Interference of Mother Tongue (L1) in the English Translation Materials

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Abstract

Malaysian philosophy, purpose and objective of the education system is rooted and based on policies stated in the National Education Policy 1956 and Education Act 1961. Whereas the Education Ordinance 1952 urged all Chinese and Tamil schools to be given equal opportunity to learn English and Malay language together with their mother tongue. This policy has open up opportunity to the non-Bumis to learn their mother tongue without any fixed rules. The learning of mother tongue was not only limited to the basic level, but it continues to the university level. The findings of this research is important especially in the teaching of Malay language as the medium of instruction in the education system. All these three parties the Ministry of Education, Translation Institute and Ministry of Higher Education play important roles in producing the quality translation materials.

Keywords: *Mother tongue, translation and English language*

Background

Translation is very important in our life due to the fast growing of world of knowledge, technology and education. The world today will not be this advance if people from a country do not communicate with people from another country. Therefore, the afford of translation happens almost everyday in order to share knowledge and disseminate information in the communitee (Ahmad Khair, 2003). Nowadays, lecturers are using translation in the their teaching materials for the teaching and learning purposes. Most probably it was not the job of a teacher to decide whether translation is important in the education or not but as an educator, teacher could determine the use of translation in teaching. Nevertheless, translation is considered as a fast-spread-field due to the establishment of the National Translation Institute Incorporation (ITNMB) on 14 September 1993 in Malaysia. Malaysia consists of people from different races and majority of them are bilingual or multilingual. Those who are involved in education, broadcasting and publishing realising it or not experienced the L1 interference during translation. Thus, the outcome of the work will spoil the purity and decrease the prestige of Bahasa Melayu. Therefore, this research is done to analyse the interference of mother tongue (L1) linguistics elements in the graduates translation materials, especially from the aspects of lexical, affixes, meaning of words and sentence structure.

Literature Review

Noor Aina Dani (2001) did a research on mother tongue interference in the process of learning Malay language among the form 4 students from the Dusun tribe who came from Sekolah Menengah Kundasang, Ranau, Sabah. The study involved 109 Form 4 students. The findings on the content analysis of the students' essay produced from the formal learning process showed that the language process on the Malay consonant phoneme in the lexical aspect recieved the most influenced of the mother tongue. From the sentence aspect, the interference was representing by the sentence structure of the verb phrase that has a verb and a preposition. The interference like the replacement of L1 in the Malay language aspect was the most obvious one. Students who use Malay language as their daily medium of instruction would commit in making glaring language errors. Unlike those who rarekly use the language would be more sensitive to the parallel exercise. She summarised by saying that the language substituting/replacing process in the higher performace students' essay can be categorised as changes in phonetics and loan words. The speaking skills of the Malay Dusun students were still below intermediate level. If this interference of L1 increases, the marks for the essay will go very down.

Awang Sariyan (2000) analysed the interference of English syntax in Malay language with specific reference to the academic language structure. He choses the academic Malay language as the material to be analysed because this material has close relationship with educators and students. Besides that, these academics who used this academic language long before the birth of the other academics received their education via Malay language as the medium of instruction was the cohort that was educated in English. Therefore, concepts and the academics transitional signals went into the Malay language through English, especially from the field of translation and English referic materials. He analysed almost 10 books that comprised of text and reference books from the secondary and unversity level. The books covered both fields pure and social sciences. The findings revealed that 15 aspects of English syntax interfered these academic discourse. He also found that there were 11 obvious aspects; sentence structure, common pattern, indefinite quantifiers, articles, subject-predicate, active-passive, 'called' passive structure, copula, definition and relative definition

There was one case study on the interference of mother tongue in the learning process of Malay language among Indian students done by Suthanthiradevi J.N.J. Money (1996). The findings showed that, the were many problems faced by these Indian students in learning Malay language. One of the problems detected was the pronunciation of the /r/ sound. This was due to factors like lack of exposure of the target language, attitudes of both teachers and students and interference of L1 on L2. Teo Kok Seong (1992) also had a study on L1 interference and his involved a group of mixed Chinese in Kelantan. The findings revealed the interference of Malay language in the form of Kelantan Malay dialect onto these mixed Chinese students' L1 from the aspect of words arrangement in the development of a phrase. Data were collected through the interview sessions between the researcher (original speaker of Chinese Hokkien dialect) and his middle-aged friends who have been using the dialect for ages to ensure the reliability of the data.

Methodology

Researcher chose eight universities that have Language Department and they are Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UiTM, Kelantan), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UTM, Skudai) and Universiti Darul Iman Malaysia (UDM). The respondents were the university graduates thet comprised of Malay, Chinese and Indian. Respondents were given questionnaire and one English text to be translated into Malay language.

Findings of the Study

Questionnaire and translation texts were distributed to 150 graduates who represent 5 local universities (UPM, UM, USM, UTM and UPSI). These graduates consisted of Malay, Chinese and Indian. The translations texts have 351 number of words and the text is on findings from a report on obesity among children. Raw data was analysed and processed by using SPSS- *Statistical Package for Social Science*. The first findings were analysed manually and are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: L1 Linguistics Elements

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Total
Lexical	120 (18.2%)	141 (22.2%)	142 (22.1%)	403
Afixes	115 (17.5%)	111 (17.5%)	119 (18.5%)	345
Meaning of Words	145 (22.0%)	143 (22.5%)	99 (15.4%)	387
Phrase	145 (22.0%)	98 (15.4%)	153 (24%)	396
Sentence Structure	133 (22.2%)	143 (22.5%)	130 (20.2%)	406
Total	658	636	643	1937

The existing of these L1 linguistics elements among these graduates; Malay, Chinese and Indian were 658 times, 636 times and 643 times respectively. Among the elements, the most frequent ones were meaning of words (145 times) and phrase (145 times). However the lowest aspect was affixes; 115 times. These numbers were derived from one reason that is Malays do not have objective attitude towards the information presented in the original texts. This happened due to the understood concept of one-versus-many between Malay and English language from the aspect of meaning of words. The ability of these graduates in mastering afixes for both languages is high. Therefore, the errors made were low. To the Chinese graduates, the errors made in meaning of words (143 times) and sentence structure (143 time) were the most frequent errors happened during the translation process. As for the phrase only 98 times of errors made in the translation. For the meaning of words errors, these Chinese graduates came to understand a concept of many-versus-one. It means that the source language has more words than the target language. The influence in the culture of language can also affect the translation because culture of language portrays varieties of backgrounds.

Furthermore, in the sentence structure the Chinese language is different from the Malay where the Chinese starts with the predícate and Malay starts with the subject phrase. This contributes to misunderstanding when it comes to give a quality of translation.

Another situation can be seen from the Indian graduates. Most errors came from phrase and lexical aspects where they were made for 153 and 142 times respectively. They were only 99 times of errors for the aspect of meaning of words. It is understood that these Indian graduates use Tamil (L1) in their daily conversation. This situation triggers the concept of many-versus-many between the Tamil and Malay language. Hence, blurry lexical and meaning of words exist in each phrase. The influence of the similarity in meaning of words for both languages make these Indian graduates able to use this aspect correctly.

Graph 1: Interference of L1 Elements of Linguistics among Graduates in the Translation Materials

Graf 1: Pengaruh Unsur Linguistik Bahasa Ibunda Mahasiswa dalam Bahan Terjemahan

Leksikal
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0

Struktur Ayat

Imbuhan

Melayu
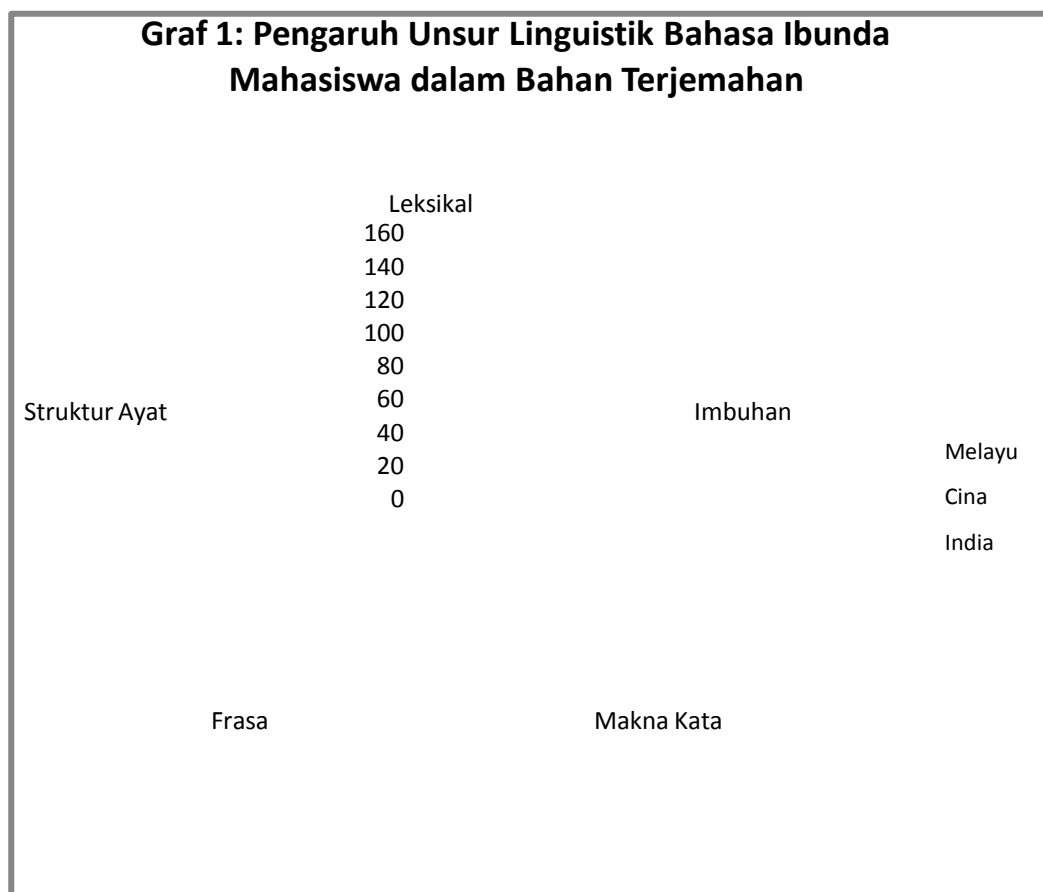Cina
India

Frasa

Makna Kata

Chart 1: Interference of L1 Elements of Linguistics among Graduates in the Translation Materials

L1 Elements of Linguistics in the Translation Materials

(i) Malay Graduates

These two aspects; meaning of words and phrase were the most frequent elements of linguistics that interfere in the L1 of the Malay graduates. The interference was very obvious and clear in the English translation materials.

Table 2: L1 Elements of Linguistics in the Translation Materials among Malay Graduates

ELEMENTS OF LINGUISTICS	WAYS OF MARKING	COMMENTS
i. Meaning of Words		
	10.26 serving *10.26 meals*	To replace the word *meals* with a less grammatical word
	during the study *during the learning process*	To replace with a less grammatical word
	In a long-term nasional study *A long-term study at a national level*	Confusión while interpreting meaning from the source text
	spending more time eating dinner with family *spending more time around the family dinner table*	Translating the meaning of words *spending more time around the family dinner table* ungrammatical
	Level three (secondary school) *standard three* *darjah tiga*	To replace the word *third grade* with standard three is less grammatical
	study *learning*	The meaning of the word *study* in the text refers to research
ii. Phrase		
• Verb phrase	To avoid children being fat *To protect children from being fat*	Prepositional phrase *dari (from)* shows location, direction, time or date
• Noun phrase	8,000 of children 8000 children	Words that show quantity of pairs with the quantifiers to show the explanation of nouns that entail it (numbers+quantifiers+noun)
• Noun phrase	Over-weight *More than the ideal weight*	NP + AdjP
• Noun phrase	Dr. Sara Gable and her college friends from the Univerity of Missouri, Columbia *Dr Sara Gable from Univerity of Missoury, Columbia and her college friends.*	noun + explanation on preposition phrase
• Noun phrase	is a group *that is a group*	The use of 'be' verb in front of the preposition phrase (PP)
• Noun phrase	The second group is the children that… *The second group is…*	The use of 'be' verb in front of the prepositional phrase (PP)
• Prepositional phrase	…play a role in taking of children's weight status. *...play a role in weight status of children.*	*Dalam (in)* as a preposition comes in front of a noun phrase which means it exists in within that has no space or even duration
• Verb phrase	To limit the time *To limit the hour*	ungrammatical

(ii) Chinese Graduates

Among the Chinese graduates, the meaning of words and sentence structure aspects were the most frequent elements of linguistics that were influenced by their L1. The interference was clear in their English translation. It is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: L1 Elements of Linguistics in the Translation Materials among Chinese Graduates Cina

ELEMENTS OF LINGUISTICS	WAYS OF MARKING	COMMENTS
i. Meaning of Words		
	10.26 serving *eat 10.26 times*	To replace the word *meals* with a less grammatical word
	10.26 serving *eat 10.26 meals*	To replace the word *meals* with a less accurate word
	10.26 serving *10.26 meals*	To replace the word *meals* with a less accurate word
	dinner table *eat night's meals*	The translated meaning of *dinner table* is less grammatical
	In a long-term nasional study *Based on nationality*	Confusión while interpreting meaning from the source text
	In a long-term nasional study *From all over the world*	The translated meaning is less accurate

	a long-term nasional study *is a national candidate in the long-term study*	Confusión while interpreting meaning from the source text
	Weight increased *to put on excess kilos by more than 1 kg*	Translated meaning *to put on excess kilos* is less accurate
	Decrease of weekly meals with family *Not eating*	The translated meaning is less accurate
	Live in unsecured neighboring area … *Unsecured feelings…*	Minimization of translation
	Each family member… *Whole family's…*	The translated meaning of *whole family's* is less accurate

ii. Sentence Structure

a.   Sentence that has emphasized suffix *'-lah'*

    1.   Children can be prevented from being fat by spending more time with family during dinner and controlling time of watching televisión, and this is the new findings.

        Kanak-kanak boleh mencegah daripada menjadi gemuk dengan meluangkan lebih masa bersama keluaga pada waktu makan dan kurangkan masa menonton televisyen, ini<u>lah</u> dapatan kajian baru.

        (The sentence can be softened with the additional suffix *–lah,* the influenced of the Chines gives the emphasis)

b.   Sentence that used *adalah (are)* as its connector.

    1.   Though these sound simple like eating together with family members and reducing time of watching televisión, they <u>are </u>the important roles in determining the children's weight.

        Walaupun bagi perkara yang mudah seperti sekeluarga makan bersama dan jumlah masa kanak-kanak menonton televisyen <u>adalah</u> memainkan peranan yang penting dalam penentuan tahap berat badan mereka.

c.   Sentence that used quantifiers that show indefinite quantity.

    1.   <u>All</u> family members must get themselves involved in the healthy lifestyle to show examples to children and this is because children will not learn this by themselves.

        <u>Semua</u> ahli keluarga harus melibatkan diri untuk menerapkan tabiat sihat terhadap kanak-kanak, hal ini kerana kanak-kanak tidak akan membelajari semua ini dengan diri sendiri.

    2.   <u>All</u> families must teach their children about the habits of practising good health because these children will not learn by themselves.

        <u>Semua</u> keluarga harus mendidik anak mereka tentang sikap mengamalkan kesihatan kerana budak-budak tidak akan belajarnya dengan sendiri.

d.   Passive sentences that used the verb *'said'.*

1. Gable <u>said</u> that family must work together to help children to control their weight for health purposes.
   Gable <u>mengatakan</u> bahawa keluarga perlu bekerjasama untuk membantu kanak-kanak menjaga berat badan supaya menjadi sihat.
2. Gable <u>said</u> that family plays an important role in determining the children ideal weight.
   Gable <u>berkata</u> bahawa ahli keluarga memainkan peranan yang penting dari segi keadaan berat badan budak.

e. Sentence that used *juga akan (will)* as connector.
1. This factor <u>will</u> give risk to over weight.
   Faktor ini <u>juga akan</u> membawa risiko berat berlebihan.
2. Low frequency of eating together with family <u>will</u> make children's weight heavier.
   Kekerapan makan bersama ahli keluarga yang rendah <u>juga akan</u> menyebabkan kanak-kanak menjadi lebih berat dari sebenarnya.
3. Besides that, the study also shows that if the family reduces the eating time in a week, this <u>will</u> increase the children's weight by 8%.
   Selain itu, kajian <u>juga</u> menunjukkan bahawa jika sebuah keluarga mengurangkan masa makan dalam setiap minggu, ini <u>akan</u> menyebabkan peningkatan berat badan kanak-kanak sebanyak 8%.
4. Besides that, the feelings of uncertainty <u>will</u> contribute to body fat.
   Selain itu, perasaan kurang selamat <u>juga akan</u> menyebabkan badan lebihan berat.

(iii) India Graduates

In the Indian graduates' translation, there was also interference of L1 detected. It came from the aspect of phrase. There are four types of phrase that interfered as shows below:

Table 4: L1 Elements of Linguistics in the Translation Materials among Indian Graduates

ELEMENTS OF LINGUISTICS	WAYS OF MARKING	COMMENTS
i. Phrase		
• Verb phrase	Spending more time *Produce more time*	ungrammatical
• Prepositional phrase	To parents *To parents*	Preposition *kepada (to)* is put in front of the noun or NP to refer to human beings.
• Prepositional phrase	From 4 to 9 years old *At the age of 4 to 9 years*	The PP *ke (to)* is always paired with the preposition *from* to give meaning of time.
• Prepositional phrase	where *where*	The PP *di* is used specifically in front of noun or NP to refer to place. This PP is written as seperated from the noun or NP that follows it.
• Prepositional phrase	In the *In the*	*Dalam (in the)* as PP comes in front of NP or noun which means a within that has no space or duration.
• Prepositional phrase	At the end *At the end*	PP *di (at the)* is used especially in fromt of NP or noun to show place. This NP is written as seperated from the noun or NP that follows it.
• Prepositional phrase	At the beginning of the study *At the beginning of the study*	PP *pada (at the)* is used in front of NP or noun to refer to time or place

Analysis of L1 Interference from the Perspective of Extralinguistics

The II and III sections from the questionnaire helped researcher to seek the L1 interference in the translation materials from the perspective of extralinguistics. The data collected was studied by using the correlation analysis. Table 5 shows positive significant correlation between L1 learning and its usage with its exposure. This shows that if the L1 academic achievement is high, the graduates will use their L1 in their conversation, reading, writing as well as daily social activities. On the other hand, those who have low academic achivement in its L1 will be able to apply English language in their daily activities (negative correlation between L1 and English).

Table 5: Correlation between L1 and Englisj

	BB	GB	DB	GI	DI
L1 LEARNING-BB	-				
L1 USAGE-GB	**0.92 ***** (0.00)	-			
L1 EXPOSURE-DB	**0.90 ***** (0.00)	**0.84 ***** (0.00)	-		
ENGLISH USAGE-GI	**-0.54 *** (0.07)	**-0.52 *** (0.08)	-0.40 (0.14)	-	
ENGLISH EXPOSURE-DI	-0.43 (0.13)	-0.44 (0.12)	**-0.52 *** (0.08)	**0.82 ***** (0.00)	-

Note: The probability value is reported in the parenthesis. Symbol *, **, *** represents the significant correlation test at its significant level of 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.

Moreover, researcher found that the strong positive relationship (siginificant positive correlation) only exists between the L1 interference with certain elements of linguistics only. There are meaning of words and sentence structure as shows in Table 6. However, other aspects like affixes, phrase and lexical, the L1 interference was not obvious. Other than that, the frequent usage and exposure of the English language accompanied by less elements of linguistics in the English translation materials gave a negative significant.

Table 6: Correlation between L1 Interference and Frequence of Elements of Linguistics in English Translation Materials

	MEANING	STRUCTURE	OVERALL
L1 LEARNING	**0.83 ***** (0.00) ***	0.46 (0.11)	0.32 (0.20)
L1 USAGE	**0.67 **** (0.02)	0.48 (0.10)	0.25 (0.26)
L1 EXPOSURE	**0.61 **** (0.04)	**0.57 *** (0.06)	0.19 (0.31)
ENGLISH USAGE	**-0.63 **** (0.03)	**-0.65 **** (0.03)	**-0.73 ***** (0.01)
ENGLISH EXPOSURE	-0.38 (0.15)	**-0.78 ***** (0.01)	**-0.66 ***** (0.03)

Note: The probability value is reported in the parenthesis. Symbol *, **, *** represents the significant correlation test at its significant level of 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.

Through the translation materials from the samples of 50 Malay graduates, it was found that the frequent elements of linguistics of L1 interfere in the Malay graduates' translation materials were from the aspects of meaning of words and phrase. To the Chinese gradutes, the most frequent aspects were meaning of words and sentence structure. Last but not least, the most obvious element of linguistics among the Indian graduates was from the lexical aspect only.

The findings showed that contrastive linguistics analysis is the most suitable technique to be used to compare the structure of L1 and L2 to see its similarities and differences. The different areas in linguistics are bigger as the learning obstacles compared to the similarity ares (Forster 1965). The linguistics aspects of both L1 and L2 can be considered as similar. This makes someone to easily master one language. There will also situation in certain L1 where the linguistics aspects do not exist. Therefore, looking for its similarities and differences is a recommended analysis.

Furthermore, researcher also noticed the strong positive relationship (positive significant correlation) only exists between the interference of L1 and certain elements of linguistics only; meaning of words and sentence structure. The other aspects were not so obvious. Other than that, the frequent usage and exposure of the English language accompanied by less elements of linguistics in the English translation materials gave a negative significant.

Conclusion

Through the researcher's observation, it was found out that the frequent used of grammar and sentence structure could also be detected through the translation materials. It can be seen clearly that similarities do exist in the translation materials among the samples with the same ethnic group. This factor entails closely to the understanding of the interpreter towards the original texts. Malay graduates were more frequent in using reported speech as well as passive sentence in their translation. As a result, the meaning of the sentence is rather heavier. As for the Chinese graduates, although their translations do not go beyond the Malay language grammar, still the sentences are too long and the meanings are complicated. Consequently, the information from the Indian graduates' translation is rather easier to comprehend because the structure- the before and after words are clear. Indeed, the transitional signals used in the translation also contribute to the understanding of the translation materials.

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