

Native language interference: The interference of passive voice

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Abstract

This study investigated the interference of Bahasa Indonesia passive voice norm on English sentence. There are many studies that investigated the interference of native language on the learning of target language. Most of the studies talked about interference in the level of lexical, grammatical, phonetic, syntactical, and many more. However, the study about interference of a norm have never been discussed before. Thus, it is important to conduct this study to give some prove that norm of languages may interfere language learning. This study involved 50 students of Tour and Travel Business Department at Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata (STP) AMPTA Yogyakarta. The data was collected by giving students 3 sentences in Bahasa Indonesia and they had to write them in English. The sentences that the students had produced were compared to the correct one. The finding shows that most of the students' sentences were interfered by the norm of passive voice in Bahasa Indonesia. It is due to the lack of students' understanding toward the concept of passive voice norms in both of Bahasa Indonesia and English. Thus, the teacher must give clear explanation about the norm of passive voice in both of languages.

Keywords: *language interference; passive voice norm; Bahasa Indonesia*

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INTRODUCTION

Living in Indonesia means living among multicultural and multilingual communities. Students in Indonesia speak by using at least two languages or bilingual such as their native language and Bahasa Indonesia. Communication across the country is conducted mainly in Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, Bahasa Indonesia also plays an important role in education as a means of delivering knowledge. It means that the majority of students in Indonesia can speak Bahasa Indonesia. Thus, Bahasa Indonesia can also be defined as their first language. The possibility of Bahasa Indonesia influencing the English language learning is big. There are two kinds of influence in language learning i.e. negative transfer (interference) and positive transfer. In this context, the main interest of the discussion is negative transfer or interference. The term "interference" will be used in the entire discussion. Interference refers to the influence of the learners' first language on their second language learning (Ellis, 1997).

The interference can be recognized through the learners' errors and mistakes in using the target language, in this case is English. Errors occurs because the learner does not know what is correct and it reflects the gap of their knowledge (Ellis, 1997). She also explained that mistakes occur because the learners cannot perform what they already know due to the occasional lapses in performance. Those two may occur in the context of teaching English in Indonesia where most of the students speak in two languages. The interference of native language (e.g. Javanese) may cause the errors in pronunciation due to the differences of sounds between Javanese and English (Subandowo, 2017). On the other hand, Bahasa Indonesia may cause errors in writing, especially in the grammar and lexico-semantic (Budiharto, 2019). It can be drawn from the findings that there are many factors influencing the language learning in the form of interference. Those factors are the similarities and differences in the structures of two languages (phonetic, morphological, grammatical, lexical and syntactical), background knowledge of the learner, proficiency of learners on the second languages, and the structure of consonant cluster in the two languages (Derakhsan & Karimi, 2015; Veliyeva, 2016).

Differences of sounds between students' mother tongue or first language and English sounds is the main cause of interference. As mentioned before, Javanese sounds interfered the learning of English pronunciation. The high articulation of Javanese consonants /p/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/ in plosive and /m/ in nasal interfered the articulation of English /θ/ and /d/ in dental and /ʒ/ and /ʃ/ palato- alveolar (Subandowo, 2017). In other case, the Aceh articulation interfered the English segmental sounds of /ph/, /th/, and /kh/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ks/, /i:/, /u:/, /æ/, and /e/ (Chaira, 2015). The interference of mother tongue also affected Chinese immigrants in learning English because they found difficulty in pronouncing English words (Hu, 2015). This interference occurs because mother tongue carried factors such as the environment, students' motivation, different sound system as well as symbol that cause changing English pronunciation in intonation and articulation (Subandowo, 2017). This interference will directly or indirectly affect the speaking learning process.

In the other context, the differences structural of the native language and English will also cause interference. The most common one is grammatical interference. In the case of Azerbaijani language, the grammatical interference laid on the morphological process in English verb (Javarofa, 2017). The other interference on structures are at the level of lexical and syntactical. Samingan (2016) found that there were five categories of lexical interference in the students' composition i.e. loanwords, literal translation at the level of words, and literal translation of first language preposition, adverb of manner, comparative degree of adjectives. He also found that that there were also five categories of syntactical interference such as the use of first language structure in target language and English noun phrase, literal translation in negation of verbal and nominal sentences, and literal translation in nominal sentence of affirmative form. The use of structure both the languages interchangeably is also a common practice. Bhela (1999) found that learners tend to adjust the structure of target language by using syntactical items

which are a part of their native language in their writing. Similar to this finding, Erarslan and Hol (2014) found that Turkish learners used their native language structure to produce responses in English that was acceptable equivalents of their native language.

The studies above showed that interference may occur in every level of linguistic features. However, none of the studies above discussed about the differences of the norms between native and target language that reflects in the overuse or overgeneralize of some forms as the source of interference. Chinese learners, for instance, tend to overuse of regret expressions when apologizing in English due to obeying the norms of their native language (Ellis, 1997). In Indonesia, the use of passive voice is normal in order to emphasize politeness. However, it is not normal to use passive voice to show politeness in English. In English, it is normally used the active voice to emphasize on the subject who is doing the action. Dardjowidjojo (2003) explained that the use of passive voice in Bahasa Indonesia is one of the ways to show politeness and also to emphasize on the event as the result of someone's action. He further explained that this norm does not occur in English. Most of students in Indonesia are very fluent in Bahasa Indonesia though their mother tongue is their own native language. Thus, the lack of understanding towards that norm may cause an interference in learning English. Students at Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata (STP) AMPTA Yogyakarta came from various areas in Indonesia. It means that most of the students spoke in two languages i.e. their own native language and Bahasa Indonesia. All the classes in STP AMPTA Yogyakarta were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. It means that both of students and lecturers were also native of Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, in this study focused on the interference of Bahasa Indonesia on English learning. This study will try to reveal the interference of passive voice norm of the Bahasa Indonesia on English.

METHOD

Respondents

This is a qualitative study. It was conducted at Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata AMPTA Yogyakarta. It involved 50 students from Tour and Business Department. They were in the fifth semester. It was the last semester for English lesson. It means that they already passed through English Basic I & II and English Profession I & II.

Instruments

The instruments for collecting the data is a series of passive voice sentences in Bahasa Indonesia that the students had to write them in English. There were 3 sentences that they had to write in English.

Data analysis procedures

The collected data was displayed in order to find the errors that the students made. In order to identify the errors, the sentences produced by the students were compared to the correct sentences in English which correspond with them (Ellis, 1997). The data was reduced to get the specific data related to

passive voice interference. The sentences that was not the result of passive voice interference were not discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency of the passive voice interference

The interference of Bahasa Indonesia passive voice was found in most of the students' sentences. Table 1 shows the interference of passive voice of the first sentence.

Table 1. The frequency of passive voice interference in the first sentence

Sentence in Bahasa Indonesia	Correct Sentence	Students' Sentence	Freq
<i>Dompot saya tertinggal di rumah</i>	I left my wallet at home	I left my wallet at home	28%
		My wallet was left at home	36%
		Other sentences	36%

Table 1 above shows that 36% of the sentences was produced as the result of passive voice interference. However, there are 28 % of the sentences was correct. The last 36% of the sentences was incorrect and counted as non-passive voice interference which is the subject of this study. The interference of passive voice in the second sentence is in the table 2.

Table 2. The frequency of passive voice interference in the second sentence

Sentence in Bahasa Indonesia	Correct Sentence	Students' Sentence	Freq
<i>Tangan saya patah</i>	I broke my hand	I broke my hand	6%
		My hand was broken	80%
		Other sentences	14%

Different from the first sentence, in the second sentence, most of the students produced sentences which was interfered by the norm of Bahasa Indonesia passive voice. There were 80% of the sentences as the result of passive voice interference and 14% of the sentences as the result of other kinds of interference. There were only 6% of the sentences correct. The third sentence is in the table 3.

Table 3: The frequency of passive voice interference in the third sentence

Sentence in Bahasa Indonesia	Correct Sentence	Students' Sentence	Freq
<i>Smartphone saya hilang</i>	I lost my smartphone	I lost my smartphone	22%
		My smartphone was lost	62%
		Other sentences	16%

The table above shows that 60% of the students' sentences were interfered by the norm of Bahasa Indonesia passive voice. There was only 22% of the sentences were in the correct norm of English and 16% of the sentences were incorrect.

The interference of passive voice

It has been discussed that the use of passive voice is normal in Bahasa Indonesia. It is not regarded as violating the norm. However, in English, passive voice is rarely used in the sentences both spoken and written. It is usually used when the subject of the action is unknown. It is very normal and acceptable to use passive voice in Bahasa Indonesia. The use of passive voice in Bahasa Indonesia is to emphasize the event rather than the subject who doing the action. It is very different from English which is normally using active voice. Take a look at the following explanation.

(1) *Dompot saya tertinggal di rumah.*

Sentence (1) is in passive voice which emphasize on the event. Here, the wallet was unintentionally left at home. However, it cannot be written in English literally because it leads into different meaning. The following English sentence will show the meaning drawn from the literal translation.

(2) My wallet was left at home.

Most of the students produced this sentence. It means that they write the English sentence based on the norm of Bahasa Indonesia. Sentence (2) is grammatically correct, but it is not acceptable. In sentence (1) and (2), the “wallet” belongs to the first person “I”. According to the norm, passive voice is used when the subject who perform the action is unknown. Sentence (2) indicates that the subject is unknown although it is clear that the “wallet” belongs to the first person. It means that the “wallet” is in the hand of third person who left it at home. In contrast, sentence (1) indicates that the “wallet” belongs to and in the hand of the first person. Sentence (1) is more acceptable if it is written in

(3) I left my wallet at home.

Sentence (3) indicates that the “wallet” belongs to and is in the hand of the first person “I”. It does not mean that the person intentionally left the wallet at home. It is more of showing that she/he left the wallet because of a reason that does not reveal in the sentence. The reason is not important since it does not indicate the intention of the person to left the wallet. It will have different meaning if sentence (3) is written in:

(4) I left my wallet at home because I only need my credit card.

Sentence (4) indicates that the person intentionally left the “wallet” for a reason. It means that she/he left the wallet because she/he does not need the whole things in the wallet. In the contrary, sentence (3) cannot be literally written in:

(5) *Saya meninggalkan dompet saya di rumah.*

Sentence (5) indicates that the person intentionally left the “wallet” at home at any reason. Sentence (3) and (5) have totally different meaning although the two are active voice. To get more clear description of passive voice interference, take a look at other sentences below

(6) *Tangan saya patah.*

Sentence (6) is emphasizing the result of a certain event. The subject who perform the action does not to be exist in the sentence. It also indicates that the event is accidentally occurred. Different from Bahasa Indonesia, the subject who perform the action must be stated or clear.

However, most of the students literally write sentence (6) into English below:

(7) My hand was broken.

Sentence (7) is in the form of passive voice. It is grammatically correct but it does not have the same meaning with the sentence (6). It is because, in sentence (7), the “hand” broke because of a reason that actually must be mentioned. Meanwhile, sentence (6) shows the current state of someone hand. Take a look at the following sentences to get more clear description:

(8) My hand was broken when I fell from my bike.

(9) My hand was broken during the fight with Mike.

Sentence (8) indicates that the “hand” broke due to someone doing. It does not involve third person. The event is totally accident which means unintentionally done by the person. Sentence (9) indicates that there is third person involved. However, the person who perform the action is not clear, whether the first or the third person. The event in sentence (9) also indicates that it is unintentionally done. Thus, sentence (7) is not considered acceptable due to the lack of reasoning. Though sentence (8) and (9) are correct and acceptable, it does not share the same meaning with sentence (6). Sentence (6) is shared the same meaning with:

(10) I broke my hand.

Sentence (10) does not indicate that the event is intentionally done. It does need any reasoning like sentence (8) and (9) to show the state of someone’s hand. It does not matter the hand was broke as the result of falling from bike or fighting. It emphasizes the subject who perform the action. He broke my hand.

Sentence (11), for instance, indicates that the third person broke the first person’s hand. It is also unintentionally done. It emphasizes that the third person who break the first person’s hand. The event that resulting that does not necessarily mention in the sentence. In the contrary, sentence (10) cannot be written into

(11) *Saya mematahkan tangan saya.*

Eventhough, sentence (12) is grammatically correct but unacceptable. In this sentence, the event is occurred intentionally or not a result of a certain accident. Thus, sentence (12) does not share the same meaning with sentence (10). As the result, sentence (6) is shared the same meaning with sentence (10). In order to have clear description on how Bahasa Indonesia passive voice, the following sentences give more picture on it.

(12) *Smartphone saya hilang.*

Sentence (13) indicates that the event is an accident which is unintentionally done. Similar to sentence (1), this sentence cannot be literally written in

English with the same form. If it is written in English passive voice, the meaning will be different. Take a look at this following sentence

(13) My smartphone was lost.

Most of the students produced sentence (14). Similar to all the other sentences, this sentence is grammatically correct but does not share the same meaning with sentence (13). It means that the person who cause the smartphone lost is unknown. It can be the first person or the third person. Moreover, the meaning which is drawn from sentence (14) is unacceptable. It is because a thing, in this case “smartphone” cannot disappear by itself. Thus, sentence (14) cannot be treated like in the sentence (8) or (9). Thus, the use of passive voice in sentence (14) is not appropriate. It is appropriate if the sentence goes

(14) I lost my smartphone.

Sentence (15) shares the same meaning with sentence (13). It is clear that the “smartphone” belongs to the first person and the one who perform the action is the person itself. It is not only grammatically correct but also acceptable. The event is not intentionally done. It is merely a mishap. Sentence (15) also cannot be treated as the same in sentence (4). It is because losing thing does not need a reasoning. In the contrary, sentence (15) cannot be written as this following sentence

(15) *Saya menghilangkan smartphone saya.*

Sentence (16) indicates that the person is intentionally make the smartphone gone. It does not share the same meaning with sentence (15).

According to the discussion above, it is clear that the norm of passive voice that naturally and normally use in Bahasa Indonesia was carried as the students write them in English. As Dardjowidjojo (2003) claimed that the use of passive voice in Bahasa Indonesia is not considered as a norm violation and it is very normal to use. However, the lack of understanding of the norms will cause the interference and may affect the meaning making process. Students tend to rely their native language (Budiharto, 2019) by resorting the native language features to substitute the difficulties in the target language (Gao, 2013). Furthermore, students also tend to think in the native language which resulting in literal translation (Warsono, 2016) without considering the differences of rules and norms of both languages. This study revealed that most of students write the English sentences with correct structure yet they use the norm in Bahasa Indonesia. The dissimilarities of the norms are assumed to be another source that contribute to the interference. Gao (2013) argued that dissimilarities between source language and the target language have deteriorating impact on interpretation. The use of Bahasa Indonesia’s passive voice norm in English sentences clearly affect the message or the meaning of the sentences. It is due to the combinatorial structure in sentences that essentially determines the essence of the message (Pae, et. al, 2016). Regarding to this finding, it is necessary to address the interference for it may counter the target language expectation and potentially contribute to mutual misunderstanding (Allard, Bourdeau, Mizoguchi, 2011).

The interference can be minimized by giving the students clear explanation about the concept of the norms from both languages. It might be done by exposing and comparing explicitly (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Siu & Ho, 2015) the norms of both languages. Littlewood and Yu (2011) further explained that the comparison must be equivalence. Here, the equivalence does not lay on the word or structure level but rather on the meaning level. They argued that meanings will be embedded into the students' cognitive system and they can re-express them in the target language. On the other hand, giving the fact that English is not used for daily communication, it will be beneficial to use first language or native language as input or stimuli in the learning process (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). These stimuli will act as the bridge between Bahasa Indonesia and English. Utilizing the native language will create the sense of security and positive atmosphere during the learning process (Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018) which can help the students understand the concept effortlessly. Establishing positive atmosphere or secure environment is quite essential. Students will have the sense of ownership over the learning process which may boost their confidence. All in all, the interference of passive voice occurred due to the conceptual misunderstanding. However, it can be avoided by utilizing the native language since it is the most familiar language for the students.

CONCLUSION

According to the discussion before, it can be drawn that native language mostly interfered the learning of target language. This study revealed that most of students' native language, Bahasa Indonesia, interfered their English. This is due to the lack of understanding on the norms of the two languages. This interference will affect the learning of meaning making process. Thus, showing them the differences of the norms from both languages might bring beneficial effect on the learning process. Using native language, in this case Bahasa Indonesia, will also help the students to understand the norms effortlessly. Moreover, utilizing the native language during the learning will create secure environment for the students.

At last, this study was conducted with some limitations. The data were collected only by giving passive voice sentence in Bahasa Indonesia and limited to only three sentences. Therefore, it is suggested for the future researchers to do a thorough research related to or similar to this study. Exploring the area of teaching methodology will be very beneficial for providing an alternative on how to teach the concept of language norms.

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