target language and it produces errors in the target language.

Feng (2017) claims that the greater the difference between the mother tongue and the target language, the greater the negative transfer will occur. In this research, mother tongue refers to Indonesian, which will be called BI, and the target language is English Language, which is called EL. BI is the first language of the Year-7 students in SMPN 01 Sungai Pinyuh, and EL is the target language that the students learn at school. BI is different from EL in some aspects, but they share properties in others (Sudarsono, 2018; Liu, 2017). For instance, BI may have clauses with non-verbal predicates; the predicates in EL must be headed by verbs. Thus, the students speaking BI may produce errors in learning EL in the linguistic aspects that BI and EL do not share and the students tend to make errors in EL (Sudarsono, 2018). However, they will not make errors in the aspects that both languages share, and the students will be facilitated by BI when learning EL (Chen, 2020).

The students with the very low level of second language mastery extremely depend on the mother tongue (Corder, as cited in Zhao, 2019). The errors are mostly made by the beginners of EFL because of lacking knowledge about the new language that they are learning, that is, English. The theory inspired the researcher to conduct the research with the participants of beginner EFL learners to analyze the errors that will be made by them. The researcher focused on analyzing errors made by the participants in the aspect of spelling by considering the differences in the writing system that BI and EL have. BI has a different phonetic system with English. This difference causes the possibility of bigger negative transfer to occur in the process of second language learning, especially in the aspect of writing. The orthography of EL is different from BI. In BI, the correspondences between letters and sounds are consistent, while in EL the correspondences are inconsistent. This makes most students make errors in spelling when they are required to write in EL. Most errors are made by beginner learners who have less knowledge about the target language. From that point, the researcher wanted to focus on the spelling writing aspect.

## **METHOD**

In this research, the researcher used descriptive study with qualitative approach as the method to describe the influences of mother tongue in students' dictation writing. The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened (Nassaji, 2015). The researcher used descriptive design in this research because this research focused on a certain phenomenon in the school environment. The focus of this research was about describing the influence of Indonesian language into English language in the aspect of spelling.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has collected the data from 13 students as shown in the table 1 -3.

Table 1.

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
1. Colaboration	1. Collaboration	1. Kolaboresen	1. Kolaborasien	1. Keraboration
2. Accistent	2. Asisten	2. Ansisten	2. Asisten	2. Ofisthen
3. Analice	3. And rice	3. Enelays	3. Enelick	3. Enelaiys
4. Intaraction	4. Interace	4. Enterlesen	4. -	4. Enterektion
5. Accses	5. Acsent	5. Angses	5. Ases	5. Ekses
6. Carier	6. Seksepul	6. Karer	6. -	6. Karier
7. Shock	7. Shokc	7. Soox	7. Sox	7. Soks
8. Glass	8. Glass	8. Glaas	8. Glass	8. Glass
9. Negotiation	9. Negosasion	9. Gonises	9. Negosesien	9. Nogosesien
10. Unic	10. You nick	10. Yunik	10. Unik	10. You nick

Table 2.

Student 6	Student 7	Student 8	Student 9
1. Holoresehen	1. -	1. Colaboresseyen	1. -
2. -	2. -	2. Asisthen	2. Sistn
3. And lais	3. Enelais	3. Elaine	3. Analays
4. Interaksion	4. Intereksen	4. Enterasyen	4. Intereksten
5. Ansesi	5. Etses	5. Eksen	5. Ekses
6. Karir	6. Sukses	6. Crecre	6. Kareer
7. -	7. Socks	7. Shok	7. Coks
8. Glass	8. Glass	8. Glas	8. Los
9. Genospian	9. -	9. Nigofrase	9. Negosisten
10. Younic	10. Yunik	10. Yunik	10. You nex

Table 3.

Student 10	Student 11	Student 12	Student 13
1. Bolboiesien	1. Korabelesien	1. Koladeversen	1. Koloboresehen
2. Asisten	2. Enstisien	2. Esisten	2. -
3. Allnigh	3. Enerais	3. Endelai	3. And lais
4. Interisien	4. Entereksien	4. Entereksien	4. Interatsion
5. Dieksese	5. Exses	5. Ekset	5. Akses
6. Kelil	6. Kalir	6. Kalier	6. Karir
7. Sos	7. Shok	7. Shok	7. Shock
8. Kias	8. Gres	8. Glas	8. Glass
9. nogesesen	9. Gegosiesen	9. Negosecen	9. Genosesian
10. yuni	10. Younik	10. Yunit	10. Younic

There were various errors made by the students. Most of the students wrote the words in the rules of Indonesian language orthography. For example, the word 'collaboration' was written as 'kolaboresyen', 'assistant' was written as 'esisten' or 'asisten', 'interaction' was written as 'intereksien', 'unique' was written as 'younik', 'success' was written as 'sukses'.

The researcher has done interviews with the participants in the form of focus group interviews with semi structure questions. The researcher provided transcription for the interview data. The technique of transcription is edited transcription. Edited transcription is where the complete, accurate script is formalized and edited for readability, conciseness, and clarity, which means the researcher has edited the transcription for better reading. From the Interviews, the researcher gathered some students' perceptions of how their first language, Indonesian language, affects the process of their English learning.

The interview data showed that some students tend not to realize the use of their first language in learning a new language. When the researcher asked whether English is different from Indonesian language or not, some of the students answered no and claimed that there was no relation between their prior knowledge and the target language but they did make negative transfers. Meanwhile, some students say that the knowledge was really helpful for them in the process of their learning. This showed that students made negative transfers of their first language into the target language but they did not really pay attention to that aspect.

Some other students realized the difference of Indonesian language and English orthography and claimed that this difference made them struggle in learning English since they cannot freely write what they listen as when they learned Indonesian language. This difference is indeed an obstacle for the students and it also leads to negative transfer. There is a high percentage of negative transfer made by students in the aspect of spelling that is related to this difference.

From the research findings in this research, it can be concluded that there are many errors made by the students. Selinker as cited in Mourssi (2013) stated that there are some sources of error: (1) Language transfer: referred to as L1 interference that means, the

learner transfers the rule of his mother tongue to the target language. Based on the theory, most of the errors made by the participants in this research were in the aspect of language transfer. The students wrote the words in Indonesian language's style because they transfer the writing rule of Indonesian language, which is their first language, to English, which is their target language. Those errors made by the participants were considered as negative transfer of their first language. They think in their first language and apply the orthography of that language to the target language they are learning. This showed that the knowledge of the first language played an important role for students who are studying a new language. (2) Overgeneralization: referred to as developmental in L2 interference that occurs when the learner overgeneralizes rules of the target language in a context where it does not fit. Some students also made errors caused by overgeneralization. For example the word 'access' was written as 'acsses', 'assistant' was written as 'accistent'. Students who made the error might understand the orthography of English that has a difference between the writing and pronunciation, therefore, they tried to use the rule and made errors because of the overgeneralization. They tried to apply the rule which does not fit and caused errors because of that perspective.

From the data provided in the findings, it showed that students made errors but did not realize what is the cause of the errors. They do not really understand how their prior knowledge affected their thinking process while learning a second language. This condition made students make so many errors without realizing them. More than half of the students made errors which are related to the negative transfer of their first language.

## **CONCLUSION**

When people learn about something new, it is a common perspective to relate the prior knowledge they have to understand the new knowledge, so as in learning language. Prior knowledge is indeed an important aspect in the process of understanding the new language. However, the use of prior knowledge does not always result in a good effect. In this research, the researcher focused on the negative transfer, which means the negative results of the prior knowledge's influence.

The results of this research showed that there were many negative transfers made by the participants in learning the target language that were caused by their first language. This phenomenon should be an obstacle for students in mastering the target language, especially those who have a different language system from the first and the target language.

Indonesian language has different orthography from English and some errors cannot be avoided because of this difference. Most of the errors made by students were in the aspect of orthography, due to the differences in this aspect. Some students did not realize that they were making errors. This is really an important aspect that teachers should pay attention to. From the research, more than half of the students were found to make errors related to the words-writing. This showed that there were very high percentages of the students making errors.

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