# The Influences of Local Language to Students in Learning English

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***Abstract***

*It is universally believed that learning a foreign language has its own difficulties. This paper discusses some problems which are faced by English as a Foreign Language students in learning English. Those problems can come from the students themselves and it can also come from their environment that have strong influence their success in learning a foreign language, in this case English. Moreover, how students' local language influence them in learning English and how to overcome such an obstruction are also discussed here.*

***Keyword :*** *local languages, English, and foreign language learning*

***Abstrak***

*Secara universal diyakini bahwa mempelajari bahasa asing memiliki kesulitan tersendiri. Makalah ini membahas beberapa masalah yang dihadapi oleh Inggris sebagai siswa Bahasa Asing dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Masalah-masalah itu bisa berasal dari para siswa itu sendiri dan itu juga bisa berasal dari lingkungan mereka yang memiliki pengaruh kuat terhadap keberhasilan mereka dalam mempelajari bahasa asing, dalam hal ini bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, bagaimana bahasa lokal siswa mempengaruhi mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris dan cara mengatasi hambatan semacam itu juga dibahas di sini.*

***Kata kunci :*** *bahasa lokal, bahasa Inggris, dan pembelajaran bahasa asing*

## 1. Introduction

ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) refer to the use or study of English by speakers with a different native language. These terms are most commonly used in relation to teaching and learning English.

In Indonesia, English as a foreign language, indicates the use of English in a non-English-speaking since Indonesian people speak Indonesian language and local language as their mother tongue. The TEFL or the teaching of English as a foreign language; note that, this sort of instruction can take place in either schools or courses. English as foreign language is taught at Indonesian school starting from elementary schools to universities. Moreover, English is as a subject is taught as a local content in elementary schools and as a compulsory subject in junior high schools, senior high schools and universities in Indonesia.

Language teaching practice often assumes that most of the difficulties that learners face in the study of English are a consequence of the degree to which their native language, that is Indonesian language, differs from English. A native speaker of Indonesian language, for example, may face many more difficulties than a native speaker of German, because German is closely related to English, whereas Indonesian is not. This may be true for anyone of any mother tongue (also called first language, normally abbreviated L1) setting out to learn any other language (called a target language, second language or L2).

Language learners often produce errors of syntax and pronunciation thought to result from the influence of their L1, such as mapping its grammatical patterns inappropriately onto the L2, for example: pluralism the nouns, pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty, and confusing items of vocabulary known as false friends. This is known as L1 transfer or "language interference". However, these transfer effects are typically stronger for beginners' language production, and SLA research has highlighted many errors which cannot be attributed to the L1, as they are attested in learners of many language backgrounds.

While English is no more complex than other languages, it has several features which may create difficulties for learners. Conversely, because such a large number of people are studying it, products have been developed to help them do so, such as the monolingual learner's dictionary, which is written with a restricted defining vocabulary.

## 2. Interpretation

### A. *The Factors that Influence Students in Learning English*

Some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. This simple fact is known by all who have themselves learned a second language or taught those who are using their second language in school. Clearly, some language learners are successful by virtue of their sheer determination, hard work and persistence. However there are other crucial factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learner. These factors are taken from (http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/factors.htm), can be broadly categorized as internal and external. It is their complex interplay that determines the speed and facility with which English is learned.

### B. *Internal Factors*

Internal factors are those that the individual language students bring with them to the particular learning situation.

#### 1. Age

Second language acquisition is influenced by the age of the students. Children, who already have solid literacy skills in their own language, seem to be in the best position to acquire a new language efficiently. Motivated, older learners can be very successful too, but usually struggle to achieve native-speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation.

#### 2. Personality

Introverted or anxious students usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek out such opportunities. More outgoing students will not worry about the inevitability of making mistakes. They will take risks, and thus will give themselves much more practice.

#### 3. Motivation

Intrinsic motivation has been found to correlate strongly with educational achievement. Clearly, students who enjoy language learning and take pride in their progress will do better than those who don't. Extrinsic motivation is also a significant factor.

#### 4. Experiences

Students who have acquired general knowledge and experience are in a stronger position to develop a new language than those who haven't. The student, for example, who has already lived in 3 different countries and been exposed to various languages and cultures has a stronger base for learning a further language than the student who hasn't had such experiences.

#### 5. Cognition

In general, it seems that students with greater cognitive abilities will make the faster progress. Some linguists believe that there is a specific, innate language learning ability that is stronger in some students than in others.

#### 6. Native language

Students who are learning a second language which is from the same language family as their first language have, in general, a much easier task than those who aren't. So, for example, a Dutch child will learn English more quickly than a Japanese child.

### C. External Factors

External factors are those that characterize the particular language learning situation.

#### 1. Curriculum

For ESL students in particular it is important that the totality of their educational experience is appropriate for their needs. Language learning is less likely to place if students are fully submersed into the mainstream program without any extra assistance or, conversely, not allowed to be part of the mainstream until they have reached a certain level of language proficiency.

#### 2. Instruction

Clearly, some language teachers are better than others at providing appropriate and effective learning experiences for the students in their classrooms. These students will make faster progress. The same applies to mainstream teachers in second language situations. The science teacher, for example, who is aware that she too is responsible for the students' English language development, and makes certain accommodations, will contribute to their linguistic development.

#### 3. Culture and status

There is some evidence that students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress.

#### 4. Motivation

Students who are given continuing, appropriate encouragment to learn by their teachers and parents will generally fare better than those who aren't. For example, students from families that place little importance on language learning are likely to progress less quickly.

#### 5. Access to native speakers

The opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage. Native speakers are linguistic models and can provide appropriate feedback. Clearly, second-language learners who have no extensive access to native speakers are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

Howerer, according to Sungedot's Weblog on Reflection on TEFL, Pedagogy and Technology, there are some factors that influence students to study English, they are:

#### 1. Second Language Aptitude

Students who do well in aptitude tests are expected to be successful in foreign language classes. These tests predict speed of learning and focus more on the use of conscious grammar rules. The tests relate to classroom skills better than communication skills.

#### 2. The Role of the First Language

It was thought that the role of L1 in L2 performance is often referred to as interference. This means that the L1 interferes or gets in the way when we try to speak a second language. Newmark suggested that this is not true and we only make errors which are simply the result of lacking a rule of L2. The cure to such errors or interference is to help students acquire the target language and its rules which will protect them from resorting to the L1 rules which may look similar them.

#### 3. Routines and Patterns

These are the sentences which are wholly or partially memorized, especially when the students have not learned the rules yet. Routines and patterns are neither acquisition nor learning though they can help some early production which in turn can help the students gain more input and manage conversations.

#### 4. Student Individual Variations

We all acquire language in the same way; by comprehensible input. However, student individual variations do exist. The theory of second language acquisition predicts that acquirers will differ only in certain ways but not in others.

#### 5. Age Differences

On the contrary of what was commonly thought, adults - over the short run - are faster in attaining second language proficiency than younger children. First, they are able to get more comprehensible input. Second, they have greater ability to beat the silent period and perform using structures that they haven't yet acquired. Third, they have greater knowledge, experience and background information of the world which makes the input more comprehensible to them. Children reach native-like levels of competence in l2 over the long run.

### D. How Local Language Influence Students in Learning English

It has been often pointed out that students in every culture all over the world manage to achieve communicative competence in their "first" or "native" languages — unless they have a specific language processing problem or have been restricted to a developmental environment markedly deficient in language stimuli. After years of working with the language(s), in this case Indonesian language and Palembang language, in use within the home and immediate community, children become increasingly more fluent and effective in their command of the native tongue. And it will influence to the learning the second or foreign language, that is English.

What is characteristic of second language acquisition or learning, but not of the first language acquisition process is so called **transfer**. This term denotes the act of trying to apply the pronunciation, word order, vocabulary or some expression form the mother tongue to the target language learnt at the moment. When the transfer is successful, for example a word from the learners' native language has been used while using the target language and such a word indeed exists in the target language (either with different pronunciation, or

not) the learner has benefited from a **positive transfer**. However, when in a similar attempt the learner tries to use a structure, or a word from the native language, but such a word, or structure does not exist in the target language the learner makes use of the **negative transfer**. When students learn some foreign language they do it gradually. They start with simple words and grammar constructions and proceed to more complex structures. The methods that are most frequently used to teach foreign languages stress that certain factors in the process resemble the process of the first language acquisition. Therefore, errors are often perceived as natural indication that the process of the second language acquisition occurs. As in the first language acquisition certain errors are predictable and determined by the current level of proficiency. However, there is also a large number of errors that cannot be accounted for as negative transfer, because the forms used do not exist in learners' mother tongue, but also do not exist in the target language. That supports the idea that learners create a sort of in-between system of their own while learning a foreign language called **interlanguage.** Here, the writer will present the examples of how local language influence students in learning English base on writer's observation in the classroom at one of senior high schools in Palembang.

1. The Phonetic Level

Sudents of English, after having learnt to master the English, may take wrong to pronounce the words with rather similar phonetics level at the end of words. E.g. the pronunciation of mine /main/, fine /fain/, sine /sain/. All words contain *ine* are heard as /ain/. Students tend to pronunce the same pronunciation to the same words like pine /pain/ and determine /di'te:min/. It is happened because words Indonesian language are read consistently to what is written and it is read. E.g. The word *buru*/buru/, *guru*/guru/ all words contain *uru*, so they are pronounced /uru/, even to the words *guruh*/guruh/, *buruh*/buruh/ dan, *suruh*/suruh/. This errors always happen in reading skill, when students are asked to read and pronounce the words loudly in front of the class.

2. The Grammatical Level

Students in the early stages may use nothing but the present tense. Later, there may be extensive, non-native use of 'be - ing' forms of the verb. Students do not use kinds of tenses, such as: I want to eat rice today, I want to eat rice now, and I want to eat rice yesterday. It is because in Indonesian language, we do not recognize tenses to verbs. It is correct if students say *sayamaumakan* to all the sentences above. Other example is in the pluralisation form, English tend to use the word 's' after the noun, e.g. book (means one book) and books (means more than one book), but in Indonesian language, the plural form noun is repeated twice, e.g. buku (means one book) and buku-buku (means more than one books). Students tend to repeat the noun in English such as Indonesian version. Those two

hings not acceptable grammatically in English. This is often happened in speaking and writing skills.

3. The lexical level

Students tend to use base terms and to stretch them - thus a 'goose' might be referred to as a 'chicken', or a teaspoon may be a 'little spoon'. Other examples, students directly translate the Indonesian langue to English or vice versa, such as *jarimanis* become sweet finger and little finger become *jarikecil*, instead of *jarikelingking*. This happens in speaking, mostly in writing skill, and translation. Students translate directly the source language to the target language or from the target to the source language.

4. The level of discourse

Lexical items and expressions may be used in inappropriate social contexts. Since it is influence by the target language culture, students do not have the correct context in expressing something. E.g. when students want refuse one`s invitation, especially the older person. It is not polite to say 'no' directly, but use the acceptance first. Such as : can you help me, son? Yes I want to, but I have something to do. It still means refusal in polite way.

E. *How to Overome the Condition*

As teachers of English, my friens and I try to stimulate exposing students more to the target language. The way that we do are first, to maximise the English environment school and classroom in teaching English. The concept of roles of English environment classroom has been significance in English teaching and learning and second, teachers must have special treatment to the errors. Third, exposing students to the native speaker, since the school provides the native speaker from America.

F. *English Environment Classroom in Teaching English*

The concept of roles of English environment classroom has been significance in English teaching and learning. To acquire the ability to communicate in English, students must use the language in the communicative situation. The key component of the study is teachers must allow the students to use English for real communication. More importantly, the real communication can be provided in English environment classroom.

In English environment classroom, teachers can perform teaching more about the nature and functioning of English, teaching students to communicate in English, developing understanding of people with whom students wish to communicate, and teaching students to read all kinds of material fluently in English. Understanding the nature of a language is basic to a methodology which develop effective communication skills; effecetive communication is imposible without some understanding of the culture of the speakers of the language; fluency in reading with direct comprehension derives from the ability to think in that language, which is established by prior training in the active communication skills of

listening and speaking; for many types of reading material mere coprehension of the printed words is valueless without the ability to intepret what one is reading in the light of cultural pattern and attitudes, Hedge (2000).

Teaching process goal is to equip students to deal ultimately with the auhtentic English language of the real situation. Students should be given opportunity to cope with this in the classroom. Students could try out a language in a classroom or in a conversation and see what feedback is given about its correctness. Even though, there are certainly successful language learners, not least among English language teachers, who have come through English laguage teaching curriculum where the focus has been on a study of the formal system of English and where classroom practice has less than interactive.

The most important, in English environment classroom, Harmer (1991) in Hedge (2000) identified the teachers in number of roles in the lesson: as controller in eliciting naionality words; as assessor of accuracy as students to try to pronounce the words; as corrector of pronunciation; as organizer in giving instructions for the pair work, initiating it, monitoring it, organizing feedback; as prompter while students are working together; and as resourcer if students need help with words and stuctures during pair work.

### G. Attitudes towards Errors

At present, a good many textbooks used in a majority of schools and universities have not only provided teachers or students with specific teaching methods or learning strategies but also the systematic classified knowledge. From this point of view, we should continue the teaching and training of learning strategies throughout classroom teaching.

In most cases, however, students are unconscious of their own interlanguage system influenced by the native language. Consequently, strategies making students aware of the existence of their local language influences and of how it influences their learning process should also be taught in class. Specifically speaking, after the target language information has been given, teachers may take flexible measures, such as recording students'production, exchanging information with students, and so forth, in order that students may have opportunities for output.

More importantly, with the help of teachers, students can contrast their output (interlanguage) with input (target language) to find out the differences and their causes. This is a process of reflection on their cognition, during which students can develop their ability to learn autonomously and avoid the negative influence which their existing interlanguage system has upon their learning process. According to Brown (1994), the following general classroom implications deserve our attention:

1. Try to distinguish between a student's systematic interlanguage errors (stemming from the native language or target language) and other errors.
2. Teachers need to tolerate certain forms that may arise out of a student's logical developmental process.
3. Do not make a student feel stupid just because of an error.
4. The classroom feedback to students should give them the message that mistakes are not "bad," rather that most mistakes are good indicators that innate language acquisition abilities are alive and well. Mistakes are often indicators of aspects of the new language that are still developing.
5. Try to get students to self-correct selected errors; the ability to self-correct may indicate readiness to regularly use that form correctly.
6. In the feedback on students'linguistic output, make sure that teachers provide ample affective feedback— verbal or nonverbal— in order to encourage them to speak.

It is believed, with the effort that teachers and students make, that students can be spared the pain of severe language anxiety and can experience what it means to succeed in the language classroom. Teachers can give appropriate feedback after checking out students' errors. Students need not worry so much about making mistakes. They can assume that making mistakes is a procedure of development from mother tongue to Second Language.

### 3. Conclusions

Language teaching practice often assumes that very difficult for students to face in the study of English. Because it is a consequence of the degree to which their native language, that is Indonesian language, differs from English. The native languages of students or Indonesian language and local language will influence more in the process of studying English, besides other factors influencing in second language acquisition. The influences can be seen in the performance of students in pronunciation, expressing ideas, writing grammatically and choosing the correct words.

The conditions must be handled carefully, so that the errors will not stick in the students mind which can be fossilized. The application of English environment at classrooms and schools will provide natural communicative situation in studying English among students. Moreover, good many textbooks used in a majority of schools and universities have not only provided teachers or students with specific teaching methods or learning strategies but also the systematic classified knowledge. And more importantly, with the help of teachers, and a native speaker, students can contrast their output with input (target language) to find out the differences and their causes of errors.

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