

Morphological and Syntactic Errors of Negative Language Transfer from Indonesian in Learning English

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Abstract

The research explores the impact of negative language transfer on English acquisition among Indonesian learners, based on data from narrative essays written by English Literature students at Universitas Pamulang. The study identifies and categorizes 20 error samples made during the learners' English development from childhood through secondary education. These errors, traced to the influence of Bahasa Indonesia, are classified into four main types: lexical errors (e.g., incorrect collocations such as make photo instead of take a photo), morphological errors (e.g., subject-verb agreement issues such as They goes), syntactic errors (e.g., word order and missing auxiliaries as in She beautiful is), and pragmatic errors (e.g., culturally inappropriate or overly formal expressions like We are forbidden). Using theoretical support from Odlin's Transfer Theory, Selinker's Interlanguage Theory, Krashen's Input and Monitor Hypotheses, Lado's Contrastive Analysis, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, the research reveals how structural, lexical, and cultural features of L1 are transferred into English. Internal factors such as overgeneralization, developmental gaps, and interlanguage patterns, along with external factors like translation-based instruction and limited exposure to authentic English, contribute to these persistent errors. The study emphasizes the need for targeted pedagogical strategies, including explicit contrastive instruction, increased comprehensible input, and pragmatic competence development, to mitigate the influence of negative transfer and improve learner accuracy and fluency in English.

Introduction

Language transfer is a fundamental concept in second language acquisition (SLA), referring to the influence of a learner's first language (L1) on the acquisition of a second language (L2). This influence can be positive, when similarities between the two languages facilitate learning, or negative, when differences lead to systematic errors. This research concentrates on negative language transfer, particularly in the context of Indonesian learners acquiring English.

Negative transfer typically occurs when learners attempt to apply L1 rules to L2 usage without recognizing the structural and functional mismatches between the two languages. A notable case is the sentence "Saya sangat suka ini", which learners often translate as "I very like this". This construction reveals a syntactic and collocational mismatch: in Indonesian, "sangat" (very) can directly modify the verb "suka" (like), whereas in English, "very" typically modifies adjectives or adverbs, and the appropriate collocation is "really like". This type of direct translation showcases the core of negative transfer—when learners project familiar

patterns from their native language onto a new language, often resulting in unnatural or incorrect constructions.

In the realm of phonology, Indonesian learners of English often experience difficulties due to the absence of certain sounds in the Indonesian phonemic system. One common example is the mispronunciation of the English voiceless dental fricative /θ/ (as in “think”), which does not exist in Indonesian. Learners typically substitute this sound with /t/ or /s/, resulting in “tink” or “sink”. Similarly, voiced /ð/ (as in “this”) may become /d/ or /z/, producing “dis” or “zis”. Another phonological issue is the deletion or simplification of consonant clusters at the end of English words. For instance, “helped” might be pronounced as “help”, and “asked” as “ask”, due to the Indonesian language’s preference for open syllables (consonant-vowel). According to Odlin (1989), “pronunciation errors often reflect the phonological patterns of the native language,” making phonological transfer one of the most persistent barriers in L2 oral proficiency.

Morphological errors are also widespread and stem from the contrasting structures between English and Indonesian. Indonesian is largely an isolating language, with minimal use of inflectional morphology, while English relies heavily on morphological markers such as verb conjugation and pluralization. This leads to errors like “He go to school” instead of “He goes to school”, or “three book” instead of “three books”. Learners frequently omit third person singular -s, past tense -ed, and plural -s, as these grammatical markers are not required in Indonesian. Abdul Chaer (2003) explains that in Bahasa Indonesia, tense and number are typically inferred from context or auxiliary words, not by changing the verb or noun form. This discrepancy makes it difficult for Indonesian learners to internalize English morphological rules without explicit instruction and repeated exposure.

In terms of syntax, Indonesian and English differ significantly in word order, sentence structure, and the use of auxiliaries. A typical syntactic error is the placement of adjectives after nouns, such as “car white” for “white car”, reflecting the Indonesian structure (“mobil putih”). Another frequent error is the absence of auxiliary verbs in questions and negatives. Learners may say “You like it?” instead of “Do you like it?”, or “I no want” instead of “I don’t want”, because Indonesian forms questions and negatives without auxiliaries. According to Lado’s (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, “the elements that are similar to the native language will be simple for the student, and those elements that are different will be difficult.” These syntactic mismatches exemplify how negative transfer arises from learners’ unconscious reliance on L1 sentence construction rules when producing L2 output.

Beyond linguistic structure, internal learner factors also play a crucial role in the frequency and severity of negative transfer. Motivation, for example, influences how much effort learners invest in acquiring accurate forms. Learners with integrative motivation (a desire to integrate into the L2 culture) are often more conscious of correctness than those with purely instrumental goals, e.g., passing an exam or getting a job. Age is another factor; younger learners may be more receptive to new linguistic patterns and less reliant on L1 structures, whereas older learners often depend more on their existing linguistic framework. Learning style and personal interest also affect how learners engage with English. Krashen (1982) emphasizes the role of affective factors, stating that “a low affective filter” i.e., low anxiety and high motivation allows better acquisition. Learners with higher confidence and interest in English are more likely to notice and correct transfer-related errors.

External factors, such as the learning environment, formal education, peer interaction, and family or workplace support, also shape the acquisition process. Learners in immersive environments—such as international schools or workplaces with English communication—receive more exposure to correct structures and are more likely to correct L1-based errors. In contrast, those with limited exposure often reinforce incorrect usage among peers. Teacher feedback and curriculum design also influence outcomes: when instruction focuses on

communicative fluency without emphasizing form, learners may not internalize the structural differences between L1 and L2. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of social interaction in language development, arguing that language learning is mediated by tools (such as teachers, textbooks, and peer discussion) within the learner's social environment. Thus, a supportive and structured external environment can mitigate the effects of negative transfer by scaffolding learners toward greater linguistic awareness.

In other words, negative language transfer is a multifaceted challenge for Indonesian learners of English, rooted in phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences between the two languages. It is further shaped by internal factors such as motivation, age, and learning style, as well as external factors including educational context and social support. As Krashen (1982) notes, comprehensible input alone is not enough; learners must also receive corrective feedback and be encouraged to notice gaps between their interlanguage and the target language. By integrating insights from SLA theorists such as Krashen, Vygotsky, Lado, Odlin, and Abdul Chaer, educators can develop more targeted strategies to address language transfer and support Indonesian learners in achieving greater accuracy and fluency in English.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative descriptive method to examine morphological and syntactic errors caused by negative language transfer from Bahasa Indonesia to English. Data were collected from 60 final test papers written by students from three Psycholinguistics classes in the English Letters Department at Universitas Pamulang. Each student wrote a narrative about their English learning experiences from childhood to senior high school, including reflections on internal (e.g., motivation, learning style) and external (e.g., education, environment) factors and examples of errors they commonly made. Recurrent errors across students were consolidated into a single data point, resulting in 20 representative examples with unique error types. These narratives were analyzed using an error analysis framework supported by second language acquisition theories from Krashen, Selinker, Lado, Odlin, Vygotsky, and Richards. Key data—Indonesian phrases, incorrect and correct English versions, and error types—were compiled in a spreadsheet and categorized by morphological and syntactic features. The analysis identified patterns of negative transfer, linked them to L1–L2 structural differences, and interpreted them through interlanguage development, contrastive analysis, and sociocultural factors, providing insight into how internal and external variables affect English language acquisition among Indonesian learners.

Finding and Discussion

The following data on errors found in practicing English comes from the confessions of English literature students at Universitas Pamulang who told of their English learning experiences in the past during elementary and high school. They wrote narrative essays for their final exam assignments, detailing their experiences learning English as a second language from childhood to the present, and included samples of the errors they made.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
1a	Jepret foto	Make photo	Take a photo / Snap a photo	Lexical Collocation

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
1b	Matikan televisi	Close the tv	Turn off the tv	Lexical Collocation /

This is the case of the lexical collocation error "make photo" instead of the correct "take a photo" or "snap a photo" arises from incorrect verb-noun collocation influenced by the learner's first language, Indonesian. In English, the verb "take" is conventionally used with "photo" to indicate capturing an image, while "make" generally refers to creating or producing something in a broader sense (e.g., make a cake). This misuse reflects a misunderstanding of English collocational norms, possibly due to literal translation from the Indonesian phrase "jepret foto", where the verb "jepret" aligns more closely with "snap" or "take" in English. According to Odlin (1989) and Selinker (1972), such an error is an example of negative language transfer, where structures from a learner's L1 are incorrectly applied to L2 production. Additionally, the lack of awareness regarding lexical collocations (Lewis, 1993) further contributes to the learner's inappropriate verb choice.

Both internal and external factors play a role in this error. Internally, the learner may overgeneralize commonly taught English verbs like "make", especially if unaware that verb usage is often context-dependent and collocational. L1 habits, vocabulary limitations, and developmental interlanguage also shape the learner's production. Externally, factors such as translation-based teaching methods, limited exposure to authentic English usage, and insufficient emphasis on collocation in language instruction exacerbate these mistakes. Overall, this error illustrates the need for explicit instruction in English collocations and more meaningful exposure to natural language use to help learners develop idiomatic accuracy.

Another case of collocation error is the word "close" was chosen to represent "turn off". In fact, "turn off" is used in English, not "close". The learner selects a semantically similar verb ("close") instead of the idiomatic phrasal verb "turn off." In Oxford dictionary, "close" is "to shut something that is open" and "turn off" is to deactivate or stop (a machine or device)". This shows lexical transfer, where the L1 command structure matches "matikan" (literally "shut off"). Odlin and Krashen both highlight idiomatic usage acquisition through comprehensible input. Odlin classifies this as inappropriate lexical equivalence. This error demonstrates the learner's reliance on L1-L2 equivalence, which can lead to inaccurate collocations in English. It reflects negative language transfer, as described by Odlin (1989), where learners carry over structures and word choices from their first language into the second. Krashen's Input Hypothesis emphasizes that accurate language structures, including idiomatic expressions and collocations, are best acquired through comprehensible input—language that is slightly above the learner's current level but understandable in context. When learners are not sufficiently exposed to natural English input (e.g., native speakers, media), they tend to depend on literal translation strategies, which often result in errors like "close the TV." Furthermore, Richards identifies this as a lexical collocation error and points to insufficient awareness of idiomatic phrasal verbs.

Internal factors influencing this include overgeneralization of the verb "close" and limited collocational awareness. External factors may involve translation-heavy teaching practices and insufficient authentic language exposure. To prevent this error, learners need more input that models' common expressions in realistic contexts and explicit instruction on verb-collocation pairings commonly used with technology and devices.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
2	Usiaku 20 tahun	I have 20 years	I am 20 years old	Lexical / Cultural

The error "I have 20 years" instead of the correct English phrase "I am 20 years old" stems from cultural-linguistic transfer, where learners directly translate from their native language without adjusting for grammatical and idiomatic differences. In Indonesian, "Usiaku 20 tahun" literally means "My age is 20 years", and languages like French (*J'ai 20 ans*) or Spanish (*Tengo 20 años*) also use a structure equivalent to "I have 20 years" to express age. However, in English, age is expressed using the verb "to be"—"I am"—rather than "to have". According to the Oxford Dictionary, "have" denotes possession or ownership, while "am" (the first-person form of "be") describes a state or condition, such as age. The misuse of "have" in this context reflects lexical transfer rooted in both linguistic structure and cultural conventions regarding how age is conceptualized and communicated.

Regarding the case of lexical choice error, Odlin (1989) highlights that cross-linguistic influence can impact not only syntax but also culturally embedded meanings, such as the expression of age. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports this by explaining that language learning is deeply influenced by the cultural and communicative norms of the learner's native environment. Internally, the learner may assume that English conceptualizes age the same way as Indonesian or other familiar languages, leading to errors in verb selection. Externally, if teaching materials or instructors do not emphasize that English treats age as a state of being, not a possession, learners are likely to default to familiar linguistic frameworks. To address such errors, language instruction should integrate contrastive analysis and culturally grounded teaching to help learners recognize and adjust for these subtle but crucial differences in expression.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
3	Kami dilarang	We are forbidden	We are not allowed	Lexical / Passive Form

The error "We are forbidden" instead of the more natural English expression "We are not allowed" demonstrates a case of pragmatic transfer, where learners apply expressions that are grammatically correct but contextually inappropriate. In Indonesian, "Kami dilarang" directly translates to "We are forbidden", and while "forbidden" is technically correct in English, it carries a stronger and more formal tone that may not fit every day or polite contexts. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "forbid" means "to order someone not to do something, especially officially or with authority," whereas "not allowed" suggests a softer, more commonly used restriction, particularly in spoken or informal settings. The learner's choice lacks awareness of pragmatic nuances in English, where context and tone determine word appropriateness beyond simple dictionary equivalence.

This error reflects pragmatic transfer—a subtype of negative transfer—where L1 conventions for expressing prohibition are carried over to L2, often without adapting to sociolinguistic norms. According to Odlin (1989), such transfer involves inappropriate application of language use rules from the first language to the second, while Dell Hymes' (1972) concept of sociolinguistic competence emphasizes the ability to use language appropriately across different social situations. Internally, the learner may overgeneralize vocabulary without understanding tone or social impact. Externally, limited exposure to authentic language use or lack of instruction in register and politeness can lead learners to rely on formal-sounding or overly literal expressions. Addressing this issue involves not just teaching correct grammar but also raising learners' awareness of contextual appropriateness, tone, and politeness conventions in English communication.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
4	Hariku sangat menyenangkan	My day was very funny	My day was very fun / enjoyable	Lexical / Pragmatics

The error "My day was very funny" instead of the correct version "My day was very fun" or "My day was very enjoyable" is a classic case of a false friend lexical error, where a learner incorrectly uses a word that appears similar in form between two languages but differs significantly in meaning. In Indonesian, "menyenangkan" translates to "fun" or "enjoyable", describing something pleasant or enjoyable. However, learners may mistakenly associate it with the English adjective "funny" due to phonetic similarity. According to the Oxford

Dictionary, "funny" means "causing laughter or amusement," while "fun" refers to "enjoyment, amusement, or light-hearted pleasure." As a result, the learner's sentence conveys an unintended meaning—that the day was laughable or amusing—rather than enjoyable or pleasant. This reveals a semantic mismatch, rooted in a surface-level similarity between L1 and L2 vocabulary.

From a theoretical standpoint, Odlin (1989) identifies this as a lexical transfer error where learners depend on perceived word equivalency without full understanding of semantic range. Additionally, the misuse is tied to a collocation mismatch, as English collocates "fun" or "enjoyable" with experiences like "a day", not "funny", which is typically reserved for people, jokes, or situations that provoke laughter. Internally, the learner's vocabulary development may be at a stage where word forms are memorized without nuanced meaning. Externally, this can be reinforced by translation-based learning environments that emphasize memorization over context-rich language use. To prevent such errors, instruction should incorporate semantic differentiation of false friends and emphasize collocational accuracy through authentic examples that show how emotionally descriptive words are naturally paired in English.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
5	Mereka pergi ke pasar	They goes to the market	They go to the market	Morphology / Subject-Verb Agreement

This is the example of Subject-verb agreement mistake due to English inflection system absent in Indonesian. In this sentence, the verb "goes" is incorrectly used with the plural subject "they." Indonesian verbs like pergi do not inflect for subject or number, so learners often default to incorrect conjugations in English. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "goes" is the third person singular form of "go," used only with he/she/it.

It was stated in Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis that morphological features such as the third-person singular "-s" are typically acquired later in the language learning process. Learners may initially learn the rule for adding "-s" with third-person subjects (e.g., He goes) and then incorrectly apply it to all subjects due to incomplete internalization of the exceptions. This error is a developmental feature of the interlanguage stage, where learners are still sorting out the complexities of English grammar. Internally, the learner may be overapplying a newly acquired rule, and externally, lack of consistent feedback or limited exposure to varied subject-verb pairs may prevent accurate acquisition. To address this, instruction should include repeated practice with subject-verb pairs, contrasting singular and plural forms, and contextualized input that helps learners develop automaticity in agreement patterns. Lado identifies this as a predictable morphological error due to lack of subject-verb agreement rules

in L1. In addition, Selinker views this as an example of incomplete target language rule acquisition within interlanguage.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
6	Kamu adalah teman saya	You is my friend	You are my friend	Morphology / Be Verb Agreement

This subject-verb agreement error involving the verb “to be” is a common developmental issue. The word “is” refers to “third person singular of be” and “are” means “second person singular and all plural forms of be”. Lado’s Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) attributes it to the lack of verb inflection in Indonesian, where “adalah” is invariant. Selinker emphasizes interlanguage grammar systems incorporating L1 logic and views this inconsistency as an indicator of an interlanguage system still struggling with tense and number agreement. Richards classifies this as a developmental error, where the learner has acquired the form “is” but not its constraints. Krashen would argue that this indicates insufficient exposure to “are” in contextualized input, which could help reinforce the correct usage.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
7	Dia bisa untuk bermain bola	He can to play football	He can play football	Morphology / Infinitive

The error "He can to play football" instead of the correct form "He can play football" reflects a structural transfer error involving the use of an incorrect infinitive form after a modal verb. In Indonesian, the sentence "Dia bisa untuk bermain bola" includes the word "untuk" (meaning "to") before the verb "bermain" (play), which is grammatically correct in Bahasa Indonesia. Learners often directly translate this into English, resulting in the insertion of "to" after the modal "can". However, according to the Oxford Dictionary and standard English grammar rules, modal verbs (such as can, must, should) are followed by the base form of the verb, not the infinitive. Thus, "can play" is correct, while "can to play" violates this rule.

Theoretically, this error aligns with Selinker’s (1972) concept of interlanguage, where learners develop an evolving system influenced by both their native language (L1) and the target language (L2). In this interlanguage system, learners often transfer structural patterns from L1, particularly when there is a lack of full syntactic awareness in the L2. Internally, the learner assumes that the Indonesian construction "bisa untuk bermain" (literally: "can to play") maps directly onto English, resulting in overgeneralization of infinitive use. Externally, this

issue may be reinforced by insufficient instruction on modal verb syntax or a reliance on translation-based methods that fail to highlight such structural differences. Addressing this requires focused teaching on modal verb constructions, supported by contrastive grammar exercises that show how modals behave differently across languages.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
8	Kamu tampak lebih baik	You look godder	You look better	Morphology / Comparative

The error "You look godder" instead of the correct sentence "You look better" reflects a misuse of irregular comparative forms, resulting from the learner applying regular comparison rules to an irregular adjective. In Indonesian, "Kamu tampak lebih baik" translates as "You look better", where "lebih baik" means "more good" or "better". In English, most one-syllable adjectives form comparatives by adding "-er" (e.g., taller, faster), which may lead learners to incorrectly construct "godder" from "good". However, "good" is an irregular adjective, whose correct comparative form is "better", as defined in the Oxford Dictionary, which lists "good → better → best" as an exception to the standard comparative pattern. This error indicates an overgeneralization of grammatical rules before the learner has mastered irregular forms.

According to Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis, language structures are acquired in a predictable sequence, and irregular forms like "better" typically emerge later in the acquisition process than regular patterns. Internally, the learner applies the general rule for forming comparatives without yet acquiring the irregular exceptions, a developmental stage common in interlanguage grammar. Externally, factors such as limited exposure to natural spoken English or instructional materials that emphasize rules without covering exceptions can contribute to this error. To address such mistakes, learners benefit from repetitive exposure to irregular forms in meaningful contexts and explicit teaching that highlights and practices these exceptions, reinforcing their place in the learner's developing grammatical system.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
9	Dia anak pintar	He clever boy	He is a clever boy	Syntax / Article and Be

The error "He clever boy" instead of the correct sentence "He is a clever boy" demonstrates two simultaneous grammatical issues: the omission of the copula ("is") and the omission of the indefinite article ("a"). In Indonesian, the sentence "Dia anak pintar" translates word-for-word as "He clever child", and this structure is grammatically acceptable in Bahasa

Indonesia, which does not require a copula ("is/are") or articles ("a/an/the") in nominal or descriptive sentences. However, in English, linking verbs (copulas) such as "is" are required to connect the subject ("He") to the complement ("a clever boy"), and singular countable nouns like "boy" must be preceded by an appropriate article. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, omitting these elements results in grammatically incomplete and non-standard English sentences.

This type of error reflects structural transfer from the learner's first language and is supported theoretically by both Abdul Chaer (in his analysis of Indonesian grammar and its influence on English learning) and Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which explains that elements absent in the native language are often difficult for learners to acquire. Internally, learners may not perceive the necessity of copulas or articles if they are not present in their L1 grammar system. Externally, teaching approaches that emphasize vocabulary without reinforcing sentence structure may further lead to such omissions. To help learners overcome this, instruction must explicitly highlight the mandatory use of "be" verbs and articles in English sentence construction, supported by frequent correction, sentence-building drills, and contextualized input that shows how English structures differ from Indonesian norms.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
10a	Mendengar musik	Listen music	Listen to music	Syntax Preposition /
10b	Marah denganku	Angry to me	Angry with me	Syntax Preposition /
10c	Dekat dari rumah saya	Near from my house	Near my house	Syntax Preposition /

The phrase "Listen music" omits the preposition "to," which is required in English for the verb "listen." In Bahasa Indonesia, prepositions are not used with this verb (mendengar musik) and Indonesian doesn't require a preposition after verbs like "listen", which leads to syntactic transfer. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "listen to" means to "give attention to sound" and is used with a preposition when followed by a noun. Odlin's Transfer Theory explains this as a case of syntactic transfer from L1, while Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests the learner lacked sufficient exposure to the fixed collocation "listen to." Richards attributes such errors to simplification and ignorance of rule restrictions. Selinker would argue that learners in the interlanguage phase often omit less salient grammatical features like prepositions.

Another error case on preposition occurred in the utterance of "angry to me" instead of the correct phrase "angry with me" demonstrates an incorrect preposition choice, which is a

common challenge in second language acquisition. In Indonesian, "marah denganku" uses the preposition "dengan" (meaning "with" or "to"), which does not have a direct one-to-one correspondence in English. Learners often translate prepositions literally, resulting in phrases like "angry to me", which is ungrammatical in English. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the adjective "angry" is typically followed by "with" when referring to a person (e.g., "He's angry with me") and "about" or "at" when referring to a situation or object. The use of "to" in this context is nonstandard, leading to a lexical mis collocational mismatch between a word and the preposition that commonly follows it. From a theoretical perspective, this error reflects interlanguage development, a concept introduced by Larry Selinker (1972), which describes the evolving linguistic system that learners build as they move toward native-like proficiency. Within this system, learners often produce lexical mis collocations, such as incorrect preposition combinations, due to both L1 interference and incomplete mastery of L2 collocational patterns. Internally, the learner may be unaware of the fixed prepositional usage in English and overgeneralize from their L1 or other familiar structures. Externally, insufficient exposure to natural spoken English and limited corrective feedback can reinforce incorrect usage. To overcome this, learners benefit from focused input on collocation and preposition use, especially in emotional or relational expressions like "angry with", through examples, repetition, and contextual practice.

Further language transfer error on the preposition is "near from my house" instead of the correct expression "near my house" illustrates a preposition misalignment caused by direct translation from Indonesian. In the original phrase "dekat dari rumah saya", the word "dari" means "from", and it is grammatically required in Indonesian to indicate proximity. However, in English, the adjective or preposition "near" is used without a following preposition such as "from". According to the Oxford Dictionary, "near" means "at or to a short distance away from someone or something," and it functions either as a preposition or adverb without requiring another preposition. The addition of "from" is redundant and grammatically incorrect in English, revealing a structural transfer error from the learner's L1. Theoretically, this is a clear example of negative language transfer, as described by Odlin (1989), where structural rules from the first language are applied inappropriately to the second language. Specifically, Odlin highlights prepositional misalignment as one of the most common sources of L1 interference in second language learning. Internally, learners may assume that English follows the same grammatical pattern as Indonesian, especially for concepts like location or distance. Externally, a lack of explicit instruction on preposition usage in English, combined with translation-heavy teaching methods, can reinforce such errors. To correct this, learners need targeted practice with prepositional phrases, especially those that differ significantly in structure from their native language, supported by contrastive analysis and repeated exposure to correct forms in authentic contexts.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
11	Dia bosan	He is boring	He is bored	Syntax / Adjective Use

The error "He is boring" instead of the correct sentence "He is bored" arises from a misunderstanding between -ing and -ed adjective forms, which is a common difficulty for English learners. In Indonesian, "Dia bosan" directly translates to "He is bored", conveying an emotional state. However, learners may incorrectly select "boring", not realizing that in English, adjectives ending in -ed describe how someone feels, while those ending in -ing describe the cause of that feeling. According to the Oxford Dictionary, both "bored" and "boring" are adjectives. The word "bored" means "feeling weary and uninterested," while "boring" means "causing boredom." So, saying "He is boring" unintentionally shifts the meaning, implying that he causes boredom in others, rather than that he feels bored.

This type of error is well explained by Krashen's Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, which distinguishes between acquired language (subconscious, natural communication) and learned language (conscious grammatical study). The subtle distinction between -ing and -ed adjectives often falls into the category of fine-grained grammar that is difficult to internalize through rule-based learning alone. Internally, the learner may lack intuitive understanding of the affective function of -ed adjectives versus the descriptive function of -ing forms. Externally, if classroom instruction overemphasizes vocabulary memorization without reinforcing usage in context, learners may choose the wrong form despite knowing both words. To address this, instruction should include contrastive examples, emotional vocabulary practice, and input-rich activities that reinforce correct use through context and repetition, helping learners acquire rather than merely memorize the appropriate forms.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
12	Buku merah	Book red	Red book	Syntax / Adjective Order

The error "Book red" instead of the correct English phrase "Red book" demonstrates a word order reversal, specifically involving adjective-noun placement. In Indonesian, the phrase "buku merah" places the noun before the adjective, which is grammatically correct in that language. However, English follows the opposite pattern: adjectives precede the nouns they modify. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, in English syntax, attributive adjectives are placed before the noun (e.g., "red book", "big house", "happy child"). Therefore, translating "buku merah" as "book red" reflects a direct but incorrect transfer of L1 word order into English.

This type of error is clearly explained by contrastive analysis theory, as proposed by Robert Lado (1957). Lado argues that learners tend to transfer grammatical patterns from their native language into the target language, especially when those patterns conflict. In this case, the Indonesian adjective placement rule interferes with English word order norms. Internally, the learner may be unaware that English structures adjectives differently, assuming that the direct word-for-word translation is acceptable. Externally, if learners are not frequently exposed to or corrected in contexts where adjective-noun phrases are used naturally in English, this error may persist. To address it, instruction should highlight syntactic differences between English and Indonesian through explicit comparison, drills on adjective placement, and context-rich input that models natural English phrases, helping learners internalize the correct structure.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
13a	Besok saya pergi ke sekolah	Tomorrow go I to school	Tomorrow I will go to school	Syntax / Word Order
13b	Dia cantik	She beautiful is	She is beautiful	Syntax / Word Order

The error "Tomorrow go I to school" instead of the correct sentence "Tomorrow I will go to school" involves two main issues: incorrect word order and omission of the future auxiliary verb "will". In Indonesian, "Besok saya pergi ke sekolah" directly translates to "Tomorrow I go to school", and this structure is grammatically acceptable because Indonesian does not require auxiliary verbs to indicate future tense; time adverbs like "besok" (tomorrow) are sufficient to imply futurity. Additionally, word order in Indonesian can be more flexible, especially in informal contexts. However, in English, subject-auxiliary-verb order is strictly required in declarative sentences, and future tense is typically expressed using the modal "will" before the base verb. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, English marks future intent using modals (e.g., will, shall), and the subject must precede the verb in most standard declarative structures—hence, "I will go" instead of "go I".

Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis explains that learners often transfer structures from their first language when they differ from those in the target language. In this case, both the flexible word order and lack of future auxiliaries in Indonesian contribute to the learner's incorrect English sentence. Additionally, Krashen's Input Hypothesis highlights the importance of comprehensible input—learners need frequent and meaningful exposure to correctly structured future tense sentences in order to acquire them naturally. Internally, the learner may not yet understand the rigid word order and auxiliary system of English. Externally, teaching that over-relies on translation or provides limited exposure to authentic English can reinforce these errors. Effective instruction should emphasize English sentence

structure, especially with regard to tense marking and word order, using contrastive examples, guided practice, and natural input to help learners internalize the correct forms.

The mistake "She beautiful is" instead of "She is beautiful" results from incorrect word order, specifically a misplacement of the copula verb "is", influenced by the learner's first language (L1). In Indonesian, "Dia cantik" means "She is beautiful", but the sentence structure does not include a linking verb like "is". Indonesian allows subject–adjective constructions without a copula, and this often leads learners to either omit the verb (e.g., "She beautiful") or place it incorrectly (e.g., "She beautiful is"). According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, English requires a strict subject–verb–complement (SVC) structure when using linking verbs such as "is"—thus, "She is beautiful" is the only grammatically acceptable form.

This kind of error is explained by Selinker's Interlanguage Theory (1972), which describes how learners build a temporary linguistic system that blends elements from both the native language and the target language. In this interlanguage stage, learners often construct English sentences using the syntax of their L1, particularly when the grammatical categories do not align directly. Internally, the learner may be uncertain about English verb placement rules and may overgeneralize or experiment with possible structures. Externally, limited corrective feedback or instructional focus on sentence structure can allow such errors to fossilize. To address this, instruction should focus on basic English sentence patterns, especially those involving copula verbs, using explicit correction, repetition, and meaningful input that models correct word order and reinforces the proper placement of linking verbs in descriptive sentences.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
14a	Saya tidak paham	I no understand	I don't understand	Syntax Negation /
14b	Saya tidak tahu	I not know	I don't know	Syntax Negation /

The phrases "I no understand" and "I not know" reflects a literal translation of the Indonesian sentence "Saya tidak paham", and "Saya tidak tahu" where "tidak" negates the verb without an auxiliary. In English, auxiliary verbs like "do" are required to form negatives in the simple present. Based on Oxford dictionary, "no" is "used to indicate refusal or denial", "not" is "used to give the following word or phrase a negative meaning, or to reply in the negative" and "don't" is "auxiliary verb used to form negatives".

The errors reflect a developmental challenge in acquiring do-support, which both Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis and Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis identify as a significant hurdle for learners whose L1 does not have auxiliary verbs in negation. Krashen

suggests that structures like do-insertion are acquired in a predictable sequence and typically come later in the learning process, while Lado emphasizes the difficulties learners face when the target language contains grammatical features absent in the native language. Internally, the learner is likely simplifying or directly mapping L1 structure onto English, unaware of the syntactic role auxiliaries play. Externally, the issue may arise from translation-based teaching methods or limited exposure to conversational English where such forms are frequent. To address this, learners need targeted instruction on English auxiliary use, with an emphasis on forming negatives and questions in the present tense, supported by communicative practice and frequent exposure to natural input. Richards labels this a simplification strategy common among beginners. Selinker's Interlanguage confirms that auxiliary structures are often omitted when they are absent in the L1 grammar.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
15	Saya malas sekali melakukannya	I am very lazy to do it	I'm too lazy to do it	Syntax / Collocation

The sentence "I am very lazy to do it" as a translation of "Saya malas sekali melakukannya" is grammatically structured but unidiomatic and unnatural in English. While "malas sekali" means "very lazy" in Indonesian, and "melakukannya" means "to do it", the direct translation "I am very lazy to do it" is not the typical way English speakers' express reluctance or lack of motivation. In English, expressing this idea naturally would require the phrase "I'm too lazy to do it", which better captures the meaning that the speaker lacks the energy or willingness to complete a task. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "lazy" means "unwilling to work or use energy", and when describing one's reluctance toward a specific action, the correct structure is "too lazy to [verb]", not "very lazy to [verb]". Therefore, while the vocabulary is accurate, the sentence reflects a collocational and pragmatic error.

This type of error is influenced by sociocultural and pragmatic differences between Indonesian English, as explained by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. In Indonesian, it is common and culturally acceptable to express reluctance or avoidance using emotion-based adjectives like "malas" directly followed by actions. However, in English, the way feelings or attitudes are tied to actions often requires fixed patterns and idiomatic constructions. Internally, the learner may assume that directly mapping the emotion adjective ("lazy") onto an infinitive verb mirrors the native language structure. Externally, the lack of exposure to authentic English expressions of mood, motivation, and politeness strategies can contribute to such errors. To correct this, learners need focused exposure to natural English expressions of reluctance, including the use of "too + adjective + to + verb" structures, along with contextual and pragmatic instruction that highlights how different languages express internal states and attitudes toward actions.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
16	Saya belum makan	I before eat	I have not eaten yet	Syntax / Tense

This is the case of Tense error due to the lack of past participle and auxiliary use in Indonesian. The sentence "I before eat" reflects a direct transfer from the Indonesian phrase "Saya belum makan", where "belum" translates to "not yet" and verbs in Indonesian are not inflected for tense. The learner incorrectly substitutes "before" for "not yet" and omits the auxiliary verb have and the past participle eaten. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "before" means "earlier than a particular time or event," which does not convey the incomplete action suggested by "not yet." This reveals a misunderstanding of English present perfect tense, which connects past actions with present relevance.

Theoretically, this is an interlingual error as described by J.C. Richards, where L1 structures interfere with L2 learning. Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) anticipates this issue due to the absence of equivalent perfect tense forms in Indonesian. Krashen's Monitor Model (particularly the Input Hypothesis) indicates the learner may not have received adequate exposure to correct grammatical input such as "I have not eaten yet." Selinker's Interlanguage Theory explains the construction as part of a developing L2 system where learners draw on L1 strategies when L2 rules are not fully acquired. According to Krashen's Monitor Model, lack of conscious grammar monitoring contributes to this structural error.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
17	Dia (laki-laki) bagus	He good	He is good	Syntax / Copula Omission

It is the example of absence of copula example influenced by Bahasa Indonesia structure. The sentence "He good" omits the necessary copular verb "is." In Indonesian, adjectives are typically used without a linking verb, as in Dia bagus (literally "He good"). This omission reflects a direct syntactic transfer from L1 to L2. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "is" functions as a copula linking the subject to a subject complementing this case, linking "he" to the adjective "good."

Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis predicts such errors due to the structural difference between the two languages. Selinker's Interlanguage Theory posits that early L2

output often mirrors L1 syntax, especially when the learner has not yet internalized auxiliary structures. Richards identifies this as both a developmental and interlingual error, often found in beginner stages. Krashen would argue that insufficient exposure to naturally occurring, correct input prevents the learner from acquiring copular usage organically.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
18	Saya sangat lapar	I very hungry & My stomach is hungry	I am very hungry	Syntax / Expression

The sentence "My stomach is hungry" and "I very hungry" as translations of "Saya sangat lapar" are examples of non-idiomatic expressions and structural inaccuracies in English. In Indonesian, "Saya sangat lapar" directly translates to "I am very hungry", where the focus is on the emotional or physical state of the speaker. However, some learners incorrectly produce "My stomach is hungry" due to a literal interpretation of bodily sensations, which may seem natural in the L1 but sounds awkward and unnatural in English. While "stomach" is the organ involved, English typically uses the subject pronoun "I" to express feelings of hunger, not a body part. Similarly, "I very hungry" omits the copula verb "am", which is essential in English for linking the subject to a state or condition. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the correct form is "I am very hungry", using the linking verb "am" and an adjective to describe the state.

These mistakes illustrate challenges in idiomatic language acquisition, which Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis both address. Vygotsky emphasizes that language use is shaped by cultural norms; in Indonesian, referencing body parts (like the stomach) to describe feelings is more common, whereas English avoids that structure in favor of emotionally direct, subject-centered expressions. Krashen argues that such idiomatic and structural nuances are best acquired through meaningful, comprehensible input rather than through isolated grammar instruction. Internally, learners may apply familiar L1 patterns without recognizing how differently English encodes internal states. Externally, insufficient exposure to natural spoken English or limited feedback can allow these unidiomatic expressions to persist. Addressing this requires instruction that combines contrastive analysis, authentic contextual input, and focused practice on expressing emotional and physical states idiomatically in English.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
19	Bagaimana suaranya	How the sound	How does it sound?	Syntax / Interrogative

The sentence "How the sound" as a translation of "Bagaimana suaranya" reflects a question form error, particularly the absence of auxiliary inversion, which is essential in English interrogative structures. In Indonesian, "Bagaimana suaranya" directly means "How (is) the sound", and it is grammatically correct in the L1 without requiring an auxiliary or word order change. However, English question formation in the present simple tense—especially when asking about perception or quality—requires the use of do-support and subject-verb inversion. The grammatically correct and idiomatic form in English is "How does it sound?", which includes the auxiliary "does", followed by the subject "it", and the base verb "sound". According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, interrogative structures in English demand that an auxiliary verb precede the subject unless the verb "to be" is used directly.

This error is explained by Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Lado (1957) argues that learners often transfer sentence patterns from their first language when forming structures in the second language—here, the learner maps Indonesian declarative word order directly into English without recognizing the need for inversion or auxiliary use. Meanwhile, Krashen emphasizes that grammatical forms like question inversion and auxiliary use are typically acquired over time through meaningful and comprehensible input rather than through isolated rule memorization. Internally, the learner may rely on L1 word order and may not yet have internalized the structural rules of English question formation. Externally, if learners receive limited exposure to natural spoken English or lack opportunities to practice interrogative structures, such errors are likely to persist. Addressing this issue requires explicit instruction and repeated input featuring natural English questions, along with guided drills and communicative practice to reinforce correct form and usage in real-life contexts.

No	Indonesian Phrase	Incorrect Translation	Correct Translation (Native-like)	Type of Error
20	Saya ingin mereka datang ke sini	I want them to come see me here	I want them to come here	Syntax / Redundancy

The sentence "I want them to come see me here" as a translation of "Saya ingin mereka datang ke sini" contains a redundancy and pragmatic error that alters the original meaning. In Indonesian, "Saya ingin mereka datang ke sini" simply means "I want them to come here", with no additional implication of meeting or seeing the speaker. However, when the learner adds "see me" in "come see me here", it introduces a pragmatic shift, implying a personal or intentional visit, which was not present in the original sentence. Furthermore, the addition is redundant, as "come here" already conveys the action of arrival at the speaker's location. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "come here" is sufficient to indicate movement toward the speaker's location; "come see me" suggests an added communicative or emotional purpose, which is not implied in the original.

Theoretical support for this error comes from Krashen's Monitor Theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective on pragmatics. According to Krashen, learners who rely

too heavily on self-monitoring or learned grammar rules may overproduce language by inserting unnecessary elements, especially when they lack sufficient exposure to natural usage. Simultaneously, Vygotsky's theory highlights that learners must develop pragmatic competence, which involves not just forming grammatically correct sentences, but also producing expressions that align with the intended social and communicative purpose. Internally, the learner may associate "come" with "come see" based on common English collocations or past learning, and externally, insufficient contextual practice may prevent them from recognizing when such additions are inappropriate or misleading. To resolve this, language teaching should incorporate pragmatic instruction, helping learners distinguish between similar expressions and use them according to context, speaker intention, and communicative appropriateness.

Interlingual Interference

The findings from the data collected among English literature students at Universitas Pamulang reveal a consistent pattern of negative language transfer from Bahasa Indonesia into English. These errors, identified through the students' narrative essays recounting their English learning experiences, show a strong influence of L1 (first language) structures, semantics, and pragmatics on L2 (second language) English usage. The error examples analyzed fall into several linguistic categories, including lexical (collocation, false friends), morphological (subject-verb agreement, modals), syntactic (word order, auxiliary omission, question formation), and pragmatic (formality and tone). Most of these errors are not random but systematically reflect interlingual interference, where the learners' internalized patterns of Bahasa Indonesia are transferred into English, often resulting in ungrammatical or non-idiomatic expressions such as "make photo", "I have 20 years", "angry to me", or "I very hungry".

Lexical errors frequently appear in the form of collocational mismatches (make photo instead of take a photo, close the TV instead of turn off the TV) and false friend misuses (funny instead of fun). These errors reveal learners' overreliance on L1 vocabulary equivalence without sufficient awareness of English collocational constraints, idiomatic usage, or pragmatic appropriateness. Additionally, cultural lexical errors were observed, such as I have 20 years to express age, reflecting cross-linguistic conceptual transfer.

Morphological errors were prevalent in several domains. The most common involved subject-verb agreement (They goes to the market), be-verb agreement (You is my friend), and incorrect modal constructions (He can to play football). Errors in comparative adjective forms (You look godder instead of You look better) also surfaced due to learners applying regular grammar rules to irregular adjectives. These morphological issues demonstrate the influence of the morphologically simpler Indonesian system, where verbs are not inflected for tense or number, unlike English.

Syntactic errors arose from direct word-for-word translation and the lack of equivalent grammatical elements in Indonesian. These include copula omission (He clever boy), article

omission (He clever boy), preposition misuse (near from my house, angry to me), and negation errors (I not know, I no understand). Learners also struggled with word order in declarative and interrogative sentences (Tomorrow go I to school, How the sound), often replicating Indonesian syntactic structure in English.

Theoretically, the data align with core frameworks in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Odlin's (1989) concept of language transfer explains how structural and semantic features of L1 affect L2 output, particularly in areas like prepositions, collocations, and fixed expressions. Selinker's (1972) interlanguage theory shows that learners form a temporary linguistic system influenced by both L1 and L2, leading to systematic errors at developmental stages. Krashen's (1982) theories, including the Natural Order Hypothesis and Input Hypothesis, suggest that features like auxiliaries, question formation, and tense markers emerge in a predictable sequence and require sufficient comprehensible input for acquisition. Lado's contrastive analysis supports the idea that differences between L1 and L2 structures (e.g., lack of verb inflections or copula in Bahasa Indonesia) make certain English constructions more difficult to master. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of cultural and communicative norms in shaping language use, particularly in expressions tied to social pragmatics, politeness, and emotion, such as "I am too lazy to do it" versus the literal "I very lazy to do it".

These errors are shaped by both internal factors (overgeneralization, limited vocabulary range, developmental stage, interlanguage fossilization) and external factors (translation-based pedagogy, lack of exposure to native-like English, insufficient input on idiomatic usage, and limited feedback in communicative contexts). The learners often default to literal translation strategies due to insufficient familiarity with English idioms, pragmatics, and collocations. For example, using "close the TV" reflects a word-for-word equivalence based on "matikan televisi", and choosing "forbidden" over "not allowed" shows a misunderstanding of politeness and tone in English discourse

Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the 20 examples by error type of English language errors made by Indonesian learners (as recorded in the students' narrative essays from Universitas Pamulang), the findings point to a prevalent pattern of negative language transfer across multiple linguistic domains—phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic. Most of the errors stem from structural and semantic differences between Bahasa Indonesia and English, where learners tend to translate directly from their L1 without adjusting for the target language's grammar and idiomatic norms. Common errors include misuse of verb collocations ("make photo" instead of "take a photo"), prepositions ("near from my house" instead of "near my house"), subject-verb agreement ("they goes" instead of "they go"), auxiliary omissions ("I not know" instead of "I don't know"), and unidiomatic expressions ("I very lazy to do it" instead of "I'm too lazy to do it"). These examples reflect challenges in acquiring idiomatic and syntactic patterns unique to English.

In conclusion, the results underscore a significant need for pedagogical adjustments in English language instruction for Indonesian learners. Educators should prioritize contrastive analysis-based teaching, emphasize collocational awareness, and provide extensive exposure to authentic input through reading, listening, and contextual language use. Explicit grammar

instruction should be complemented with pragmatic training, focusing not only on correctness but also on appropriateness, tone, and naturalness. Only through a balanced approach that combines cognitive, structural, and cultural awareness can learners be guided toward achieving greater fluency and accuracy in English. These findings provide valuable insights for curriculum designers, teachers, and SLA researchers working to improve outcomes for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in Indonesia and similar L1 contexts.

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