

**THE ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTICAL INTERFERENCE IN ENGLISH PHRASES  
IN STUDENTS' WRITING  
(A Descriptive Study at the Second Grade Students of SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar)**

**Salwa Chaira<sup>1</sup> and Diana Topan<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract**

This qualitative-descriptive research attempts to describe Indonesian interference in building English phrases in writing. The research was undertaken to the second year students of SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar. This study aims to verify the Indonesian interference made by students in English phrases. The data were collected through document analysis which then the sample was selected to be analyzed. The sample of this study was twelve narrative texts composed by the students. The finding of data analysis reveals that there are some syntactical interference samples made by them as in *scenery roads, voice strange, morning Sunday, water bath, garden flower, and advice future*. These are resulted from Indonesian interference because they applied Indonesian structure in building English phrases. In conclusion, the research result shows that the students have lack of grammar knowledge in constructing English phrases. Therefore, they borrow Indonesian structure as a solution for their difficulties. For this reason, the teaching should focus more on how to build English phrases correctly by giving many samples of noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup> (where noun<sup>x</sup> means head and noun<sup>y</sup> means modifier) pattern all well as explaining the rule in English as the target language they are learning. It hopes that they will not transfer the Indonesian pattern when they are writing in English.

**Keywords:** *interference, syntactical, phrases*

---

<sup>1</sup> Salwa Chaira, STIKES Bina Nusantara Idi

<sup>2</sup> Diana Topan, Universitas Iskandar Muda, Banda Aceh

## INTRODUCTION

Some phrase structures of English are different from those of Indonesian. When young learners are learning English as a target language (TL), they often transfer the rules of Indonesian which is their first language (L1) into English. As a result, the interference of the L1 frequently happens to Indonesian learners when they are writing or building English phrases. Beardsmore as cited in Bhela (2016) states “many of difficulties of second language learners have with the phonology, vocabulary and grammar of the target language are caused by the interference of habits from L1”. Indonesian students who learn to write in English which is a foreign language (FL) often face difficulty to construct the phrases correctly because there is distinction between these two languages.

Based on a preobservation at a junior high school, namely SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar, the writer found there were a lot of syntactical errors in their writing. For example, they wrote *girl beautiful* instead of *beautiful girl*. This is categorized as syntactical interference because they transfer their Indonesian phrase pattern (noun<sup>x</sup> + noun<sup>y</sup>) into English phrase pattern (noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup>) (where noun<sup>x</sup> means head and noun<sup>y</sup> means modifier). This transfer makes some of their phrases are incorrect.

This study is related to the study undertaken by Siska Kardina (2016) with the title “Grammatical errors produced by students in writing (a qualitative study at the first grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Darul Imarah, Aceh Besar). Here she focused merely on addition,

omission, misinformation and misordering in term of grammar. This study has a similarity in the context of misordering. The samples taken by Kardina were unstructured phrase and sentences. The students applied incorrect phrase and sentence patterns as a result of transferring the pattern from their mother tongue, Indonesian. They arranged the phrases by applying Indonesian phrase pattern (noun + adjective and noun<sup>x</sup> + noun<sup>y</sup>) instead of English phrase pattern (adjective + noun and noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup>).

As a result, the writer conducted this study which describes Indonesian interference in building English phrases by the students of SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar. The writer hopes that the result of this study will be beneficial for English teachers or lecturers as a guidance of how to analyze interference in students’ writing so that they can focus more on how to build English phrases correctly by giving many samples of noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup> pattern all well as explaining the rule in English as the target language they are learning. Then, it hopes that they will not transfer the Indonesian pattern when they are writing in English. Besides, it can give significant information for other researchers who wish to conduct a similar research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Definition of Interference in Language

Interference gives a clear meaning of an act of intervention. It may be a disturbing effect on the performance caused by other behaviors. In the context of language learning and acquisition, interference refers to learner’s

intervention of one's first language (L1) onto his target language (TL). This bad effect of intervention is categorized as interference.

Language learners often get difficulties in acquiring a new target language because they have to adapt with the new rules of the language which can be dissimilar to their mother tongue's rules. The result is that they often apply their L1 structures into their TL for help. This technique gives two different results. If the structures are similar, it will help the learners to have correct application. On the contrary, if the structures are dissimilar, it will ruin the learners and take them into incorrect application. This ruin is called language interference since it gives negative effects to the learners. In this case, experts have proposed some definitions about interference language. Ellis (1986:299) views interference as an "old habits get in the way of learning new habits. Thus, it refers to the patterns of the learner's mother tongue get in the way of learning the patterns of the TL".

Usually, students are not accustomed to using a language which is newly introduced to them. They tend to refer to their L1 when they find difficulty to use new phrases or sentence in the target language. They automatically transfer the structures of their first language into the structures of the target language. Further, Ellis (1997:51) states "interference as the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition on an TL". At the beginning stage of target language learning, learners have less knowledge about how to produce utterance or sentence in correct structures. So, they will transfer the

rules of their L1 to the TL. They will construct their own rules in order to accomplish their speaking or writing.

In addition, according to Saville (2006:35), interference is a transfer of elements in a first language to the target language as a negative effect since the L1 structure is used inappropriately in the TL". Interference is an obstacle for students resulted from their habit on their native language. Because it has differences in these two languages, one of them may influence another one in which the students wrongly apply some rules to express something in the target language both written and spoken. Although it is considered as a usual phenomenon happens in learning and acquiring a new language, interference can lead to errors.

From all definition above, the writer concludes that interference is a negative transfer from learners' L1 to TL. This usually happens in the process of language learning where learners often use their L1 structure into the TL because the lack of knowledge of the target language. Students' limited understanding about their TL will cause interference. Due to this, their first language will influence the production of the target language they are learning.

Before language learner are familiar with the new language, they often thinks about what L1 structure to transfer to the TL because it is the only arrangement they already know. Related to this, Brown (2000:224) states "especially in the early stages of learning a second language before the system of the second language is familiar, the native

language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw". Accordingly, the learners take their previous language rules and apply them to the language they are learning at the current time. This negative transfer highly affects a phrase order in the TL writing.

English which is taught as a foreign language for Indonesian students provides situation in which students are introduced to a new language forms and at the same time they feel dependent on their mother tongue. As a result, the habit in L1 will play in the way they produce their TL. Brown states "learner's errors may be caused by many different processes including borrowing patterns from the mother tongue and extending patterns from the target language".

## 2. Syntactical Interference

Syntactical interference in this study is about unstructured phrases. It usually occurs when language learners incorrectly use part of words, phrases and clauses in a sentence. It can be a wrong order of phrase or sentence construction. The wrong form of an noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup> pattern in English phrases as a result of transferring from Indonesian pattern.

Indonesian patterns are quite different from English patterns. For example, the use of Indonesian noun phrase pattern into English is categorized as interference because both have differences in the way of constructing. For example, Indonesian uses pattern of DM (*diterangkan-menerangkan*) which can be seen in the phrase *sekolah baru*. On the contrary, English uses MD (*menerangkan-diterangkan*)

which consists of *modifier+noun* like in *new school*.

### a. Indonesian noun phrase

A noun phrase in Indonesian can be formed by putting a main noun (noun<sup>x</sup>) at the beginning which functions as a head and another noun(s) (noun<sup>y</sup>) afterwards which functions as a modifier. To construct a noun phrase, Indonesian uses principle DM (*diterangkan-menerangkan*) which constitutes of D as a main and M as an attribute (Djajasudarma, 2003:12). The sample in Indonesian pattern can be seen in *jendela kaca*. This phrase consists of two nouns; *jendela* and *kaca*. Therefore, the first coming noun *jendela* indicating by noun<sup>x</sup> functions as main/head (*diterangkan*) and the next coming noun *kaca* indicating by noun<sup>y</sup> is as an attribute which describes the noun/head (*menerangkan*).

### b. English noun phrase

In English, a noun phrase can be formed by putting a noun(s) (noun<sup>y</sup>) at the beginning which functions as a modifier and a main noun (noun<sup>x</sup>) afterwards which functions as a head. To construct a noun phrase in English, it applies MD (*menerangkan-diterangkan*) pattern where a modifier or attribute describes a noun, for instance, *glass window*. This phrase comprises of a modifier and a headword in which the modifier *glass* describes the noun *window*.

This arrangement of noun phrase of English is opposite to Indonesian. This distinction patterns between these two languages causes interference in students' English writing if they merely borrow the L1

rules without adapting. They often use their Indonesian pattern of noun phrase when they write in English. This points out that they directly transfer their L1 pattern to the TL.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

**1. Research Design**

This research applies qualitative-descriptive in design since it aims to obtain information about the phenomena.

**2. Population and Sample**

This research was conducted at SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar which is located in Kuta Baro Subdistrict, Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This junior high school established in 1992 and runs under the authority of Ministry of National Education. There were 37 teachers teaching in this school with 189 students in academic year of 2015/2016. Thus, the sample taken in this

study is merely the students of Class II A of SMP 2 Kuta Baro which were twenty students who were present on the day.

**3. Technique of Data Collection and Data Analysis**

To collect the data, the writer asked the students to compose a narrative writing in English. From their writing, the writer picked phrases which included Indonesian interference. Then, she analyzed the sample and discussed.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**1. Findings**

There are a few samples of interference made by the students of SMP 2 Kuta Baro in writing a narrative text. Since the test was given once, the writer merely met these samples as seen below.

<b>Incorrect pattern</b>	<b>Correct pattern</b>
Scenery roads	Road scenery
Room class	Class room
Morning Sunday	Sunday morning
Water bath	Bath water
Garden flower	Flower garden
Advice future	Future advice

The sample of interference made by the students of SMP 2 Kuta Baro

Here, the writer compiles all the samples and explains all in one explanation. All the samples show that the students created syntactical interference because they applied their L1 pattern in making English noun phrases. It can be seen in *scenery roads, room class, morning Sunday, water bath, garden flower, advice future*.

In these samples, the students borrow Indonesian phrase pattern which applies noun<sup>x</sup> + noun<sup>y</sup> or DM (*diterangkan-menerangkan*) pattern. In Indonesian, noun<sup>x</sup> functioning as a headword which means that it is the intended noun pointed by a someone must come first. Noun<sup>y</sup> functioning as a modifier that describes the pointed noun must come second. The modifier can be more than one noun. As long

as it needs to describe the intended noun, the students can use as many nouns as they need in their phrase. Thus, the students simply place other nouns which function as modifier to additionally describe the headword (noun<sup>x</sup>).

However, when this pattern is transferred into English, it is not accepted since English has the opposite pattern. In it, noun<sup>x</sup> still functioning as a headword which means that it is the intended noun pointed by a someone but comes after noun<sup>y</sup>. Noun<sup>y</sup> still functioning as a modifier that describes the pointed noun but must come first. Here, the modifier can be more than one noun and follows the previous noun<sup>y</sup>. The final coming noun in the phrase is the headword (noun<sup>x</sup>). Hence, the pattern is noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup> or MD (*menerangkan- diterangkan*). Therefore, all the samples should be corrected to *road scenery, class room, Sunday morning, bath water, flower garden, future advice*.

## 2. Discussion

The result of document analysis reveals some syntactical interference made by the twelve students at the second year of SMP 2 Kuta Baro, Aceh Besar in their narrative English writing. This interference is a result of Indonesian interference due to their limited knowledge in English syntax and causes error in their writing. The main factor is the lack of knowledge of syntax especially about how to construct English phrases.

The Indonesian interference in syntax often occurs in students' English writing because they have lack of syntax knowledge especially in constructing noun phrases. Therefore, they borrow Indonesian structure as

a solution for their difficulties. It can be seen that the errors are related to the transfer of noun<sup>x</sup> + noun<sup>y</sup> structure from Indonesian to English. they borrow their L1 phrase pattern and simply put it into the target language pattern.

As Brown (2000:224) says that different processes including borrowing pattern from the mother tongue may cause errors to learners. Due to this fact, students' limited knowledge of English structures can lead to the interference because they will refer to their L1 rules when they are facing difficulties in writing English phrases. This will automatically influence the process of language teaching and learning. It means that interference is a problem for both teachers and students.

For this reason, the teaching should focus more on how to build English phrases correctly by giving many samples of noun<sup>y</sup> + noun<sup>x</sup> (where noun<sup>x</sup> means head and noun<sup>y</sup> means modifier) pattern all well as explaining the rule in English as the target language they are learning.

Writing is a productive skill that they need develop to and advance steps so that they can share ideas and information correctly to others. Consequently, by having adequate abilities in English writing, they can communicate effectively with other people around the world.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### 1. Conclusion

This research is aimed at finding out the types of interference, in students' English writing at the second year of SMP 2 Kuta Baro

Aceh Besar. After analyzing the data, the writer made some conclusions.

From the document analysis, the writer found that the students at the second year of SMP 2 Kuta Baro made a few interference in constructing English phrases. This result Produces errors in their English writing. Due to this fact, the students cannot master writing skill as means of communication as well as possible.

## **2. Suggestion**

After having some conclusions about the research findings, the writer would like to give some suggestions for teachers and other researchers who will conduct similar research.

- a. Teachers should pay more attention in aspect particularly in English phrase.

They should focus more on what the students need to increase their knowledge about phrase constructing. Some writing activities are needed by which they can practice these patterns.

- b. Interference is a common issue in language learning. Therefore, further researches are needed in order to provide more information about other features of interference in students' writing which is very beneficial for both teachers and students to conduct better teaching and learning. There are a lot of types of interference occurs in English writing. Thus, other researchers should follow up this research to find what was not resulted from this research.

## REFERENCES

- Bhela, Baljit, *Native Language Interference in Learning Second Language*. <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v1n1/bhela/bhela.pdf>. Accessed on January 2, 2016
- Brown, H Douglas (2000) *Principle of Language Learning and Teaching*. San Fransisco: Longman
- Ellis, Rod (1986) *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ellis, Rod (1997) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Kardina, S (2016) *Grammatical Errors Produced by Students in Writing (a Qualitative Study at the First Grade Students of SMP Negeri 2 Darul Imarah, Aceh Besar)*. unpublished thesis. Banda Aceh: Universitas Syiah Kuala
- Saville, Muriel (2006) *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press