

## **NEGATIVE TRANSFER AS LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING**

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### **Abstract**

This research was motivated by a phenomenon of grammatical interference that occurred at the Islamic Boarding School using English students in daily conversation. The purpose of this research was to find out the form and factors of grammatical interference produced by students of Al-Madienah. This research used descriptive qualitative methods. Fifty-five resource persons were taken consisting of the students of 11<sup>th</sup> grade of Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School. Data collection in this research was carried out in three ways: interviews, observation, and documentation. For the instruments used in data collection, there are three instruments, there are interview guides, observation checklists, and a list of documentation. Data analysis was carried out according to the theory of Miles and Huberman (1992): data reduction, data display, and verification. The results of the data analysis are: 1) Pronouns and syntactic interference are the two types of grammatical interference in Al-Madienah. 2) Bilingualism and the decline in speakers' primary language are the two reasons that create grammatical interference. Grammatical interference always appears in communities that speak another language because bilingualism will happen when people speak in two languages or more and bilingualism is the big factor causing interference.

**Keywords:** *Bilingualism, Grammatical Interference, Interference*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is something that is used to communicate with people around the world. Every country has its language. Usually, language becomes characteristic of each country. For connecting people in communication, English becomes an international language that is used by the people for communicating. English as International language must be learned by Indonesian students as a foreign language. The importance of English which becomes the international language is realized well by the government especially the Indonesia Minister of Education and

Culture (Kemendikbud). Through Permendiknas Number 22 and 23 Tahun 2006, the purpose of English teaching and learning process in school was published. It contains some main purposes of teaching English at school such as preparing the students to face the development of science and technology in the modern era by having English communication skills both orally and written.

In learning English, bilingualism happens between the Indonesian language and English because, as Indonesians, English is a foreign language for them. Bilingualism is a condition when a speaker uses two languages in turns. This theory was developed by Jim Cummins in the early 1980's. It stated that the two languages used by an individual, though on the surface separate, function through the same central cognitive system. Indonesians are bilingual because they have a local language that most of them usually speak their local language daily, and they speak the Indonesian language when they are in school. Through Permendiknas no.22 and 23 tahun 2006, English becomes a subject that must be learned in school so that makes the students more confused. Their habit of using their first language will influence when they use other languages. This phenomenon is called language transfer, also known as interference. According to Weinreich in Achmad and Abdullah (2012:181), there are six factors causing interference (a) bilingualism of the speaker, (b) decrease of the first language speaker, (c) the lack of vocabulary in the first language, (d) extinction of vocabulary which rare to use, (e) the needed of synonym, and (f) prestige of donor language and literary style.

Language transfer, the phenomenon where learners use knowledge from their first language (L1) when using the second language (L2), is frequently brought on by the process of learning English as a non-native tongue. Language transfer happens when learners depend on native language structures or rules, according to Ellis, as stated in Shiddiq (2022). Similarly, Meriläinen (2010) characterizes language transfer as the influence of L1 on L2 acquisition, but Ringbom, as mentioned in Bai (2018), defines it as the influence of L1 in the learning of L2. Odlin provides one of the most frequently used definitions, stating that language transfer is the impact of one's mother tongue on learning and utilizing a second language (Aziz, 2019). This impact may be either positive, when L1 structures align

with L2 rules, or negative, when L1 structures conflict with L2, leading to errors (Karimiabdolmaleki, 2022).

The role of L1 was not given much consideration in early second language acquisition (SLA) studies, but in the second half of the 20th century, its importance was increasingly acknowledged. In recent years, numerous studies have highlighted the role of language transfer in SLA, demonstrating its effects on various aspects of language, including vocabulary, grammar, and usage (Fauzati, 2017). Errors made by learners, commonly referred to as "interlanguage" (Selinker, as cited in Fauzati, 2017), represent transitional stages in L2 development, bridging the gap between L1 and full proficiency in the target language.

Odlin highlights that language transfer is a more intricate process in which L1 information can aid in learning rather than just being the result of L1 habits interfering (Aziz, 2019). While negative transfer leads to mistakes when there are notable disparities between the two languages, positive transfer happens when the similarities between L1 and L2 encourage proper usage (Karimiabdolmaleki, 2022). The negative transfer usually results in speaking and writing issues for pupils at Al Madienah Islamic Boarding School, where English is used in everyday activities. Students make mistakes when they try to translate Indonesian language structures to English, especially when it comes to morphology and syntax, where the two languages' grammatical systems diverge greatly. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (as mentioned in Iman, 2020) acknowledge that mistakes are inevitable when learning a language and emphasize the significance of realizing that mistakes are a necessary component of the learning process. These mistakes offer chances for focused instructional interventions as well as insights into the developmental phases of the students. Specifically, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic faults are crucial for recognizing and resolving unique L2 acquisition challenges (Iman, 2020).

Given the foregoing, this study aims to examine the negative language transfer in Al Madienah Islamic Boarding School students' writing, emphasizing morphological and syntactic faults. This study looks at students' writing to pinpoint typical faults and their causes, ultimately offering solutions to reduce negative

transfer and enhance writing skills. The research questions addressed in this study will be: (1) what grammatical errors do Al Madienah students frequently make in their writing, and (2) what the factors that caused negative transfer by the students of Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School are.

## **Methods**

This research employed the qualitative research method with a case study approach. Qualitative research was chosen because this research aims to provide an insight into the case of First Language Grammatical Interference of Students' Writing, (a case study at Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School), specifically grammatical interference. The setting of the research was in Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School. It located in Jalan Bisri Syansuri no 17 Denanyar, Jombang, East Java. The Islamic Boarding School is divided into 3 locations; those are: the first location is for the female students of junior high school, the second location is for the female students of senior high school, and the third location is for all of the boys, both the students of junior and senior high school. The course was established in 1997. In Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School, there are many programs like *nahwu*, *shorof*, *tadhib*, *Al-Qur'an*, and English courses. The research was conducted at Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School in April 2023. It consisted of interviews with the students of 11th grade.

To collect the data, the researcher used instruments such as observation, interview, and documentation. Observation is used for collecting data about student's problems in writing. The interview consisting of seven questions was used to collect some information about the research. Documentation was used for collecting data which is related to student's writing. To get research data, the researcher needs a data source. Arikunto defined data source as a subject where the data is found in research (1998:114). The data source is divided into two types they are primary data and secondary data. The primary data are taken from the relevant research subject, while the secondary data are taken from documents and relevant references. The primary data of this research are taken from 45 students in the 11th grade of senior high school as research subjects. The writer got the data for this

research by taking the documents of students' descriptive writings. Here, the students are chosen based on two criteria: 1) they must be students of 11th grade; and 2) they are minimally staying for 2 years, both male and female.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes the data. According to Taylor, (1975: 79) data analysis is a process that details formal efforts to find themes and formulate hypotheses (ideas) as suggested and as an effort to provide help and themes on hypotheses. Sugiyono (2014) explains there are three steps of data analysis in descriptive qualitative, those are data reduction, data display, and conclusion. Reduction is the process of selecting, identifying, classifying, and coding the data. Data display is the process of making the data simple. Concluding is the making of the results from the data that has been analyzed.

## **Findings and Discussions**

Findings and discussions consist of the research questions. Those are: (1) what grammatical interference Al Madienah students frequently make in their writing, and (2) what factors caused negative transfer by students of Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School.

### **1) The Grammatical Interference on Students Writing at Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School**

The finding was obtained by analyzing their writing. The researcher presents the data based on pronoun interference, syntactic interference, and plural form.

#### **a. Pronouns Interference**

English grammatical has many components inside, the pronoun becomes an important component which is always used for changing the noun when we write about something so the noun is not repeated many times because its position has been changed by pronoun. The pronoun is an important partial in grammatical English which must be mastered for all of the English learners. From the result of the data, the researcher draws the results of pronoun interference in the following table :

**Table 1: The Result of Pronoun Interference**

No	Pronoun's Interference	The Correct Sentence
1	I see <i>she</i> in dry place	I see her in dry place
2	please say to Amara, I put <i>she</i> book on the table	Please say to Amara, I put her book on the table
3	Chandra is visited by <i>he</i> father	Chandra is visited by his father
4	it is raining, take <i>you</i> clothes hurry up	It is raining, take your clothes hurry up

Table 1 shows that the students of Al-Madienah use the wrong pronoun function of pronouns, the students only write as the word which they translate directly without thinking about the pronoun function, that's why pronoun interference happens there. The result is also supported by Haugen (1972:90), who said that grammatical error happens from mixing simple words in English and taking the word from one language to another language. Huda (1981:17) also said that less attention to each word causes grammatical interference because one language to another language does not have the same meaning or has a different word depending on its position. It can be concluded that pronouns can become the first language grammatical interference because English has simple partial which must be mastered to master English. Pronouns are simple partials in English grammar, which is very important to know because although they look the same the word can have different meanings and functions depending on its position.

#### **b. Syntactic Interference**

Syntactic interference is where the students do not use good structure in every sentence produced in their writing. From the result of the data, the researcher draws the results of syntactic interference in the following table:

**Table 2: The Result of Syntactic Interference**

No	Types of Syntactical Interference	Example of Conversation	The True Sentence
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1	Word order (repetition word)	1. Don't smile smile	1. Don't smile
		2. Take the rice little little	2. Take the rice little by little
		3. let's go go	3. let's go
2	Word unit (lexical)	1. you buy what?	1. what did you buy?
		2. you are from where?	2. where are you from? Or Where have you been?
		3. you eat what?	3. What do you eat ?

Table 2 shows that in writing English, the students of Al-Madienah is just writing and without thinking about the good structure of it. Making sentences in English is not easy as in Bahasa Indonesia, the speakers must think about the grammatical, that's why syntactical interference must appear in learning English whatever the language is. Syntactical interference becomes the interference that always appears in students' writing at Al-Madienah. The results are also supported by Chaer (1994:206) who stated that syntax talks about the word about the other words; or the other functions as an utterance. He added that syntax discusses the arrangement of words into larger units, which are called syntax units (Chaer, 2009:3). Syntactical interference happens if one sentence's structure is absorbed by another sentence's structure (Suwito, 1983:56). It can be seen from the using of word, phrase, and clause in a sentence (Chaer and Agustina, 2004:162). It can be concluded that syntactical interference cannot be separated from grammatical interference because syntactical interference occurs in writing English the speakers will make the words relate to each other, and the syntactical talks about it, that's why the syntactical becomes the form of the first language grammatical interference of students' writing which happens in Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School.

### **c. Plural Form**

The plural form must be found in the community that learns or uses English in their conversation because English has a different pattern between singular and

plural. From the result of the data, the researcher draws the results of plural interference in the following table:

**Table 3: The Result of Plural Interference**

No	Plural Form Interference	The True Sentence
1	Forget not bring your plate, i bring 2 <i>plate</i> only	I bring 2 <b>plates</b> only
2	Yesterday, i borrow 2 <i>book</i> , i forget to return the book	I borrow 2 <b>books</b>

Table 3 shows that the rules or pattern of making words is not being taught by the students of Al-Madienah, the students only use the word as they speak in Indonesia, that is why plural form interference becomes another grammatical interference that is found in Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School. The finding is also supported by the theory from Weinreich (1981) and Haugen who said that the plural form is included in grammatical interference. it can be concluded that the plural form becomes one of the grammatical interferences that can appear in the community where use to speak with their second language because the first language them will still strongly influence their writing. The situation will also be found in Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School because the students of Al-Madienah use English as their second language, and speaking English in their daily conversation is a must.

## **2) The factors caused grammatical interference in students' writing at Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School**

The factor that caused the first language grammatical interference of students' writing which happens in Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School is there are two factors. Those factors are explained as follows:

### **a. Bilingualism**

When people speak two languages or more, bilingualism happens. That's why bilingualism becomes the first factor that causes first-language grammatical



interference in students' writing produced by Santri Al-Madienah. For getting information about bilingualism, the first informant who talks about it is the leader of the Language Commission of girls. The question is about why first-language grammatical interference happens in Al-Madienah, and here is the answer:

“The factor caused grammatical interference here is of course bilingualism because our first language is not English, we used to use Indonesian as our first language so when we speak English we cannot lose our Indonesia as our first language (10/04/2023)”

Based on the data above, bilingualism becomes the first factor that is very important to cause the first grammatical interference where there the students must speak English in their daily conversation. In line with the opinion of the second informant, namely the students who have stayed in Al-Madienah for at least 2 years, namely student one, student two, and teacher three, regarding factors causing grammatical interference, questions asked about what is the factor caused the grammatical interference of students' writing. Here are the answers:

“I think bilingualism becomes the first factor, because we cannot deny if bilingualism will happen if we speak two language, and here we will speak English but when we are in home we will speak Indonesian as our first Language so it will be combined with English. (12/4/2023)”

“If we talk about the situation here when the students are using English for having communication each other, bilingualism will happen. (12/4/2023)

“First language or mother language cannot be loosen from the Indonesian, whatever the new language is, bilingualism will always happen. (12/4/2023)”

From the data above, the leader of the language commission of Al-Madienah said that bilingualism happens because the students speak English where their first language is Indonesia, as we know, bilingualism happens when people speak in two languages or more. It is also stronger, but students one, two, and three that said the

main factor caused grammatical interference in students' writing at Al-Madienah is bilingualism because the students speak English only when they are in Al-Madienah, when they are in their homes, they will speak Indonesia as their first language. It can be concluded that bilingualism is the first factor causing first-language grammatical interference at Al-Madienah Islamic Boarding School. The result is also supported by Bloomfield (in Chaer and Agustina, 2004:85-86), who states that bilingualism is a speaker's ability to use two languages at a good level. It means that someone can be called as bilingual if his ability to use his first language and second language is at the same level. It is difficult to apply this because it is difficult to determine a base where a bilingual speaker uses one language as well as another language.

Macnamara in Rahardi (2001:14) argues that bilingualism is a mastery of at least the first language and second language, even though the mastery of the second language is at the lowest level. Haugen (1961) also mentions that bilingualism is knowledge of two languages. He says that a bilingual speaker may not be actively using two languages; it is enough for him to understand a second language (Chaer and Agustina, 2004: 86). The result of the interview, it is supported by some experts that bilingualism will happen when people learn or speak in two languages or more that's why bilingualism becomes one of the factors causes the first grammatical interference that happens at Al-Madienah. From that result, it can be concluded that bilingualism must appear in the situation where the community learns or uses two languages or more for communication.

#### **b. Decrease the first language of speakers**

While doing the interview, the researcher also found the second factor caused grammatical interference, which is called the decrease of the first language speakers. The question is "Is there another factor that causes grammatical interference in students' writing at Al-Madienah?" the answer is:

“Hmm, If in my opinion, we are forced to speak English everyday although we don’t know English or we just know English just little, so that we will decrease our Indonesia to speak English. (10/4/2023)”

From the statement above, the interviewer said that the students of Al-Madienah are forced to speak English, which means they must decrease their first language. With the same question about another factor that caused the grammatical interference, also found the answer from the students as follows :

“To speak English is not easy because we have to lose our first language. (12/3/2021)”

“I think decrease of the first language is another factor causing the grammatical interference, because we only decrease our first language in here, we are in home we will speak Indonesia again. (12/3/2021)”

“For me losing our habit to speak English because we used to speak Indonesia is so difficult, sometime we always use our first language when we speak English, so that when we speak English we have to lose our Indonesia, from losing the Indonesia, it makes the interference appears. (12/3/2021) “

From the result of the interview above, the interviewee said that losing their first language makes they confused about speaking English because they used to use Indonesia in their daily conversation, so when they are forced to speak English every day for their daily conversation in Al-Madienah interference will automatically happen, from that statement, it can be concluded that another factor causing the first language grammatical interference of students’ writing at Al-Madienah is decreased the first language speakers.

According to Weinrich, there are six factors causing interference, one of them is a decrease in the first language of speakers. That statement describes the situation of students in Al-Madienah because they will speak English when they are staying in Al-Madienah, but when they are at home, they will speak Indonesia as their first

language. From the result above, it can be concluded that this phenomenon will happen in a situation where writing a new language is forced. When someone or a community speaks a different language, of course, they will decrease their first language is a must. So, a decrease in the first language of the speakers will naturally be the factor causing the first grammatical interference in students' writing at Al-Madienah.

### **Conclusion**

After analyzing the data, the conclusions are as follows: (1) the form of the first language grammatical interference of students' writing is divided into two, those are pronouns interference, syntactical interference, and plural form. Those forms include grammatical interference because the pronoun, syntactical, and plural forms are one of the element subjects in grammatical, so when the students learn about English, pronoun, syntactical, and plural forms cannot be separated; (2) There are two factors caused the first language grammatical interference of students' writing. Those are bilingualism and a decrease in the first language of speakers. Bilingualism becomes the factor that causes the first grammatical interference because the first language of students Al-Madienah is not English, which makes them speak in two languages. Decreasing the first language of the speaker becomes the factor that causes the first language grammatical interference because the students of Al-Madienah are forced to speak English, which is why they will decrease their first language.

From the conclusion of this research, the researcher can give some suggestions. *For students*, students should learn more about English because English is not only about writing but also about grammar. The students must do more practicing to have skill at writing in good grammatical. *For the teachers*, teachers should give more practice than theory because the students need more practice to have good grammar in writing English. *For the further researchers*, hopefully, the further researcher should look for deep information about grammatical interference especially about lexical interference because in this research the research did not do research about lexical interference.

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