

**L1 Syntactic Interference in Students' Writing
Assignments: A Study at STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang**

THESIS

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Degree of Master of Education
in English Education.*



By:

Tia Marita

16178043

Advisor :

Prof. Dr. Jufrizal, M.Hum

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM OF ENGLISH EDUCATION

FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS

UNIVERSITAS NEGRI PADANG

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ABSTRAK

Tia Marita : 16178043, Interferensi Sintaksi Bahasa Pertama pada Tugas Writing Siswa, Penelitian pada STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang. Tesis. Pasca Sarja Universitas Negeri Padang.

Dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua / asing, siswa sering kali mengalami interferensi dari bahasa pertama mereka dalam memproduksi L2 mereka, baik dalam bentuk lisan maupun tulisan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis interferensi sintaksis Bahasa Pertama (B1) oleh siswa STES Manna Wa Salwa dalam tugas menulis Bahasa Inggris mereka. Peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dalam penelitian ini dengan analisis dokumen dan angket sebagai instrumen pengumpulan data. Analisis data dilakukan dengan beberapa tahapan seperti identifikasi, pengklasifikasian, analisis, dan interpretasi. Berdasarkan analisis data, peneliti menemukan interferensi sintaksis B1 pada tulisan Bahasa Inggris siswa terjadi pada semua aspek sintaksis, seperti pada frasa dengan tiga jenis frasa teratas yang paling banyak terjadi pada data yang dikumpulkan adalah NP (frasa nomina), VP (kata kerja frase), dan DP (frase penentu). Pada klausa juga terdapat beberapa jenis interferensi B1, seperti penyalahgunaan kata ganti relatif, konjungsi, dan predikat dan kalimat mengambil jumlah kesalahan tertinggi kedua yang disebabkan oleh munculnya interferensi B1 dalam analisis data. Berdasarkan beberapa temuan dan pembahasan dari angket, ditemukan juga bahwa interferensi B1 dapat berpengaruh pada efisiensi tulisan Bahasa Inggris mereka. Selain itu, peneliti juga menemukan beberapa faktor linguistik maupun non-linguistik yang menjadi penyebab terjadinya interferensi B1 dalam tulisan Bahasa Inggris siswa.

Kata Kunci : *Interferensi, Bahasa Pertama, Sintaksis, Tulisan Bahasa Inggris Siswa.*

ABSTRACT

Tia Marita : 16178043, L1 Syntactic Interference in Students' Writing Assignments: A study at STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang. Thesis. Graduate Program of Universitas Negeri Padang.

In second/foreign language learning, learners often have their prior knowledge of their first language interfering in their foreign language outcomes, whether it is in spoken or written form. This research was aimed to do further exploration related to L1 interference in EFL learners' writing assignments. This research was focused on analysing the L1 syntactic interference made by students of STES Manna Wa Salwa in their writing assignments. This research was followed qualitative descriptive methods with documents analysis and questionnaire as the instruments to collect the data of this research. From the documents analysis, researcher concluded several types of L1 syntactic interference in students' English writing, they are phrases with top three types of phrases that is mostly occurred in the collected data are NP (noun phrase), VP (verb phrase), and DP (determiner phrase). Clause holds several types of errors, such as the misuse of relative pronoun, the conjunction, and predicate and sentence takes the second highest amount of errors caused by L1 interference appearance in data analysis. Based on some findings and discussion from the questionnaire, it was found that L1 interference occurs a lot in students' writing product and it affects their English writing efficiency. Researcher also categorized linguistic and non-linguistic factors causing L1 interference in students' writing assignments based on the analyzed data.

Keywords: Interference, L1, Syntactic Interference, Writing

PERSETUJUAN AKHIR TESIS

Mahasiswa : Tia Marita
NIM : 16178043/2016
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

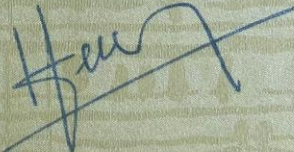
Nama	Tanda Tangan	Tanggal
<u>Prof. Dr. Jufrizal, M.Hum.</u> Pembimbing		<u>10/8-2022</u>

Dekan Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni
Universitas Negeri Padang






Prof. Dr. Ermanto, S.Pd., M.Hum.
NIP. 19690212.199403.1.004

Ketua Program Studi


Dr. Hamzah, M.A., M.M.
NIP. 19611221.199003.1.001

**PERSETUJUAN KOMISI
UJIAN TESIS MAGISTER KEPENDIDIKAN**

No.	Nama	Tanda Tangan
1.	Prof. Dr. Jufrizal, M.Hum. (Ketua)	
2.	Prof. Dr. Hermawati Syarif, M.Hum. (Sekretaris)	
3.	Dr. Rusdi Noor Rosa, M.Hum. (Anggota)	

Mahasiswa

Mahasiswa : Tia Marita
NIM : 16178043/2016
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Tanggal Ujian : 25-02-2021

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Tia Marita

16178043

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Every language has different set of systems (sounds, words, sentences, etc). Some systems found in one language and another one might be similar, but they never exactly the same. They have their own distinctive systems in many ways. Because languages have their own different systems, second or foreign language students have a tendency to use their habit of their native language in producing the linguistic aspects of the second or foreign language (Lekova, 2010). Some students find difficulties in produce complex sentence in second language whether it is written or spoken. Sometimes the substitution of sentence structure can be confusing and sometimes it is still understandable. This problem may happen because of the tendency of interference from their native language. Arthur (1992) refers this kind of tendency as “language interference” or “linguistic interference”.

Linguistic interference has become widespread phenomenon among English second or foreign language students. Corder in Lekova (2010) states that interference is a type of error that appears in language learning process caused by the native language habit of the students get involved. This means that native language as learner’s first language influences their second language learning. Skiba in Lekova (2010) views this phenomenon as the transference of one language’s elements to another at various levels including linguistical elements of a language, since all of linguistical elements contribute in order to produce language both active and passive form.

In Indonesia, college students who take other major of study beside English have ESP class to take to study English related to their major of study. Economic students, for example, take ESP class to study English to be used in economic field. They learn it for communication purpose so they usually have both speaking and writing classes. In facilitating ESP students to produce effective paragraph writing, many teachers prioritize students' writing problems in grammar, lexicon, and discourse aspects. However, many teachers neglect the problem of students' native language and culture interfering in written English. Even though L1 interference is not a new trend in studies on second language acquisition, it is an important factor to be considered in ESP writing instruction.

L1 interference with regard to the terms '*cross-linguistic and language transfer*' refers to the influence of native language structures on students' performance and development in the target language (Hashim, 1999). When interlanguage students are writing in the target language, some of their L1 characteristics show up in their writing. This issue should be considered in teaching of ESP writing. ESL/EFL students may produce pieces of writing containing correct grammar structures as well as appropriate vocabulary items and content. Nevertheless, many sentences make more sense in the students' native language than in English due to direct translation from L1 into English. If this issue is pinpointed, students will be able to work towards correcting such a problem by thinking in English or being effectively aware while writing in relation to the standard English writing system.

Interference can happen in each component of language, whether it is phonemes, morphemes, syntax, or lexemes. For example, researcher found

students sometimes missed to put “to be” in sentence as a predicate because in Bahasa Indonesia, it does not need copular verbs as a predicate. The sentence “Dia guru di SMA” in Bahasa Indonesia is acceptable although you do not put “adalah” as a predicate to state that subject in that sentence is a teacher. But in English, the sentence “He teacher in high school” is not acceptable. It needs “to be (is)” as a predicate to connect the subject and the adjective, so it should be “He *is* teacher in high school”. That is one example of many syntactic interference appear in students’ English outcomes whether in writing or speaking class.

Written communication become more demanding since people communicate through email and many other communicative technologies. The needs to master this skill is crucial for ESL students. Chen (2007) states that owing to the age of globalization, the world seems to be smaller because of the perception of unlimited communication. For this reason, all members of global institutions, for their own benefits in terms of education and business cooperation, have to stay connected with one another. In order to comprehensibly express thoughts and opinions, apart from oral interaction, writing is considered crucial. On account of its importance, many colleges and universities thus offer more writing courses, for example, Writing for Specific Purposes, Academic Writing, Paragraph Writing, and so forth to students who need to improve their writing.

However, thinking in English when writing in English is quite difficult for Indonesian students. Their habit of using Bahasa Indonesia structures and culture inevitably interfere with their English writing. Although English is a compulsory subject for students from primary to tertiary levels, it is taught more in Bahasa Indonesia than in English. English is not used as the instructional medium in other

subjects in Indonesia educational institutions, as it is in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines. That is to say, students use more Bahasa Indonesia rather than English even in the English language classroom. They also carry over the habits of their native language into target language, such as forms, meaning and culture, into English sentences. As a result, L1 interference occurs widely in their written English.

Good writing English skill requires both syntactic and semantic knowledge. Weigle (2002) points out that encoding ideas into written text may be disrupted by the need for lengthy searches for appropriate lexical and syntactic choices. It is clear that limited language competence has negative impact in writing proficiency. Students who take ESP class learn less about those knowledges than students in English major, but requires the same result in written English efficiency. Moreover, L1 interference is one of causes that affects L2 writing efficiency. It is apparent that errors caused by L1 interference have been seen as an unavoidable obstacle that all EFL and ESL student writers have to encounter, resulting in ineffective L2 writing.

Related to L1 interference found in English writing, there have been some studies conducted by the previous researchers. Camilleri (2004). Camilleri studied the native transfer in Maltese students' English writing. In order to identify errors caused by L1 intervention, a hundred essays written by selected participants were analyzed, based on five phases of investigation, including data collection, identification of errors, explanation of errors, attribution of error categories, and reflections on the results. The findings showed that the students' most common mistakes were divided into 13 categories, namely noun, adverb, verb, adjective,

verb form, preposition, post, spelling, concord, idiom, pronoun, passive voice, and word order. The causes of the errors reported were mainly the interference of L1 with direct translation, the discrepancies between L1 and English in syntactic properties, and the transition of L1 systems to English writing.

Similar to the research in various contexts, Bennui (2008) studied L1 interference in the writing of Thai EFL students. He analyzed and described L1 interference in paragraph writing by 28 third-year students in the Basic Writing Course at Thaksin University. He analyzed three levels of L1 interference, which are words, sentences, and discourse, by considering four approaches: contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage analysis, and contrastive rhetoric. Based on the data analysis, he found that L1 interference mainly presented in lexical interference. Structural borrowing from Thai language such as word order, subject verb agreement, and noun determiners indicated features of L1 syntactic interference. He states that those chronic writing problems should be solved in appropriate way for the quality of written product and EFL writing instruction.

Another study of L1 interference was conducted by Solano, et al (2014) investigated L1 interference in Spanish students' English writing skill. They asked 351 students and 42 teachers from second year senior high schools (public and private) to participate in the study. They use student and teacher questionnaires, as well as a written test as the instruments for collecting the data in which students were asked to write a narrative passage. The results from their study indicate that English grammar and vocabulary were the linguistic areas that suffered the highest level of L1 language interference. The most common Spanish interference errors were misuse of verbs, omission of personal and object pronouns, misuse of

prepositions, overuse of articles, and inappropriate/unnatural word order. At the end, they mention some suggestions to teachers in order to help students prevent further Spanish interference problems during writing/composition classes. Their study showed how L1 interference can cause some errors in students' writing and affecting their English writing efficiency.

Based on those facts in the field and several results of studies above, researcher was interested to do further exploration related to L1 interference in students' writing assignments. An important strand of inquiry in second language acquisition (SLA) research is that devoted to the investigation of language learners' successive approximations of the target language. With the students' English educational background from primary to tertiary level, they are supposed to have good knowledge in conducting English writing texts. Yet, no one can assure such assumption unless a scientific discovery is done to find out the answer.

For those assumptions, researcher was interested to do further investigation to see linguistic interference that cause errors in students' writing English task especially for students who learn English for specific purposes. Focus of this research is to find out L1 syntactic interference in students of ESP class writing assignments. Researcher would like to do deeper analysis in L1 syntactic interference found in students of STES MANNA WA SALWA Padang Panjang writing assignments. Syntax is element of linguistic that study about the relation between words, which makes it important aspect in order to define good writing quality in English. Such investigation is needed in order to get scientific

insight into L1 interference phenomena and to answer whether any further pedagogical consideration needs to be taken.

B. Identification of the Research Problem

Based on the background and the previous studies, researcher identifies that it is apparent that errors caused by L1 interference have been seen as an unavoidable obstacle that all EFL and ESL student writers have to encounter, resulting in ineffective English writing. It happens to almost every student who learn English whether they study English as major of study or study English as specific purposes. Years of learning English since primary to tertiary level cannot avoid students to have their L1 knowledge to interfere their English outcomes. For decades, it has become an attractive issue that many language researchers have studied in order to find out what approaches and methods can really assist English writers to overcome this difficulty.

English and Bahasa Indonesia have different language systems. Syntactic systems differences of both languages are able to trigger the interference of the language outcomes. The phenomenon attracts researcher to do deeper analysis related to L1 interference. Moreover, many researchers have also been interested in studying language interference using linguistic studies.

A language interference itself may occur on each component of linguistics. Researcher also identifies that interference mostly happen in four elements of linguistic, which are phonological interference, morphological interference, syntactic interference, and lexical interference. L1 interference affects their English writing efficiency, mostly in the sentences structure. In order to express thoughts, they use of L1 syntactic properties and relate them to English structures,

which cause errors in some extents and eventually lead to the gap between L1 and English linguistic features.

Since the aim of this research is to find interference in students' writing assignment, researcher focus on analyzing syntactic interference because this aspect relates the most to the quality of writing. Furthermore, it is also able to show analysis of interferences more systematically in the level of phrases, clauses, and sentences. Therefore, researcher would like to conduct a research of L1 syntactic interference in the students' writing assignment in STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang.

C. Limitation of the Problem

L1 linguistic interference may occur in the form of phonology, morphology, syntax, or lexicon. Researcher limits this research to focus on L1 syntactic interference that occurs in students' writing assignments. Syntax is the linguistic element that study about the relation between words, phrases, clauses, and sentences which is prominent aspects in constructing good quality of writing. Researcher focuses on analyzing L1 syntactic interference to see how the L1 interference affecting students' writing efficiency since syntactic interference hold major role in defining the quality of writing.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The problem of this research is formulated in the following question:
“How does L1 syntactic interference appear in students' writing assignments at STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang?”

E. Research Questions

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the research questions of this research are:

- 1) What are the syntactic units of L1 syntactic interference that appear in students' of STES Manna Wa Salwa writing assignments?
- 2) How does the L1 syntactic interference affect students' L2 writing efficiency?
- 3) What are factors that cause the L1 syntactic interference to happen in students' English writing assignments?

F. Purposes of the Research

Based on research questions above, the purposes of this research can be stated as follow:

- 1) To explain the types of L1 syntactic interference that appear in students' writing assignments.
- 2) To explain the effects of L1 syntactic interference in students' writing efficiency.
- 3) To identify some linguistic factors related to system differences between two languages that cause the interference to happen.
- 4) To identify some non-linguistic factors that also can cause L1 interference in students' writing.

G. Significance of the Research

Theoretically, the findings of this research provide some information about L1 syntactic interference that may affect students' writing ability and quality. Practically, referring to that information, lecturers can use it as a reference to build compatible teaching materials for their students to minimize some kind of errors

caused by L1 interference in students writing assignments. Students can also learn where they do it wrong in their writing because of their L1 habit interference so they also improving themselves in writing English. This interference sometimes happens unavoidably especially for Indonesian students who do not use English to communicate in daily basic. Realizing that their L1 habit may affect their writing quality in English could help students to avoid doing the same mistakes in their future writing. Therefore, they can improve their English writing efficiency, especially for specific purposes.

H. Definition of the Key Terms

L1 Interference	: refers to the influence of the knowledge and habits of students' first language in their English language products.
Syntax	: refers to the rules and principles that a language has related to sentence structure or arrangement of words in to making sentence to deliver message.
Syntactic Interference	: refers to the interference in syntactic systems that occur in students' writing assignments.
Writing Assignments	: Writing Assignments of economic students in ESP class at STES Manna Wa Salwa Padang Panjang.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Interference that happens in the language learning process is an unavoidable problem. Errors in the context of interference demonstrate that the process of learning is taking place. The method of learning is in the form of knowing the rules of the language being learned. The error in the interference form indicates that, in some forms, systems of Bahasa Indonesia and English are different. The influence of L1 would decrease in line with the awareness of the target language systems by students.

From the result of analysis, the highest percentage of inefficiency in students' writing is hold by phrases with the most types of phrases that is mostly occurred in the collected data are NP (noun phrase), VP (verb phrase), and DP (determiner phrase). The second type of syntactic interference from the data of students' writing assignments is clause with mostly in the use of relative pronoun, conjunction, and the use of predicate of the clauses. The most parts where L1 interference in constructing English sentence are the use of tenses and the use of predicate in the sentence which is related to each other. There also the syntactic interference in passive voice, and in the negative sentence which appeared as errors in collected data.

There are two categories for the factors that cause L1 syntactic interference in students' writing, linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors. The more the student understands the rules of the target language, the interference will be reduced. Conversely, a student's lack of understanding of the rules of the target

language will increase the appearance of interference caused by the effect of L1. Lack of mastery of the target language adds to the tendency for the influence of L1. The effect of L1 will decrease in line with students' understanding of the L2 system.

B. Suggestion

From the result of the research, the writer wanted to give some suggestions. The method of learning is in the form of knowing the rules of the language being learned. The effect of L1 suggests that L1 has a role to play in language learning, which cannot be denied. Students need to grasp this distinction. The more the student learns the structures of the target language, the intrusion will be decreased. In comparison, the lack of understanding of the structure of the target language by a student will increase the appearance of errors caused by L1 interference. The influence of L1 would decrease in line with the awareness of the target language systems by students.

Understanding the concept is also needed so that students do not interpret a word that they do not know by just looking at the dictionary and then applying it in the target language without paying attention to the suitability of the use of the word with the rules of the language being studied. In the following, some basic concepts are given so that students can reduce the appearance of L1 interference.

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