

Errors in the use of Verbs Caused by the Interference of Bahasa Indonesia as the First Language in the Writing of Final Project Abstracts Done by the Batam Polytechnic Students

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Abstrak

Polytechnic is one of the colleges that requires the writing of the final project as one of the important graduation requirements for its students in the end of their three-years study. Batam Polytechnic, as a college located in the region which directly borders with Singapore and Malaysia and whose graduates are mostly employed by multinational companies encourages its students to write their final project abstracts in English. This research was done to investigate the errors in the use of verbs in the final project abstracts done by the Batam Polytechnic students. The result of this inquiry is assumed to reveal the properness level of the English abstract of the final project in Polytechnic. Besides, it is also supposed to contribute to determine the standard of the final project writing in Polytechnic, especially in writing its English abstract.

Key Words: *errors, interference, first language (L1), second language (L2)*

1 Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language is a no doubt a daunting task and a hard process. A learner has to acquire a new target language by being taught after he has mastered his first language. Since language is habit, language learning takes the form of habit formation. The

single paramount of fact about language learning is that it concerns, not problem solving, but the formation and performance of habit. Learning was seen to take place inductively through “analogy” rather than “analysis” [9].

According to behaviorist theories, the main impediment to learning was interference from prior knowledge. But in case of L2 learning, however, Ellis argued that this interference does not always hinder the learning process. “Where the L1 and L2 were identical, learning could take the place easily through *positive transfer*, but where they were different, learning difficulty arouse and errors resulting from *negative transfer* were likely occur” [9]. This way, the degree of difficulty in learning English as an L2 will depend primarily in the extend to which English was similar to or different from the learners language pattern. In this understanding, unfortunately, Bahasa Indonesia seems to be more different than similar compared to English, that it is not probably easy for Indonesian learners of L2 English to avoid the negative transfers – which finally produce a big number of errors. And this study is intended to find the errors in the use of verbs caused by the interference of Bahasa Indonesia as the first language in the writing of final project abstracts done by the Batam Polytechnic students.

2 Formulation of the Problem

As it is reflected in the introduction, this study is intended to find out the influence of Bahasa Indonesia which is

resulting errors in English, particularly the errors in the use of English verbs. It studies the errors found in eighth English abstracts of final project written by 14 students of Batam Polytechnic. More specifically, this study explores the following questions: (1) How significant are the verb errors written by the the Batam Polytechnic students as a result of Bahasa Indonesia interference to the properness of their final project English abstract? (2) How does Bahasa Indonesia interfere them in using English verbs in their final project English abstract?

3 Methodology

The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature since this study does not use statistical calculation to measure the validity or reliability. Qualitative research “implies a direct concern with experience as it is “lived” or “felt” or “undergone” [10]. Descriptive method, because this method characterized by attempting to describe characteristics and events that exist.

The data were collected from eight final project English abstracts written by 14 students of Batam Polytechnic. The eight final projects were picked up randomly; four final projects from Informatics Technic Study Program and the other four from Electrical Engineering Study Program. The abstract of those final projects were then analyzed to find out any errors in the verb use that resulted by the Bahasa Indonesia interference. Furthermore, those errors were categorized and described as result of Bahasa Indonesia through discussing the difference of English and Bahasa Indonesia that causes the errors. All the errors found were finally summed up to see their significance to the properness of those final project English abstracts.

4 Related Literature Review

It is important to understand what constitutes an error. An error refers to a systematic error of competence, both covert and overt, that deviates from the norms of the target language. Covert errors are grammatically but not interpretable within the context of communication whereas overt errors refer to the obviously ungrammatical utterances [11].

Errors need to be explained as to whether they are interlingual or intralingual. Generally interlingual errors can be identified as transfer errors which result from a learner’s first language features (e.g., lexical, grammatical, or pragmatic, etc.). Intralingual errors are subdivided as overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

There are two sorts of transfer. They are positive transfer and negative transfer [12]. Positive transfer is when L1 helps in the learning process of a foreign language. For example, in Bahasa Indonesia we also have the form of pronouns that are almost similar with English. Bahasa Indonesia has the terms of first person, second person, and the third person both in singular and plural forms. Thus, when we are learning pronouns in English, we are assumed not to have difficulty in following English rule related to pronouns. But negative transfer will happen when there is a difference between the L1 and TL. Here is another example to explain that. English distinguishes the third person of pronouns into man and woman and “it”. The two first relate to gender. “He” is used for a man, and “she” for a woman. While, Bahasa Indonesia does not own that kind of distinction. It only has one third person form of pronoun that is “dia” without any further attribute to indicate whether it is a man or a woman. As the consequence, we often do error when we have to say “he” or “she”. Sometimes we feel awkward in focusing our mind that we have to differentiate the gender of the person we are talking about. The negative transfer often hinders us in learning a foreign language. That is why this kind of transfer is also called as interference.

Interference happens when there is a structural difference between the L1 and TL. The greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative transfers can be expected. That is why, this error can only analyzed if comparison of both languages is made. This field is learnt under the theory of contrastive analysis. By comparing the first language and the foreign language, the ease and the difficulty of learning can be found [12]. This hypothesis is that the items that are similar to the learners’ native language will be simpler to learn, and those that are different will be difficult for them.

There are some previous studies related to the issue of errors analysis. One of them is the investigation of grammatical errors in students' writing composition [13]. It is revealed that there are nine major grammatical errors found in the senior high school students' writing composition. They are, in sequential orders, errors in the use of verbs (35,39%), prepositions (16,07%), the use of nouns (13,47%), articles (10,23%), adjectives (7,63%), pronouns (6,66%), adverbs (4,87%), conjunctions (3,25%), expletives (2,44). From the obtained data, errors in using verbs are the highest errors found in students' writing composition. Unfortunately, the research only displays the errors made by the students but it did not examine what causes of the errors.

Based on that previous study, I have strong motivation in doing further research in the field of errors analysis. I am interested in carrying out error analysis specifically on the use of verbs. According to Fakhrudin's research, it is the most frequent error made by the students [13]. There must be reason lies behind that phenomenon. Verb does have important role in English. The verb is the central of sentence formation so that there is no syntactical analysis without giving emphasis on the study of verbs [14]. Therefore, I want to investigate it more.

5 Finding and Discussion

The error analysis on the eight final project English abstracts written by the Batam Polytechnic students finds that there are 32 errors in English verbs use caused by the interference of Bahasa Indonesia. Those errors could be categorized into three kinds. They are; a. Errors in the Use of Verb for the Third Singular Person Subject in Simple Present Tense (15 errors or 46.88%), b. Errors in the Use of "to be" (12 errors or 37.50%), and c. Errors in the Use of Incorrect Form of the Verb (5 errors or 15.63%).

It seems that all the errors occur in the area of overt errors since all of them obviously belong to ungrammatical sentences. In more detail, the error analysis can be seen in the tables and the discussion below:

Table 1. Errors in the Use of Verb for the Third Singular Person Subjects in Simple Present Tense

Clases Containing the Verb Errors	In Bahasa Indonesia	Possible English Forms	The Data Source
1. Automatic portal scheme <u>consist</u> of two schemes.	Perancangan portal otomatis terdiri atas dua bagian	Automatic portal scheme <u>consists</u> of two schemes.	[1]
2. Hardware scheme <u>consist</u> of electronic and mechanic	Perancangan hardware terdiri atas mekanik dan elektronik.	Hardware scheme <u>consists</u> of electronic and mechanic	[1]
3. Software scheme <u>use</u> Visual Basic ...	Perancangan software menggunakan bahasa Visual Basic	Software scheme <u>uses</u> Visual Basic ...	[1]
4. And after vehicle <u>pass</u> portal...	Dan setelah kendaraan melewati portal	And after vehicle <u>passes</u> portal...	[1]
5. The designing of the robot <u>consist</u> of two parts.	Perancangan robot terdiri dari dua bagian	The designing of the robot <u>consists</u> of two parts.	[2]
6. Hardware design <u>consist</u> as mechanic and electronic.	Perancangan hardware terdiri dari mekanik dan elektronik	Hardware design <u>consists</u> as mechanic and electronic.	[2]
7. ...when the sensors <u>detects</u> a white line...	Ketika sensor mendeteksi garis putih...	when the sensors <u>detect</u> a white line...	[2]
8. A system <u>have</u> two function.	Sistem ini mempunyai dua fungsi.	A system <u>has</u> two function.	[4]
9. The system <u>use</u> four cylinder...and <u>use</u> three sensor...	Sistem ini menggunakan empat silinder...dan menggunakan tiga sensor	The system <u>uses</u> four cylinder...and <u>uses</u> three sensor...	[4]
10. Politeknik Batam <u>apply</u> some quality policies	Politeknik Batam menerapkan beberapa kebijakan mutu	Politeknik Batam <u>applies</u> some quality policies	[5]
11. Business process automation application services Politeknik Batam... and <u>support</u> services paperless ISO	Aplikasi automasi bisnis proses pelayanan Politeknik Batam... dan mendukung program <i>paperless ISO</i>	Business process automation application of Politeknik Batam services ... and <u>supports</u> services paperless ISO	[5]
12. These young people <u>plays</u> games	Kalangan muda ini lebih banyak bermain game	These young people <u>play</u> games	[6]

Clauses Containing the Verb Errors	In Bahasa Indonesia	Possible English Forms	The Data Source
13. ... to help people <u>feels</u> satisfaction	Perkembangan informasi teknologi lebih meningkat saat ini.	... to help people <u>feel</u> satisfaction	[6]
14. Information technology development <u>increase</u> more lately	Perancangan hardware terdiri atas mekanik dan elektronik.	Information technology development <u>increases</u> more lately	[7]
15. Someone who <u>want</u> to make a driving license <u>have to</u> come...	Seseorang yang ingin membuat SIM harus datang...	Someone who <u>wants</u> to make a driving license <u>has to</u> come...	[7]

The errors in the use of verb for the third singular person subject in simple present tense mostly happen because the writers do not add affix “s/es” to the verb with the third singular person subject in simple present tense (no. 1-6, 8-11, and 14-15). All these errors are probably caused by the interference of Bahasa Indonesia in English. It can be explained this way; in Bahasa Indonesia, there is no different of form of the verbs which follow both singular and plural subjects. While in English, the verbs which follow the third singular person subjects in simple present tense, such as “automatic portal scheme” (no. 1), “hardware scheme” (no. 2), “software scheme” (no. 3), etc. should use the affix “s” or “es”. The habit of “not changing the verb form for whatever the subject form is (first/second/third, singular/plural person)” is applied by the writers in writing the English abstract of their final project. It finally results this kind of errors in which they forget to add the affix “s” or “es” to the verbs which follow the third singular person subjects in simple present tense.

On the other hand, in two of these eight final projects [2] and [6], the addition of affix “s” to the verb with the plural subject is found (no. 7, 12-13). This addition is of course not needed. This kind of errors belongs to an overgeneralization application of language rules. It happens like this; after having sufficient exposure to the rule of adding affix “s/es”, the writers are finally able to apply it. Unfortunately, soon other errors occur when they use this affix addition excessively including to the verbs

which follow the other subjects out of the third singular person as can be seen in the errors no. 7, 12-13 in table 1.

Table 2. Errors in the Use of “to be”

Clauses Containing the Verb Errors	In Bahasa Indonesia	Possible English Forms	The Data Source
1. While assembly <u>used</u> for the program of ...	Sedangkan assembly digunakan untuk memprogram...	While assembly <u>is used</u> for the program of ...	[1]
2. Portal will <u>closed</u> after time arranged for open portal...	Portal akan tertutup setelah waktu yang disetting untuk membuka portal selesai	Portal will <u>be closed</u> after time arranged for opening portal...	[1]
3. the data <u>compared to</u> data which <u>enlist</u> at database.	data tersebut dibandingkan dengan data yang terdaftar pada database	the data <u>are compared to</u> data which <u>are enlisted</u> at database.	[1]
4. Electronic portal scheme <u>base</u> on RFID...	Perancangan elektronik portal berbasis RFID dan ...	Electronic portal scheme <u>is based on</u> RFID ...	[1]
5. The most basic reason why this device <u>made</u> is to...	Alasan mendasar mengapa alat ini dibuat adalah untuk...	The main reason why this device <u>is made</u> is...	[3]
6. Minimum circuit of microcontroller system <u>that combined</u> with driver...	Rangkaian minimum sistim mikrokontroler yang digabungkan dengan driver...	...minimum circuit of microcontroller system (<u>that is combined</u> with driver...	[3]
7. Measuring and testing <u>required</u> to detect...	Pengukuran dan pengujian diperlukan untuk mendeteksi...	Measuring and testing <u>are required</u> to detect...	[3]
8. Game <u>known</u> by old and young people	Game dikenal oleh kalangan tua dan muda	Game <u>is known</u> by old and young people	[6]
9. It <u>is make</u> impact	Hal itu memberi dampak	It <u>makes</u> impact	[7]
10. This <u>is need</u> a long time	Ini memerlukan waktu yang lama	This <u>needs</u> a long time	[7]
11. All of them still <u>using</u> manual system	Semuanya masih menggunakan sistim manual	All of them <u>are using</u> manual system	[7]
12. (It) also <u>supported</u> by entry manual	Juga dilengkapi dengan petunjuk pengisian	(It) <u>is also supported</u> with entry manual	[8]

The errors in the use of “to be” or exactly the errors which happen because of not using the necessary “to be” take the second biggest number. 12 of the 37 errors or 37.50% of the all errors occur in this area. Mostly the “missing to be” occur in passive voice (no. 1-9). These errors can be understood as in Bahasa Indonesia, the active and the passive form of verb is differentiated by the form of affixation (mostly affixes “me“, “mem“, or “men“ for active verbs and affixes “di“ or “ter“ for passive verbs). Yet in English, all passive voices should use past participle verb (V3) which must be preceded by “to be”. It is not easy for almost all the writers of the eight final projects to apply this rule which is far different from the one in Bahasa Indonesia as their first language. Not only losing the “to be”, but the passive verbs “enlist” (in no. 3) and “base” (in no. 4) are also in incorrect form. Instead of writing them in past participle form (V3), W[1] incorrectly chooses to use the infinitive (V1) form.

a. Table 3. Errors in the Use of Incorrect Form of Verb

Clauses Containing the Verb Errors	In Bahasa Indonesia	Possible English Forms	The Data Source
1. Portal will closed after time arranged for <u>open</u> portal...	Portal akan tertutup setelah waktu yang disetting untuk membuka portal...	Portal will be closed after time arranged for opening portal...	[1]
2. VB used to process data found on RF card and <u>presenting</u> in monitor of computer.	VB digunakan untuk memproses data yang terdapat pada kartu (card RF) dan menampilkannya di monitor komputer	VB is used to process data found on RF card and <u>(to) present</u> in monitor of computer.	[1]
3. Software design <u>using</u> assembly language to program the microcontroller	Perancangan software menggunakan bahasa pemrograman assembly untuk memprogram mikrokontroler	Software design <u>uses</u> assembly language to program the microcontroller .	[2]
4. Design of the microcontroller based system <u>containing</u> two parts.	Perancangan system berbasis mikrokontroler terdiri dari dua bagian.	Design of the microcontroller based system <u>contains</u>	[3]

5. (Application game flash) can <u>coached</u> accuracy	(Aplikasi <i>game flash</i>) dapat melatih ketelitian	(Application game flash) can <u>coach</u> accuracy	[6]
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The rest of the errors appear because of the use of incorrect form of verb. This type of errors ranges from not using gerund after preposition (no.1), using unparallel verb form (no.2), using present participle form of verb for simple present tense (no.3 and 4), and using past participle form of verb after modal (no.5). Despite using the gerund (opening) after the preposition “for” (in no. 1), W[1] inaccurately decides to apply the infinitive form (open). The use of present participle “presenting” (in No.2) is also incorrect since it is not parallel with the infinitive verb form “to process” which precedes it. The correct form then should be “(to) present”. W[2] and W[3] do other mistake in which they use present participle form of verb (using and containing) for simple present tense instead of infinitive with affix “s” form (uses and contains). W[6] does the last error in which he uses past participle form of verb (coached) after modal “could” instead of infinitive form (coach). Again this kind of errors arises because it is not easy for the four writers {W[1], W[2], W[3], and W[6]} to apply the above grammar rules, as none of those is applied in Bahasa Indonesia verb regulations.

6. Conclusion and Suggestion

The error analysis on the eight final projects written by the Batam Polytechnic students finds that there are 32 errors in English verb uses which are caused by the interference of Bahasa Indonesia. Each English abstract of the eight final projects averagely consists of 12 clauses. It means there are approximately 96 clauses in those all project abstracts. And 32 of those 96 clauses (33.33%) are incorrect because of the verb errors as a result of Bahasa Indonesian interference. Since the errors in the verb alone have already made 33.33% of the whole clauses in those abstracts incorrect, from the grammar point of view, the inquiry then concludes that the English abstracts of Batam Polytechnic student final projects are mostly still improper.

Based on the investigation of the data, Bahasa Indonesia

interferes the students of Batam Polytechnic in writing their final project English abstracts in the way that it causes errors in using the verbs in terms of structure. They rely on much to grammar rules of Bahasa Indonesia verb as their first language, or in another word they often forget to apply the correct use of the very various forms of English verb depends on the context. This happens because they lack of exposure to English, both in active and passive interaction. The consequence is that they are confused of how to write good English because they do not have enough reference and model. They only study English most in English class.

Realizing the tendency of higher education system which is more and more global, it is suggested for the institution of Polytechnic, especially Batam Polytechnic which is located in an internationally very strategic location (directly borders with Singapore and Malaysia) and whose graduates are mostly employed by multinational companies, not only to suggest but also to obligate the students to write the English version of their final project abstract. Because of the absence of this obligation, until now it is still extremely difficult to find any final project which has English abstract in Accounting Study Program of Batam Polytechnic. Involving the English lecturers in the final project advisor team, especially for helping to guide the writing of the English abstract, is probably a good idea.

The success in writing a proper English abstract of the final project needs serious effort and corporation from both lecturers and the students. Therefore, the lecturers, especially the English lecturers are supposed to support their students more in learning English. Not only in a class, but more important thing is how they have well confident in using English outside class. In term of using verbs, they also need to find effective teaching method in teaching the rule. It is necessary for them to give many examples of reading material so that the students can see the variation of English expressions.

It is also suggested then to the students to encourage themselves in doing interaction with may kind of English media. By having many references and models in using English, it will provide them good example of English. It

will increase their knowledge and their confidence when speaking English, and also finally their writing skills especially in writing their final project abstract.

By doing so, it is hoped that in the future the students of Polytechnic will be able to write a more proper abstract for their final project.

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