

THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDONESIAN LANGUAGE ON ENGLISH AT THE BILINGUAL SCHOOL SMA TUNAS LUHUR PAITON

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ABSTRACT

Language interference frequently occurs in bilingual learning, especially when students mix elements of their mother tongue into a foreign language. At SMA Tunas Luhur Paiton, which implements a bilingual learning system, students are still found making errors in using English due to the influence of Indonesian, especially in terms of structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This study aims to describe the forms of Indonesian language interference in students' English usage. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show four main types of interference: phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical. Phonological interference is seen in mispronunciations, morphological interference in the application of Indonesian affixation to English, syntactic interference in sentence structures similar to Indonesian, and lexical interference in the use of Indonesian words or phrases in English utterances. The conclusion indicates that Indonesian language interference remains highly dominant in students' English usage, highlighting the need for more adaptive and contextual learning strategies to improve their bilingual competence.

Keywords: *Language Interference; Bilingual; High School Students*

INTRODUCTION

In a bilingual education environment, the practice of using two languages alternately in learning can lead to a linguistic phenomenon called interference. Interference occurs when elements from the first language influence the use of the second language, resulting in speech that does not conform to the rules of the target language. This phenomenon not only hampers the smoothness of communication, but also reflects the students' limited mastery of foreign language structures and systems. Therefore, interference is an important issue that needs to be studied in the context of second language learning, especially in schools that implement bilingual policies.

SMA Tunas Luhur Paiton is one of the private schools in Probolinggo Regency that has implemented a bilingual system in an effort to improve students' English language competence. Although this policy has only been fully focused in the past year, its implementation has been initiated since the first batch through the Smart English program. The school's commitment to establishing a bilingual environment is realized through activities such as English Assembly, English Camp, English Club, as well as

English for Teacher training that is conducted regularly. The school also establishes mandatory English speaking zones in several strategic areas such as the teacher's office, principal's office, library, and IT room to familiarize students with using English in daily life.

However, this bilingual environment also has the potential to create interference between Indonesian and English in students' speech. Therefore, this research is focused on Tunas Luhur Paiton High School to examine the phenomenon of Indonesian to English interference in students' communication practices. This study aims to analyze the forms of interference that occur in the use of English in the school environment, as well as identify the factors that influence the occurrence of interference in order to provide a better understanding in the context of bilingual learning.

Based on initial observations, interference is evident in students' oral and written communication, especially in the aspects of pronunciation, sentence construction, and vocabulary choice. Frequent errors include English pronunciation with an Indonesian accent, the use of local vocabulary in English sentences, and sentence structures that follow Indonesian language patterns. Although the school has provided a program that supports bilingual practice, most students still have difficulty in distinguishing the use of two languages separately. This makes interference a significant linguistic symptom that affects students' communication fluency and language accuracy. Therefore, this research is important to identify the forms and causes of interference as well as to find more effective learning approaches in a bilingual environment.

In sociolinguistic studies, interference is defined as interference, which is the introduction of language elements from one language into another language. The Complete Indonesian Dictionary explains that interference occurs due to language contact which causes language errors, especially in foreign language learning. Interference is also known as a form of negative transfer, which is the transfer of the first language system into the second language, resulting in deviations from the rules of the target language. This phenomenon can occur at the individual or community level, and is often an important part of language error analysis and comparative studies between languages. An understanding of interference is fundamental so that learners are able to avoid mistakes influenced by the mother tongue.

A speaker is called an equal bilingual if he/she is able to use the first and second language equally without experiencing interference in moving from one language to another. But in reality, many learners are compound bilinguals, that is, individuals whose mastery of the second language is not equivalent to the first language. In this situation, speakers tend to bring structures and habits from the first language into the second language, resulting in various forms of interference.

This study is based on the theory of interference proposed by Weinreich (1953), which explains that interference occurs due to intense contact between two languages used alternately by bilingual speakers. The contact allows elements of the first language to move into the second language and disrupt the language system being learned. Interference can appear in various linguistic levels, including phonological, lexical, syntactic, and morphological.

Phonological interference occurs when the pronunciation system of the first language influences the way words are pronounced in the second language. For example, the pronunciation of the word "*reader*" becomes "*reder*" or "*place*" becomes "*plis*", which shows that students' pronunciation is more influenced by Indonesian phonology. Lack of listening practice and imitation of native pronunciation are the main

factors for this interference, especially in the early stages of foreign language acquisition.

Meanwhile, lexical interference occurs when speakers insert vocabulary from Indonesian into English speech directly. Examples are the phrase "*you roll and you bye*" or the idiom "*shy cat eyes*" translated into "*you shy shy cat eyes*". The causes of this form of interference are usually limited vocabulary in English and the tendency to translate expressions literally due to unfamiliarity with idioms in the L2.

Syntactic interference is seen in the structure of English sentences that follow the grammatical structure of Indonesian. Sentences such as "*I see its chicken bakar*" or "*Let's call me mbak*" show that the English sentence structure is shaped by the Indonesian way of thinking and structure. This usually happens when students have not fully understood the syntactic rules in English and automatically transfer sentence patterns from a more familiar language.

Morphological interference appears in the form of errors in word formation or the use of morphemes in English that are influenced by the Indonesian language system. For example, the use of the singular form "example" to express more than one example, or constructions such as "*disorryin*" that follow the morphological pattern of passive in Indonesian. These errors are often caused by students' ignorance of the differences in grammatical systems between the two languages, especially in terms of noun inflection and verb structure.

This study also refers to Rod Ellis' (1997) idea, which states that interference is a form of negative transfer from the first language into the second language. This transfer occurs because learners tend to rely on the knowledge already possessed in L1 when facing ignorance or uncertainty in L2 usage. This process results in typical forms of errors in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon.

With reference to these theories, this study focuses on the identification and classification of forms of Indonesian to English interference in students' speech. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques in the form of observation, documentation, and interviews conducted directly in the environment of Tunas Luhur Paiton High School. It is hoped that the results of this study can broaden the understanding of the dynamics of language use in a bilingual context and make a practical contribution to the development of learning strategies that are more responsive to students' linguistic needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach which aims to reveal in depth the forms of Indonesian to English interference in students' speech. The research design is organized in the form of a field study by focusing on language phenomena in a natural situation, as it is in a bilingual school environment.

The object of this study is the forms of Indonesian interference that appear in the oral and written communication of students at SMA Tunas Luhur Paiton. This research does not focus on the quantification of data, but on the description of the types of interference that appear contextually and factually based on direct observation.

This research was conducted at Tunas Luhur Paiton High School, Probolinggo Regency. This school was chosen because it implements a bilingual system with a policy of using English in various school activities, but still shows symptoms of interference in students' speech. The focus of the research was directed at the speech acts of SMA Tunas Luhur students, grade XI and XII students in English learning

activities. Class XII A1 consists of 35 students, 20 male and 15 female students, while class XI A3 consists of 29 students, 12 male and 17 female students who actively use English in academic and non-academic interactions.

The data collection techniques used were participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted in English learning situations and other English speaking activities, such as *school assembly* and *English Club* program. Interviews were conducted with English teachers to obtain supporting information about the forms of interference that are often encountered. Documentation included transcripts of students' speech as well as archives of relevant bilingual learning activities, including students' written works such as presentation slides.

The operational definition of interference in this study refers to the inclusion of Indonesian elements in students' English speech, which causes deviations at the phonological (sound), morphological (word structure), syntactic (sentence structure), and lexical (vocabulary) levels. Each form of interference was analyzed based on the classification proposed by Weinreich (1953), which became the theoretical basis in this study.

The data analysis technique in this study uses Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation are categorized according to the type of interference, then described narratively to reveal the patterns that emerge in students' language practices in a bilingual environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Indonesian Language Interference to English Usage at Tunas Luhur Paiton High School

Based on the observation and analysis of students' speech at SMA Tunas Luhur Paiton, it is found that the interference that occurs includes four main types, namely phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical interference. To provide a comprehensive overview, the following is a summary of the types of interference from each data:

Table 1 Research Data

No	Speech/Data Excerpt	Type of Interference	Brief explanation
1	<i>I see its chicken bakar eh no, I want catfish</i>	Lexical, Syntactic	The words " <i>nya</i> " and " <i>catfish</i> " are inserted; the sentence structure does not conform to formal English.
2	<i>No, not sorry in</i>	Morphological	Indonesian passive structure is applied to the word " <i>sorry</i> ", which is not a verb
3	<i>Stop calling me cece, let's call me mbak</i>	Lexical, Syntactic	Local greeting is used; the structure of " <i>let's call me</i> " is not in accordance with the rules of invitation in English.

4	<i>Becarfull- becarfull, you roll and you bye</i>	Phonological, Lexical	Deviant pronunciation; the word " <i>rolling</i> " is inserted without translation; the phrase " <i>you bye</i> " is not standardized
5	<i>You shy shy cat eyes</i>	Lexical	Literal translation of the idiom " <i>shy shy cat</i> " without cultural adaptation or appropriate idiomatic equivalents
6	<i>Pronunciation observation: "reader" → "reder", "place" → "plis", etc.</i>	Phonological	The pronunciation of English words is influenced by Indonesian phonology
7	<i>Writing: Examples → Example</i>	Morphological	The error in using the plural form " <i>examples</i> " when it refers to only one example shows morphological interference. Students apply the rule of adding <i>-s</i> without considering the actual number, which shows a lack of understanding of English morphological rules.

Discussion

In this study, interference committed by Tunas Luhur Paiton High School students is classified into four main types: phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. Each form of interference is analyzed based on the students' speech data as well as the previously discussed theories of language interference. This analysis aims to show how the influence of Indonesian is still strong in the use of English, as well as to reveal the causes of interference.

Data 1

Student A: "Did you see what was on the lunch menu in the cafeteria?"

Student B: "*I see its chicken bakar eh no, I want catfish*" (I see *its* ikan bakar, eh *no* I want catfish).¹

The utterance is an example of the use of a mixture of English and Indonesian elements spoken spontaneously in an informal situation. The phrase "*I see nya chicken bakar*" shows the insertion of the Indonesian particle "*-nya*" into the English sentence structure. In addition, the phrase "*eh no*" which functions as a spontaneous correction

¹English learning process in class XI A3, Observation, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 13, 2025).

also shows the influence of directly translated Indonesian conversational expressions.

According to the theory of interference proposed by Weinreich, this form of deviation occurs due to the transfer of patterns from the first language (L1) into the second language (L2). In this case, students still think using Indonesian structures and translate them literally into English, resulting in sentence structures that deviate from English rules. This error falls under syntactic interference because sentence construction in L2 follows the order and logic of L1 (Weinreich, 1953, p. 36).

An example of an appropriate construction in English should read: *"I thought it was grilled chicken, but I want catfish instead."* The sentence shows correct grammatical structure as well as appropriate use of vocabulary according to the context. In contrast, the utterance in Data 1 shows that the student still relies on the mother tongue structure to convey the meaning in the foreign language, and this indicates that the internalization process of the L2 structure has not been fully formed.

To minimize this kind of interference, active and consistent practice in English is needed, as well as teaching strategies that emphasize the formation of sentence structures through understanding the context, not just literal translation from Indonesian.

Data 2

Student A: "Sorry"

Student B: *"No, not sorry in"* (no, not forgiven).²

The speech context of Data 2 occurred when a student accidentally stepped on his friend's foot while walking to join the crowd watching the *school assembly* activities.



Figure 1
School Assembly Activity³

After the incident, the student who stepped on him immediately apologized. However, his friend replied with a joking sentence, *"No, not*

²School assembly activity, Observation, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 14, 2025).

³School assembly activities, Documentation, (Tunas Luhur High School, February 14, 2025).

sorry in" while laughing lightly. This utterance shows the mixing of Indonesian and English forms in an informal setting.

This data shows morphological interference in informal conversations between students. The utterance "*gak di sorry in*" is a form that reflects the application of Indonesian word formation patterns into English. Students add the prefix "*di-*" and the suffix "*-in*" to the word *sorry*, as if *sorry* is a verb that can be passivized like in Indonesian such as "*dimarahin*" or "*disuruhin*".

In reality, *sorry* in English is an adjective, not a verb, so it cannot be treated with such morphological patterns. This phenomenon shows that students form utterances based on the grammatical structure of the first language (Indonesian), which is transferred into English usage.

According to Weinreich's theory of interference, linguistic interference occurs when elements from one language influence the use of another language, whether in the areas of phonology, syntax or morphology. In this case, the form "*sorry in*" is the result of interference at the morphological level which causes word formation that does not fit the English system (Weinreich, 1953, pp. 1-2).

Phenomena like this show that students' mastery of morphological structures in English is still not complete, and is still strongly influenced by the mother tongue system. Therefore, an explicit approach to learning English morphology is needed, including through contrastive exercises that emphasize the differences between word formation patterns in Indonesian and English. That way, students can better understand that not all words in English can be treated as in Indonesian.

Data 3

Student A: "*You can do it, Cece!*" (*You can do it, Cece!*)

Student B: "*Don't call me cece, let's call me mbak*" (*Don't call me cece, call me mbak!*).⁴

This data shows the occurrence of syntactic interference, which is when the sentence structure in Indonesian is transferred directly into English without adjusting to the syntactic rules of the target language. The sentence "*Let's call me mbak*" is a literal translation of an Indonesian structure such as "*let's call me mbak*", which is quite common in informal contexts. However, in English, the use of *let's* (let us) is not used to ask others to do something to us personally.

Syntactically, the form is incorrect because the subject of the invitation "*let's*" (us) cannot logically be followed by "*me*" as the object of the action performed together. The sentence would be more grammatically appropriate if it used a structure such as "*Just call me mbak*" or "*Please call me mbak*", which are more appropriate in the context of requests or light instructions.

According to the theory of interference proposed by Weinreich, syntactic interference occurs when sentence construction patterns from the first language are applied to the second language, resulting in forms

⁴Observation of English learning process in class XII A1, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 19, 2025).

that do not conform to the syntactic norms of the target language. In this case, students produced sentence structures based on Indonesian syntactic logic which were then translated directly into English (Weinreich, 1953, p. 39).

This phenomenon also shows that students' understanding of imperative or inviting sentence structures in English is not fully developed. This shows the importance of more contextual and communicative syntax exercises, so that students can recognize the differences between the structures of invitation, request, and instruction in both languages. Explicit learning of sentence functions (such as imperative, invitation, and request) is also needed so that similar interference can be minimized.

Data 4

Student A: "*Becarfull-becarfull, you roll and you bye*".⁵

This sentence shows lexical interference, which is the insertion or use of Indonesian vocabulary into English speech directly, without translation or adjustment of meaning. In the utterance, the word "*gelinding*" is used instead of English equivalents such as "roll" or "fall down". Similarly, the phrase "*you bye*" does not have a clear meaning structure in English, but is used by the student to convey that his friend could "*slip and bye*", a joking expression commonly found in casual Indonesian interactions.

This sentence shows that when students do not know or are unsure of the English equivalent, they rely on their mother tongue vocabulary to get their point across. This is a key feature of lexical interference, where the first language influences word choice in the second language.

According to Weinreich's theory of interference, lexical interference arises from an imbalance in the acquisition of two languages, where the first language (L1) becomes the dominant source in the process of thinking and communicating. Lexical interference tends to occur in learners who have not had enough comprehensible input in the target language (L2) and are still accustomed to using L1 in everyday life (Weinreich, 1953, p. 47).

This phenomenon shows that students' English vocabulary is still limited, so in spontaneous contexts they fill in the gaps with Indonesian terms. To minimize such interference, learning based on *communicative input* and increased exposure to English vocabulary in authentic situations are needed. Strategies such as roleplay, storytelling or immersive learning can help students get used to conveying messages with appropriate vocabulary and structures in English.

Data 5

Student A: "*You shy shy cat eyes*".⁶

The sentence is an example of lexical interference, which is the influence of the first language (Indonesian) on the selection and

⁵English learning process in class XII A1, Observation, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 20, 2025).

⁶English learning process in class XII A1, Observation, (Tunas Luhur High School, February 20, 2025).

arrangement of words in the second language (English). In this context, the student translated the Indonesian idiom "*malu-malu cat*" literally into "*shy shy cat eyes*".

The idiom "*malu-malu kucing*" is culturally used to describe someone who pretends to be shy or appears shy in the context of flirting. However, when the idiom is translated directly into English without paying attention to the appropriate idiomatic equivalent, the meaning becomes unclear or even confusing for English speakers.

According to the theory of interference proposed by Weinreich, lexical interference occurs when second language learners take lexical elements from the first language (L1) and use them in second language (L2) utterances without proper adjustment of meaning. This often arises in informal situations when speakers are trying to convey typical expressions from the home culture, but do not have a deep understanding of the equivalents of these expressions in the target language (Weinreich, 1953, p. 49).

This phenomenon shows that students still rely on idioms and native language vocabulary when communicating in English, especially in spontaneous or joking contexts. This reliance results in translation errors, which have the potential to hinder inter-speaker understanding.

To overcome this form of interference, English language learning needs to pay attention to idioms and cultural expressions commonly used by native speakers. Teachers can introduce idiomatic equivalents in English through contextual activities such as dialogs, videos, or roleplays, so that students are able to convey their intentions precisely without having to rely on idiom patterns from their mother tongue.

Data 6

The speech context of Data 6 comes from the observation during English learning activities in the classroom.



Figure 2
Reading Practice Session in English Learning Activities⁷

During the reading practice session, some students were asked to pronounce the English words displayed through the slide presentation. Some examples of pronunciation observed were the word

⁷English learning process in class XI A3, Documentation, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 13, 2025).

"reader" pronounced as "reder", "summarizing" without the /z/ sound stress, and "place" pronounced as "plis". The pronunciation shows that students tend to read English words based on spelling, not based on the corresponding phoneme system in the target language.

These pronunciation errors are a form of phonological interference, which is the influence of the Indonesian sound system on sound production in English. Indonesian has a relatively simpler phonological system and does not recognize many final consonants or specific sound stresses, as is prevalent in English. For example, in the word "reader", the omission of the /d/ sound and the pronunciation into "reder" shows that students have not yet distinguished the important sound contrasts in English. Similarly, in the word "summarizing", the stress on the missing /z/ sound, as well as the simplification of the word "place" to "plis", reflect that students rely on the written form only, not the original phonemes.

According to Weinreich's theory of interference, phonological interference occurs when pronunciation in the second language is influenced by the phonological system of the first language. This phenomenon is common among beginner learners, especially when they have not gained enough exposure to the distinctive sounds in the target language. When students are used to reading and pronouncing words based on the sound system in the mother tongue, the phonological structure of the L1 tends to carry over into second language pronunciation (Weinreich, 1953, p. 28).

This phenomenon shows that the English learning process has not provided enough authentic auditive exposure, so students are not accustomed to distinguishing or producing typical sounds in English. To minimize phonological interference like this, learning strategies that focus on phonetic training and listening comprehension are essential. Teachers can use audio-visual media, drilling, shadowing, and listening activities to native speakers' conversations to make students more familiar with correct pronunciation patterns.

Data 7

Errors on student PPT slides: "Examples" → should be "Example"



Figure 3

Writing error on student's PPT⁸

The writing error on the student's PowerPoint slide is found in the use of the word "examples", even though the context only presents one example. The word used should be "example" in the singular form. Although this error appears in written rather than spoken form, it still reflects morphological interference, which is the misapplication of the grammatical rules of the plural form in English.

The error shows that students most likely generalize the rule of adding the -s suffix to nouns in English, even though the context does not require the plural form. This can also be influenced by the assumption that the use of plural forms looks more formal or "correct", even though it does not match the actual content. In Indonesian itself, the word "example" does not change form in either singular or plural, so students are not used to adjusting the word form to the number. As a result, the Indonesian morphological system affects the form they use in English.

According to the interference theory proposed by Weinreich, interference occurs when structural elements from one language are used in another language as a result of continuous contact between the two languages. In this context, the error in writing "examples" reflects the influence of the Indonesian morphological system on the students' English structures. Since there is no change in the form of nouns to indicate number in Indonesian, students tend to apply the pattern to English, even though it is grammatically inappropriate (Weinreich, 1953, p. 22).

This phenomenon shows that morphological aspects, especially in written form, are still a challenge for students in a bilingual environment. To overcome this, teachers need to put more emphasis in evaluating the written form, not only on the content and fluency of the presentation, but also on aspects of grammatical accuracy. Activities such as self-revision, peer-review, or utilization of correct academic templates can help students form better morphological awareness.

Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that the interference that occurs in the use of English by Tunas Luhur Paiton High School students includes four main forms as proposed by Weinreich, namely phonological, lexical, syntactic, and morphological interference. These four forms appear in students' oral and written communication, especially during the learning process and informal interactions at school. Of the four forms, lexical interference is the most dominant form found in data 1 to 7. In addition, the most frequent form of interference is oral interference when students speak spontaneously using English.

However, this finding contradicts the results of the interview with the English teacher who mentioned that syntactic and phonological interference are the most frequent forms. The teacher said, "*Students quite often experience Indonesian interference in the use of English, especially in oral communication.*"⁹ She also added, "*The interference that often appears is*

⁸English learning process in class XI A3, Documentation, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 13, 2025).

⁹Uswatun Hasanah, interview, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 12, 2025).

syntactic interference and phonological interference."¹⁰ This discrepancy suggests that teachers' perceptions may focus more on sentence structure deviations, while the empirical data shows the dominance of errors in the vocabulary aspect. Therefore, this discrepancy indicates the need for further training and a thorough evaluation of the forms of interference that actually occur in students' oral communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of observation and analysis, Indonesian interference to English usage by Tunas Luhur Paiton High School students occurs in four main forms: phonological, lexical, syntactic, and morphological. Indonesian to English interference appears in four main forms: Phonological interference (2 data), Morphological interference (1 data), Syntactic interference (2 data), and Lexical interference (3 data). Of all the data, lexical interference is the most dominant form. This shows that students tend to mix Indonesian vocabulary into English sentences when facing limitations in the target language vocabulary.

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¹⁰Uswatun Hasanah, interview, (SMA Tunas Luhur, February 12, 2025).