FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN THE CORRESPONDENCE OF HOTELS AND VILLAS STAFF

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Abstract: The aims of this study are to identify whether L1 structure and semantic interfere the L2 structure and semantic, and to revise errors in correspondence made by the reservation staff of villas in Badung, Bali. Reservation staffs were choosen as the subject of this study since they are responsible for intense correspondence in English with the clients. A number correspondence of ten reservation staffs from different villas are analyzed for this study. The result shows that the elements of L1 (Indonesian) interfere the use of L2 (English) in the correspondence by the villa staffs that results in some errors in their use of English. The main cause of this interference or errors is the word per word translation from L1 to L2. The implication of this study to the teaching of correspondence is that more emphasis should be put on the acceptable written expressions in English and the grammar.

Keywords: interference, mother tongue, reservation’s staff, correspondence

INTRODUCTION

Learners of a foreign language often uses their knowledge of the mother tongue in the target language they learn. It is called language transfer (also known as L1 interference, linguistic interference, and cross meaning) and refers to speakers or writers applying knowledge from their native language to a second language. Dulay et al (1982) define interference as the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. Lott (1983: 256) defines interference as ‘errors in the learner’s use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue’. In learning a target language, learners construct their own interim rules (Selinker, 1971, Seligar, 1988 and Ellis, 1997) with the use of their L1 knowledge, but only when they believe it will help them in the learning task or when they have become sufficiently proficient in the L2 for transfer to be possible.
When an individual’s understanding of one language has an impact on his or her understanding of another language, that individual is experiencing language transfer. There can be negative transfers, it is known as interference, when the understanding of one language complicates the understanding of another language. Alternatively, there can be positive transfers such as knowing one language which can aid in developing skills for a second language. Language interference is the effect of language learners’ first language on their production of the language they are learning. It means that the speaker’s first language influences his/her second or and his/her foreign language.

The effect can be on any aspect of language: grammar, vocabulary, accent, spelling and so on. Language interference is considered as one of error sources (negative transfer), although where the relevant feature of both languages is the same it results in correct language production (positive transfer). The greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative the effects of interference are likely to be. It will inevitably occur in any situation where someone has not mastered a second language. Therefore, the problem this study addressed is going to observe and describe the language interference in the correspondence of villas staff in Badung.

Some studies and research indicate that there are, of course, many other influences and factors when we learn a foreign language, but the influence that the mother tongue has on the foreign language we produce has become very essential aspect to be aware of.

Corder (1980) stated that another attitude to errors is that they are all the result of the influence of the mother tongue on the learning process “interference” as it was called from the habits of the first language. The communication necessity seems to stress that grammatical interference poses the most significant contribution. The ungrammatical sentences will certainly pose problems to the listeners which in turns they will bring about problems or misunderstanding. Therefore, the successful performance of someone depends very much on the knowledge and fluency of the second language. To make it worse, the aspects of the two languages are certainly not similar or identical. The levels of interference may be cultural, semantic, lexical, grammatical, and phonological.

1. In cultural level, cases of interference may be found in the speech of the bilingual; their causes may be found, not in his other language, but in the culture that it reflects. The foreign element may be result of an effort to express new phenomena or new experience in a language that does not account for them. For instance, an Indonesian speaking English is ‘forced’ to use such words as barong and rangda because of no equivalent words in English language.

2. In semantic level, interference occurs when a speaker introduces new semantic structures. Even though the semantic units may be the same in both languages, a foreign way of combining them may be introduced as a new semantic structure. Both Indonesian and English, for instance, have comparable units for mengandung – consist of; but when an Indonesian language speaker uses a sentence Paragraf itu mengandung beberapa kalimat he introduces into his speech a foreign semantic structure based on the English model The paragraph is pregnant of several sentences instead of The paragraph consists of several sentences.

3. In lexical level, interference may involve the introduction of morphemes
of language A into B. For instance, an Indonesian commentator using the words such as hand ball, kick off, off side, goal, keeper, etc in an Indonesian-language football broadcast; the other speaker may say Banyak handicap dalam perjuangan ini or Dalam pembuktian kita perlu melakukan cross check, etc.

4. In grammatical level, interference may involve the use of grammatical patterns of one language in another. The grammatical patterns or categories may be morphological or syntactical. The possible examples is A student learning English may use say He go to school every day instead of He goes to school every day. This interference occurs as a result of no system of agreement or concord between noun and verb (subject and predicate) in Indonesian; all the subjects are followed by the same predicate (verb) such as Saya pergi; Dia pergi, Mereka pergi, etc.

5. In phonological level, the problem of interference concerns the manner in which a speaker perceives and reproduces the sounds of one language in terms of another. This interference occurs in the speech of bilingual as a result of the fact that there are different elements in sound system between one language and another, or between native and foreign language.

In this relation, Weinreich says that the practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism and the persons involved, bilingual. Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language either language that occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact, will be referred to as interference phenomena (1968). There are many factors that contribute interference (Weinrich, 1970): first, speaker bilingualism background. Bilingualism is the major factor of interference as the speaker is influenced by both of the source and the target language. Second, disloyalty to target language. Disloyalty to target language will cause negative attitude. Third, the limited vocabularies of TL mastered by a learner. Vocabularies of certain languages mostly are about words of surroundings connected to life. Thus, a learner who is willing to master another language will meet new words differ from his native words. In order to be able to speak as natives of TL, vocabularies take a big role. The more vocabularies someone has, the better he masters TL. Foreign language learner will try to put deliberately his native word to state some points when he cannot find the best words of TL. Interference as the effect of new words entries is normally done by another language learner. Fourth, needs of synonym. Synonym in language usage plays an important role as word chosen variation in order not to repeat similar word during the communication process (redundancy). Implementing synonym in a language contact will contribute to interference in the form of adoption and borrowing of new words from SL to TL. Thus, need of synonym for certain word from SL to TL is seemingly aimed to intensify meaning. Fifth, prestige and style. Applying unfamiliar words (foreign words) during a communication practice which dominant words are languages of both speaker and receiver is something else. Those unfamiliar words usage is aimed to get a pride. Interference will appear as there are certain words even though the receiver probably cannot catch the real idea of the speech.

METHOD
The aims of this study are to identify whether L1 structure and semantic interfere the L2 structure and semantic,
and to revise errors in correspondence made by the reservation staff of villas in Badung, Bali. Reservation staffs were chosen as the subject of this study since they are responsible for intense correspondence in English with the clients. A number correspondence of ten reservation staffs from different villas are analyzed for this study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Lexical Level

Misspelling

Misspelling is a common error in writing. Levine (2002) suggests there are five problems in writing; one of them was memory problem. Misspelling was example of memory problem which frequently occurred in the people’s writing. In relation to the errors in the research that has been done, some errors in spelling were committed by some reservation staffs, as below:

a. I am Glade to promote your Hotel / Villa at our sales program.
   (I am glad to promote your Hotel / Villa at our sales program)

b. I have made the itinerary for may 8 – 10. --
   -- (I have made the itinerary for may 8 – 10)

There are basic foundations that should be noticed by the staffs so that the errors can be avoided, such as:

1. Acquire knowledge of spelling patterns and learn helpful guidelines:
   The staffs need to learn and practice the common spelling patterns that are used in English. There are also guidelines that can help us learn correct spelling. While there are exceptions and irregularities most words follow common patterns. There are also a number of helpful guidelines to aid us in accurate spelling. The staffs are better able to achieve spelling success when they learn and practice these common patterns and helpful guidelines.

2. Learn/memorize specific and ‘tricky’ spellings: For accurate spelling the employee does need to learn the correct spelling for common words and begin memorizing the specific spelling pattern used for particular words. Accurate spelling can be tricky and does require remembering which spelling pattern is used within certain words.

Capitalization

There were some errors in capitalization of email written by reservation staffs. According to Levine (2002), error in capitalization was a common error done by the reservation staff. They find some problems in recalling information or memorizing. Therefore, errors in capitalization were grouped into memory problem as stated by Levine (2002). In relation to the capitalization, the first error is about the name of person in sentence. It must be replaced with the capital letter at the beginning of the words…; meanwhile the second error is the use of capital letter inappropriate word, which must be in small letter because it is a word with no significance to use capital letter.

a. …., we are preparing to beverages package for Rachel Yong’s wedding on…….
   (….., we are preparing to beverages package for Rachel Yong’s wedding on……)

b. I am Glade to promote your Hotel / Villa at our sales program
   (I am glad to promote your Hotel / Villa at our sales program)

Vocabulary

The word vocabulary entered the English lexicon in the 1530s and is derived from the Latin word ‘vocabularium,’ meaning ‘a list of words.’ By the time vocabulary means two related things, 1) a list of words, and 2) the range of words. If vocabulary refers to a list of words, it can be classified into adjectives, noun, verb,
and adverb (grammatical classes). However, sometimes the vocabulary is not properly used. Although it refers to the same thing and idea, how the words are conveyed is incorrectly stated and in some cases it is still influenced by the mother tongue.

a. But no worry, we will keep the room and the guest can pay directly when they arrive at our hotel.

(However, no worry, we will keep the room and the guest can pay directly when they arrive at our hotel.)

b. … air port pick up service with price USD 17 net/way/car.

(… air port pick up service which costs USD 17 net/way/car)

The interference found in the example mentioned above can be seen below. In this case, the interference happens since the target language structure is just merely translated into the target language by using mother tongue’s structure. English and Indonesian in some cases have different language structure. Therefore, when translating sentences into the target language (English), the structure of English need considering (not only by literally translation), the example found is:

… air port pick up service with price USD 17 net/way/car

Punctuation

Error in punctuation were not only occurred in salutation, but also in the main message and leave taking. Punctuation is an example of memory problems (Levine, 2002). This is one of common writing problems experienced by the speakers. They find some problems in recalling information or memorizing. When they failed in recalling information or memorizing, as a result they forgot to put correct punctuation. In relation to the errors shown in the picture, there should be a comma after the term of address in salutation.

a. ……., further to our conversation by the telephone before please kindly provide…

(……., further to our conversation by the telephone before, please kindly provide…)

b. ……., a long table, cutlery pool, water goblets, mineral water? And how…

(……., a long table, cutlery pool, water goblets, mineral water. And how…)

c. They dont have it.

(They don’t have it)

d. While you are there, please kindly note that the availability for the sunbed, snorkeling, and kayaking would be depends on the weather.

(While you are there, please ……..)

Grammatical Level

1. Subject-verb agreement

Errors in Subject – Verb agreement referred to unsuitableness connection between subject and the predicate or ‘be’. The agreement between subject and verb used in sentences will influence the meaning of sentences. When speaking English as a foreign language, the speaker should be able to use appropriate verbs which are suitable for the subjects. Both errors found in the reservation’s staffs correspondence as below are reflected the interference of Indonesian into the use of English:

- And how about the waiter or waitress is enough for serve all the foods and beverages….

(And how about the waiter or waitress, are they enough for serving all the foods and beverages…)

- It cost is Rp 13,000.

(It costs Rp 13,000.)

2. Word order

According to Dulay, et al. (1982;154), among five types of errors incorrect word order belonged to misordering. Misordering deals with incorrect placement of words, phrases, or morphemes. There was incorrect word order done by the employee. Incorrect
word order occurred due to the influence of mother tongue when translating into the target language. It was clearly seen from the datum; When we pick up you at the airport. --- (When we pick you up at the airport). The employee directly translated the sentence into English without considering the target language structure.

3. Pluralisation
Error in plural form is categorized into error which is over generalized due to imperfect learning of the target language. The staff over generalized all the rules in target language (English). One of such mistake is pluralisation. To illustrate, the examples below could be a clear image of how the error in pluralisation occurred:

- We have 2 pcs High Chairs for a babies.
  (we have 2 pcs High Chairs for the babies)
- We would advise you to have 2 person to look after all your children.
  (We would advise you to have 2 people to look after all your children)
- We can provide maximum 2 baby car seat for your 2 infants.
  (We can provide maximum 2 baby car seats for your 2 infants)

4. Omission
According to Dulay, et al, errors of omission occur when compulsory elements are omitted. It usually takes place mainly in tense markers.

The finding of omission can be described as follows:

- “12 – 03 go to Garuda Wisnu Kencana (biggest statue in Indonesia)”. This sentence is part of itinerary written by the travel to its guest. They omitted the article “the” that should be mentioned in superlative sentence (the biggest statue in Indonesia). This kind of mistake is obviously affected by Indonesian language due to there is no article used in Indonesian. Therefore the writer thought as an Indonesian that unnecessary to write “the” in this kind of sentence or they probably did not remember to write it. Indonesian interference is occurred here.
  - “08 – 09 go to bedugul (view is hill and Buyan lake)”. It has similar error by omitting the definite article “the”. The correct sentence should be “the view is hill and Buyan lake)”. Same assumption as the above finding that occurs because of first language interference.
  - “We would like inform you the rate of ……”. Omission of preposition “to” is found in this sentence written by hotel staff to the guest. The correction should be “We would like to inform you the rate of …….”. In Indonesian, we usually say “Kami ingin memberitahumu …....” that in word of word English translation will be “We would like inform you …”. This error occurs absolutely because of interference that noticed clearly by understanding its Indonesian meaning.

5. Addition
“The are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.”
(Dulay, et al., 1982;155)

Addition is against omission errors in which unnecessary elements are present with the use of redundant markers. It occurs when the learners have acquired some rules in the target language (in this case English). Therefore, addition usually occurs in the later stages of L2 acquisition. There are three kinds of addition, namely:
6. Regularization

There are some exceptions in most languages. In English, it is found that “swim” does not become “swimmed”, but “swam”. Some of the rules are regular and the rest belongs to irregular rules. Whenever the learners apply the rules for regular to irregular ones, it leads to errors in regularization.

a) Double-marking

As its name is double marking, it can be seen clearly that it refers to the marking of two items for the same feature.

“I did not wrote.....” and “He does not tells.....”

The tense formation in English is placed on the first verb, so the second verb must be in the infinitive. Since, two items (rather than one) are marked for the same features, this types is called as double marking.

b) Simple Addition

Any addition which does not belong to either regularization or double-marking refers to simple addition. Adding the -s marker on verbs after the plural pronouns/nouns in the simple present tense is one of illustration of simple addition. It can be seen from the following examples, “They likes....” and “Students wants...”.

There were some examples of errors in addition taken from the correspondences from the reservation staffs. Below are those examples with its revisions.

a. ...., we are preparing to beverages package for Rachel Yong’s wedding on....

   (...., we are preparing beverages package for Rachel Yong’s wedding on......)

b. Thank you and please let us know if you should have any further question.

   (Thank you and please let us know if you have any further question).

c. While you are there please kindly note that the availability for the sunbed, snorkeling, and kayaking would be depends on the weather.

   (While you are there please kindly note that the availability for the sunbed, snorkeling, and kayaking would depend on the weather.)

d. If there is any revise, please let me know ya / Please advise ya.

   (If there is any revise, please let me know/ Please advise)

e. 09 – 11 heading to Batubulan area for Barong Dance, the show is about for 1 hour.

   (09 – 11 heading to Batubulan area for Barong Dance, the show is about 1 hour)

f. Ohya, there is some places that you can visit to enjoy the sunset.

   (There are some places that you can visit to enjoy the sunset)

g. Many thanks again for your help

   (Many thanks for your help)

h. Please advise, we will crosscheck with our reservation team regarding this issue.

   (Please advise, we will crosscheck our reservation team regarding this issue)

i. With kind regards,

   (Kind regards,)

Amongst the afore-mentioned examples, there are some of them which belong to interference. It is because the errors contained in the examples are those errors which are influenced with the speakers’ mother tongue (in this case Indonesian). The interference in addition covers the structure of English which is still influenced with the use of Indonesian structure. The examples of interference are listed as follows.

a. If there is any revise, please let me know ya / Please advise ya.

b. 09 – 11 heading to Batubulan area for Barong Dance, the show is about for 1 hour.

c. Ohya, there is some places that you can visit to enjoy the sunset.

d. Many thanks again for your help

e. With kind regards,
2. **Error in using preposition**
   We just found one error related to the use of preposition as mentioned below:
   - “Oh ya Javeed, lunch will be served with buffet style”. The error found here is the use of preposition “with”, that should be “in” (lunch will be served in buffet style). In Indonesian, we usually say “makan siang akan disajikan dengan cara buffet”, “dengan” in English is with, therefore this error is obviously interference of Indonesian.

3. **Incorrect verb form**
   Many finding from the data related to this type of error, incorrect verb form, as follows:
   - “….. for continues support could you please give us New contract rate for Apr’2014 – March.’15”. The form of verb “continues” is incorrect, should be “continuing”.
   - “Transfer in and out to airport is confirm.” This sentence should be in passive form, therefore the form of verb “confirm” must be in participle, “confirmed”.
   - “10 – 12 go for city and kuta tour, visited denpasar city and bomb blast monument.” This part of itinerary is written in wrong tense, should be in simple present. The verb “visited” that is past must be changed into present “visit”.
   - “About the cost, do you want me to give you a package tour which is already including entrance fee, meals and transports?” The tense used in this sentence is incorrect. Present continuous should be changed into participle become “which already included”.
   - ”Deposit payment payable 5 days after send this booking confirmation.” According to English grammar, “after” is followed by verb –ing, therefore the correct verb in this case is “sending”.
   - “We thank you very much for your inquiry and are pleased to confirmed that…..” It is mentioned on the basic grammar of English that “to” should be followed by infinitive. The correct verb for this sentence is “confirm”.
   - “I have book the hotel for you at Bintang Kuta Hotel.” In this case, obviously can be seen that the tense is in participle shown by auxiliary “have”. It is wrong because the verb is in infinitive, while it requires participle form (booked).
   - “We have check name Kenneth Harkness in our guest list and our booking calendar” The problem occurs in this sentence is similar with the above one. The verb “check” in this participle form ought to be changed into “checked”.
   - “… couldn’t found that name.” Error appears in this sentence due to the modal should be followed by infinitive. So the correct form is “couldn’t find”.
   - “We look forward to welcome you at …..” Usually we found this kind of sentence for closing the letter. This form is an exception of the general rule that “to” should be followed by infinitive. Specialty in closing a letter “to” is followed by verb -ing, the expression used should be “We look forward to welcoming you at …..” Interference appears in the case of incorrect verb form as above, due to Indonesian verb is never changed so the use of changing verb in English is confusing. The interference of first language has influenced those errors made by the writers.

4. **Part of Speech**
   Some people sometimes used words which were incorrectly attached; it could happen because parts of speech of words could not be well - distinguished.
   a. Paseo 60 sheets. It’s kindly of wet tissue.
   (Paseo 60 sheets. It kinds of wet tissue)
   b. … that your change you arrival into 29/04 - 30/04 instead of 30/04 - 1/05.
CONCLUSION
Based on the study, it is found that L1 structure and semantics influence the L2 structure and semantics. In some cases, reservation staffs merely translate the Indonesia language into the target language without considering the structure and semantics in L2. The formal elements of L1 are used within the context of L2, resulting in errors in L2 as the structure of the language L1 and L2 are different.

There were 2 levels of interference (lexical and grammatical), and 12 categories found in lexicogrammatical errors, namely 1) Misspelling, 2) Subject-Verb Agreement, 3) Word Order, 4) Pluralisation, 5) Punctuation, 6) Omission, 7) Addition, 8) Error in Preposition, 9) Incorrect Verb Form, 10) Capitalization, 11) Parts of Speech, 12) Vocabulary.

It is therefore suggested for other researchers to conduct research in related field within the context of hospitality and correspondence. It is advised that other features in error analysis in the same work place are needed to be investigated.

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First Language Interference in The Correspondence of Hotels and Villas Staff


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