

## SEMANTIC INTERFERENCE FROM *BAHASA INDONESIA* IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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**Abstract.** This research examined the potential issue of students' language interference from Bahasa Indonesia (SL) in students' English (TL) translation. It observed the students' English translation which is paid attention in translation techniques and only focused on one of language interference's part which is semantic interference. Semantic interference is a lexical error which occurs in students who learn foreign language. The participants were from Translation class in English department who have learnt about linguistics skill, were in the middle of learning translation method and were advanced students. This research analyzed 25 students' English translation and categorized the findings into two categories of semantic interference; false cognate and redundancy. It was not only about analyzing the semantic interference, but the researcher also managed to answer why those students had the interference by interviewing them. Qualitatively, this research, moreover, described the students' phenomenon of semantic interference in detail along with the explanation of other interferences which might be happened in students' sentences.

**Keywords:** Semantic interference, students' English translation

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### INTRODUCTION

Due to the preliminary research done by the researcher, there were some lexical errors in students' English translation which was translated from *Bahasa Indonesia*. The words, phrases, even sentences were translated directly from *Bahasa Indonesia* into English without paying attention to the meaning in context. For instance, from the SL "*Bentuk radio aktif dari karbon yang dikenal sebagai karbon-14 diketahui memiliki ...*" was translated into TL as "*shape of radio active from a carbon which is famous as carbon-14 is known to have ...*". From that translation, it can be seen that there were some unnecessary words, or even a space, that added into the sentence. That kind of translation was created considering that the translator was Indonesian and used *Bahasa Indonesia* so that the sentence structure of the English translation was similar to *Bahasa Indonesia*'s. That phenomenon is considered as language interference. There are various language interferences, which are grammatical interference, phonological interference, semantic interference, etc. However, this research focused on only semantic interference which concerned on lexical errors.

Language interference is a language which is influenced from another language. Language interference in learning English as second or foreign language is basically occurred while speaking, reading, and writing, moreover when the English is not mostly used (Radhika

and Kala, 2013). When students are trying to translate to the TL, the SL characteristics will sometimes appear in their translation since the characteristics are difficult to avoid from students' aptitude in SL (Bennui, 2008). In this case, most of students tend to translate directly from the SL to TL (mostly used word by word method). The sentence structure of both languages, SL and TL, also determine the language interference because the students would like to translate accordingly based on the SL's structures. The structure of Indonesian word is similar to English (subject, verb, and object). The subject may be dropped and the word order reversed may occur in both languages in casual speech. This could be echoed in students' mistakes in English (Swan and Smith, 2001).

In addition, the translation course was taken by the advanced students or those who have finished the translation pre-requisite courses in the English department. Besides learning how to translate theoretically, students must work on translating any document formats (article, important document, poems) to the TL or *vice versa*. Therefore, after accomplishing the course, students were expected to carry out high quality of translation works. To the point that the researcher attempted to analyze the students' work of translating nonrelated topic to English or education was because that students, since they are advance in English, should be able to translate any kind of articles including science article or Islamic related article (which was used in this research).

Considering the reasons explained before, the researcher conducted the research on Translation class of English department in *Surabaya* Islamic State University to observe the language interference occurred in students' English translation.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are two kinds of semantic interference which are sign interference (false cognates) and redundancy. Linguistic sign was a tight unity with two components. Sign is the relation between a signified (concept) and signifier (mental of the sound). In this study, sign interference is understood as linguistics interference caused by false cognates, while redundancy is an interference which happens because the different point of view of the words between the author and the translator (Galvao, 2009).

Cognates are the words which have the same origin, or mostly called as one family. In linguistics term, the term cognate refers to original words in different languages that come from the same word in parent language, such as English *pencil* and *Bahasa* Indonesia *pensil* which may seem related each other but are not (Aske, 2005).

The words or phrases categorized as false cognates because these words have been mistaken by the students as the accurate translation. However, it is not that these words or the sentences are incorrect, but that only has semantic interference from *English* which was translated with the influence of *Bahasa* Indonesia (Havlašková, 2010).

On the other hand, Redundancy is a various phenomena in the language that explains the successful communication is not merely a superficial quality of language, but a constraint at the heart of its origin and the dynamics of its development. Redundancy is deeply rooted in language and anyone can find many redundancy features within grammar, syntax and other aspects of language.

It can be concluded that redundancy is giving the speakers own ideas of the sentence to make it clearer or more understandable.

Conversely, the redundancy discussed in this research is the negative one. The students might add some words to the original sentence. The probability is that students translate the *Bahasa* Indonesia to TL using the word by word method and translate all words without considering that both languages are different in some ways, for instance, *Bahasa* Indonesia *dengan* sometimes do not really need to be translated as *with* in English.

### Relevant Scholarship

Bhela in her research entitled *Native Language Interference in Learning a Second Language: Exploratory Case Studies of Native Language Interference with Target Language Usage* (1999) explained that the learners' habit in using first language more often could create the interferences on the target language. This research focused on specific occurrences of first language (L1) interference on target language (L2) in the syntactic structures of the L2 learner's writing. The research also identified the effect of the differences and/or similarities between the structures of L1 and L2 on the target language. Besides that point, this research objected to analyze the effect of each of the noted areas of difficulty on interpretation of meaning by English's native speakers and also examined the learners' knowledge of syntactic structure of L1 which causes difficulty in L2. Not only was about L1's syntactic structure, the researcher also aimed to observe the learners' knowledge of the syntactic structure of L2. The scope of this research was limited to the analysis of writing samples and only focused on syntactic structures which were errors caused by semantic and spelling.

A research about language interference was done by Bennui (2008) entitled a study of L1 Interference in the Writing of Thai EFL Students. Unquestionably once again the mother tongue interference in EFL students is evident through studies. Thai EFL Students are part of the students that face problems with the transfer phenomena in the learning process at the moment of try to communicate their ideas. In this research, the findings reveal that there is a significance level of L1 interference that represents more negative transfer than positive transfer in the students' written English. Also, the results show the different type of errors such as, vocabulary use, phrases, clauses and sentence structures, as well as language style of paragraph writing. It is concluded that at the end of the study it is possible to identify that all aspects of L1 interference should be seriously taken into account by teachers of writing courses so that the negative transfer would be diminished and the positive transfer would appear and become a useful tool to students at the moment of analyze the structures both structures.

The research was done by Gonzalez (2011) entitled Native Language Interference in The Spoken Target Language, A Case Study of Three (3) Speakers of English As A Foreign Language analyzed the interference orally with the object of more professional in English field. This research was identified the most common spoken errors made during English lesson. It is because the subject of this research was the English language's teachers, this research was aimed for teacher to be able to work on enhancing the use of English in EFL class. This research was more likely looking for the reasons of them (the subject of the research) getting language interference. The interference in spoken language discussed in this research was mainly about all kind of interferences. It did not focus on certain interferences but to identify the level of interference in spoken language. This research used the mixed method to find the objective of this research. The researcher needed to find the level of the interference in spoken language as well as how teacher could get the interference while they were the teacher of English. This research concluded that the interference occurred in English teachers was when the teachers did not have the opportunity to prepare some speeches. It was found in this research that language with more similar structures (such as, English and Indonesian) was more susceptible to have various interferences than language with fewer similar features (for example, English and Korean).

A study was done by Subramaniam and friends (2011) analyzed the interference of mother tongue (L1) in the English Translation materials. The main purpose of this study was in Translation field. However, the researchers highlighted that the interference had the main

role in translation. This research examined more than one kind of interferences. The researchers aimed to help the teaching of Malay language as the medium of instruction in the education system. Therefore, this research was done to analyze the interference of mother tongue (L1) linguistics elements in the graduates' translation materials, especially from the aspects of lexical, affixes, meaning of words and sentence structure. The methodology used in this research was quantitative since the researchers used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) to analyze and process the raw data. As what have been explained before that this research was ore focus on the translation, the researchers tried to explain about the translation work while for the four aspects of the interference analyzed in this research, the researchers only classified which interference and counted how many interferences in the translation was without further explanation.

From all previous studies explained before, there are various differences that distinguish the current research with all the previous studies. Some of previous studies only focused on the general language interference without discussing much more of its interference. There was also a study that focused on grammatical interference while this current research focused on semantic interference. In other hand, this current research used *Bahasa Indonesia* as a SL and English as TL. However, these all previous studies give much help for this current research.

## **METHOD**

### **Subsections**

The research analyzed students' semantic interference from *Bahasa Indonesia* in students' English translation. The semantic interference is divided into two categories which are redundancy and false cognate. The research focused on the explanation whether the words or phrases have false cognate or redundancy categories of semantic interference.

### **Participant (Subject) Characteristics**

The study involved students who already learnt some of Linguistics skills in Surabaya Islamic State University faculty of Education and Teacher Training. The numbers of the students involved for the subject of this study were taken from translation class. There were 25 of students' English translations which analyzed. The 25 students' English translations were taken from the students who are from one class who had different method in translating the article from *Bahasa Indonesia* to English and involved in the process of obtaining information, needs analysis, and tryout phase.

### **Sampling Procedures**

Before conducting the research, the researcher did the preliminary research and found some problems. The researcher collected the data which were analyzed, were students' English translation. After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher interviewed the students to answer the probability occurred when analyzing the data. In the end, the researcher categorized the semantic interference into two categories, which are false cognate and redundancy.

### **Sample Size, Power, and Precision**

From 25 students' English translation not all of them were found the semantic interference. There were only eight students who had the semantic interferences, while the other was errors.

### **Research Design**

This research used qualitative descriptive approaches to find out the research question. Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem (Creswell, 1988). The reason behind the use of qualitative method that is the research is to describe the phenomenon, which is the data used are opinion (interview), behavior, or document, and never be analyzed with statistics' pattern instead of in descriptive form (Ahmadi, 2014). Dealing with these statements, a qualitative descriptive research aims to describe a definite situation happened in daily routine. Based on the aim of qualitative descriptive research, it is related with the goal of this current study that is to describe the language interference in students' English translation.

In conducting a qualitative research, qualitative approach has three major categories of data, such as in-depth interviews, direct observation and written documents (Torchim and Donnelly, 1999). In this research, the researcher used all the major categories which are interview, direct observation, and written documents. The major of the data source was from written documents, while interview and observation is to strengthen the data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

After analyzing the data of 25 students' works, there were numerous semantic interferences in students' English translation. The findings of the research were dealing with the semantic interference in students' English translation based on the theories explained. The following discussion divided into students' work and researcher's analyzing.

### Thinking

The word *thinking* was translated from *pemikiran* in sentence 1; *Apapun landasan dan metodologi yang digunakan, studi Islam di Jerman atau Eropa pada umumnya tidak dapat dilepaskan dari orientalism, sebuah paradigma pemikiran tentang timur atau Islam khususnya, yang menjadi arus utama pemikiran*. The students translated the sentence as *Whatever the anvil and methodology used, Islamic studies in Germany or Europe in general can not be separated from Orientalism, a paradigm of thinking about east or Islam especially, are becoming mainstream thinking*. To translate some sentences or even words from source language to the target language is not merely changing the words of the target language. It is also not as simply as maintaining the source language meaning based on the context meaning, but it rather than to make sure that there is one exact target language's term used to represent the source language. One of the examples is from the sentence above, in English, *thinking* which translated from *Bahasa Indonesia pemikiran*. Grammatically, the *Bahasa pemikiran* can be translated as *thinking* in English. The Indonesian *pemikiran* is from the basic word *berfikir* (*think*). However, most of *Bahasa* verb which is added the prefix *pe-* and suffix *-an*, or becomes noun, in English, from the basic word will be added the suffix *-ing*. For instance, the Indonesian *penanaman*, *perencanaan*, and *pembangunan* which are from the basic word of *menanam*, *merencanakan*, and *membangun* (verb) will be translated to English *planting*, *planning*, and *building* which their basic word are *plant*, *plan*, and *build*. From this case, the student was probably tricked by these common formulas in translating a noun word which has basic word of verb. However, the *Bahasa* of *paradigma pemikiran* should not be translated as English *paradigm of thinking*. The *Bahasa paradigma pemikiran* itself means how someone has kind of belief or point of view of paradigm. However, instead of it is translated as English *paradigm of thinking*, it should be translated as English *paradigm thought*. Therefore, while translating these words, the student was probably influenced by the *Bahasa Indonesia* and came up with that translation.



Same with, the same of

The phrase *same with* and *the same of* are from the sentence, “*Therefore, the first generation Islamic study is same with the Orientalism with all its pros and cons.*” And “*therefore, the first Islamic generation study is the same of orientalism with all benefits and lacks.*” which are translated from *sentence 2*. Most of them got the interference in the same phrase which is the *Bahasa sama dengan*. The English *same with* and *the same of* are translated from the *Bahasa sama dengan*. Many students used these two phrases, *same with* and *the same of*, to translate the *Bahasa sama dengan*. The *Bahasa sama dengan* might be translated as *same with* if it uses *word by word* method. The first student was probably tricked by the Indonesian phrase and directly translated it. While another student would think that the English collocation of *same* is *of*. Meanwhile this student still was tricked by the Indonesian *sama* and directly translated it into English *same*. From this case, the *Bahasa sama dengan* will be much better to be translated as *similar to*. The English *similar to* represents the *Bahasa sama dengan* which means something similar, identical, or equal.

By that, with it also, from that

The words *by that*, *with it also*, and *from that* were found in English translation which were translated from the *Bahasa Indonesia Dengan itu pula*, found in *sentence 3*, “*Dengan itu pula peneliti menggarisbawahi bahwa konsep studi Islam generasi pertama ini sama dengan orientalisme.*” The cases from this *sentence* are similar to each other. The false cognate happens in the same words but came out with different words in the TL. Nonetheless, the students translated the *Bahasa dengan itu* to the English by directly translated those words without paying attention to the context or even the English term of that words.

From that sentence, the English *by that*, *with it also*, and *from that* were actually meant as a complement. Even though the Indonesian *dengan itu* is an emphasize complement as well, but those three English phrases do not really accurate to represent the Indonesian *dengan itu* for the reason that there is no English term of these three phrases. The students also admitted during the interview that those three phrases have a *Bahasa Indonesia* sense or *Bahasa Indonesia* interference yet they still used it for some reasons. On the other hand, the English *it* will be more accurate to exemplify the *Bahasa dengan itu*. *It* is a pronoun that can be a subject for that sentence and it has less (or even no) *Bahasa Indonesia* language interference. On the other hand, the sentence will not be changed by the meaning if the



*Bahasa dengan itu* is not translated to English because it has no much role to explain the meaning of the context.

#### German

The word *German* was translated from *Jerman* in *Bahasa* which was found in sentence 4, “*Hal itu bisa dimaklumi karena memang Jerman tidak bersentuhan langsung dengan Islam di era kejayaan Islam.*” The English translation was, “*That matter may be because it is not in direct contact with the German Islam in the era the glory of Islam.*” The student was probably confused by the translated word from *Jerman*. That word means a country in Europe. The correct translated word in English is *Germany* instead *German*. However, because the English *G* word is pronounced the same as *J* alphabet in *Bahasa*, the student was probably jumbled and thought that the English *German* is translated from Indonesia *Jerman*.

#### Face, face with

The word *face* and *face with* translated from the *Bahasa bersentuhan dengan* from sentence 4. The translated sentence was “It can be tolerable because Germany did not directly face with Islam in the era of its glory.” The words “directly face with Islam” is translated from “*bersentuhan langsung dengan Islam*” and these words has Semantic Interference because in English characteristics, the word “face,” based on the context, is a transitive verb which is directly followed by noun which is in that sentence is “Islam.” However, the student translated that sentence in that way was probably because she/he has first language interference. In *Bahasa* Indonesia, the word “*dengan*” is translated “with” in English. Therefore, the student thought that she/he needed to translate the word “*dengan*” in the sentence whereas the context does not need that word to be translated. From the context point of view, the sentence should not need an additional “with.”

#### In

The English *in* was translated from *di* in *Bahasa*. It was found at sentence 5, “*Di UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, ....*” and translated into English, “*In UIN sunan Ampel Surabaya, ....*” In this case, it is discussed about preposition. The used of preposition in both *Bahasa* Indonesia and English are totally different. In *Bahasa* Indonesia, the preposition *di-* which represents all kind of places or a serially such as *di rumah* (in the house), *di belakang*

(behind), *di kampus* (at campus), *di umur yang ke-22* (at the age of 22) is completely different in the used of preposition in English. As what have been explained in the example, the *Bahasa Indonesia* preposition *di-* is not always translated as *in* in English.

In that sentence above, the Indonesian preposition *di-* represents the place which is not supposed to be translated as *in* in English. The student most likely was misled by the *Bahasa Indonesia*. The student might think that all Indonesian prepositions *di-* is translated as *in* in English. However, because the Indonesian preposition *di* exemplifies the place, it should be translated as English preposition *at*. It is explained in Oxford dictionary that English preposition *at* can be used to say where someone or something is or where something happens.

Beyond investor, outside investor.

Those two phrases were found in the translated sentence of *Bahasa*, *investor luar*. The sentence was “*Sementara sisanya harus didanai bank ataupun investor luar.*” While the translated sentences were “*While the rest should be funded by bank or beyond investors.*” and “*While the rest should be funded by bank or outside investors*” Some certain words are not directly translated just how these words changed in target language. The example is from the sentence above. The Indonesian *luar* has a meaning of a place which is not inside, or outside. However, based on the context of the sentence, the Indonesian *luar* which is attached with the word *investor* means an investor from another country, or it can be said as *foreign investor*. The first student translated those words into English *beyond investor* was probably influenced by the *Bahasa Indonesia*. She/he thought that all Indonesian *luar* could be translated into English *beyond* or *outside*. The students stated that they used to use the English words either *beyond* or *outside* in translating the Indonesian *luar*.

## Discussion

After analyzing the data, linked to the theories in related review literature, there are two kinds of semantic interference, they are sign interference caused by false cognates and redundancy. The explanation about the differences of both false cognates and redundancy is discussed in this chapter.

### False Cognates

False cognates come when students translate from SL to TL using the word which seems accurate but different. In this study, there are article from a student translated from

*Bahasa Indonesia* to English. From the research finding there were found some semantic interferences and were dominated by false cognate category. The examples below have been categorized as the false cognates, while the explanation is explained in the research finding. The examples of false cognates found in the findings are *thinking, mainstream, same with, the same of, German, face, in, beyond investor, and outside investor*.

### Redundancy

From the findings, there was less semantic interference of redundancy category than the false cognate category. The redundancy category is not easily found compared to false cognate category. Based on students' opinion, in the interview, students were more confused to choose the most accurate words to represent the word from the source language. Most of students stated that they were tricked by the English words which they used most in their daily life without considering whether those words are accurate or not. On the other hand, the students who had semantic interference in redundancy category assumed they had to translate all words in Indonesian text to English because they did not want to change the whole meaning of the text. Several students also stated that they did not really understand about omitting some unnecessary words.

The example of semantic interference of redundancy category based on the finding is *face with*.

From the examples explained, it is difficult to deny the language interference in students who is learning a second or foreign language. There are many *Bahasa Indonesia* interferences found in students work tough the students are already in their third year of university. However in this research, which only discussed a semantic interference, also found some cases about semantic interference.

### RECOMMENDATION

Basically, students used the *word by word* method in translating so that the interferences were made. Granting it was not the only reason, most of students stated in the interview that the method made them having the interferences. On the other hand, the language which they used most in daily life, *Bahasa Indonesia*, has a prime reason to influence their English.

One of the big reason stated by the students why they still got linked to their *Bahasa Indonesia* when translating into English is that because they have limited vocabularies.

Principally, the interference cannot be denied from students who learn a second or foreign language.

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