INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract— **Learning Indonesian language at Al-Syifa Boarding School by Indonesian Students who have been lived and studied abroad, (Indonesian Back Home Students) IBHSs, is a crucial problem. The purpose of this study was a threefold: (a) to explore difficulties in learning Indonesian language by students in the classroom focusing on linguistic challenges, (b) to determine and classify these challenges to help teachers tackle the problem, and (c) to come up with critical suggestions for the school to overcome the problem. The participants in this study are of two sources: (1) all the Indonesian students who have been lived and studied abroad who are currently studying at Al-Syifa Boarding School in the seventh and tenth grades; (2) teachers and staff at the school. The results showed that there are different linguistic challenges in learning Indonesian language by IBHSs that can only be solved through intensive courses of BIBA.**

Keywords : language learning, linguistic challenges, Al-Syifa B.S., IBHSs

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning difficulties has been an area of interest for researchers focusing on different aspects of language learning difficulties on both L1 and L2 such as students low achievement (Ferrar and Palladino, 2007:256-269), learning styles (Castro and Peck, 2005: 401-409), proposing approaches on a foreign language learning difficulties (Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky, 1998: 248-258), non-linguistic (communication) challenges of immigrant students (Hilburn, 2014: 654-680), and linguistic challenges of immigrant students who travelled to the united states (Kanno and Varghese, 2010: 310-328). Pinar (Pinar, 2016: 83-94) suggests for further research on language learning difficulties (Pinar, 2016: 92). More specifically research on the effect of L2 on L1.

A. The Effects of L2 on L1 on Study and Stay Abroad Context

The effect of the l2 on L1 is known as the influence of a person's knowledge of second language on that of his or her first language known as "L2 influence, reverse/backward transfer, bidirectional transfer, interference, interlingual effects, cross-linguistic influences, cross language transfer, cross language influence" (Liu and Ni, 2016: 625). The literature shows an increase interest in identifying the direct and indirect affect of L2 language knowledge on the L1 linguistic knowledge in different linguistic levels. At a semantic level, the study by Liu & Ni (2016: 625) proved that there is a direct influence from L2 to L1; that is 'the influence of English knowledge on Chinese at a semantic level; the case of English tag questions knowledge on Chinese'.

Juan-Garau (2015: 45) found that "YES" study abroad can do the trick in terms of enhancing learners' speaking abilities. This study did not highlight the risks of L2 on L1 in the case of a long term study abroad. Cook [9] claims that there are positive and negative side effects on the L1 which are represented in three points: (a) the first language can be enhanced by the use of a second language; (b) the first language can be harmed by the use of a second. (c) the first language is different from the second, without being better or worse.

B. Linguistic Challenges

Indonesian language is a language spoken by Indonesians and used as the official language. It is "agglutinative" language with a complex range of affixation attached to base words. For example, the verb *bermaafmaafan* consists of the prefix *ber-*, the suffix *–an*, and the infix *maaf* (functions as internal reduplication).

According to Kanno and Varghese (2010: 316) linguistic challenges of the L2 learners might be mainly found in their academic work. According to him the most difficult is the reading and writing skills. (Kanno and Varghese, 2010: 316) That linguistic challenges, structural constrain, financial struggles, and self-censorship are the challenges of language learning. He concluded that the most frequent challenges of the four language skills are reading and writing; students require more extra time to perform academic task in one's L2.

This study is meant to shed light on the linguistic challenges of Indonesian Back-Home Students (IBHSs) with the following questions.

- What are the difficulties that encounter the Indonesian Language teacher in teaching IBHSs?
- What are the ILLDs that encounter the IBHSs?
- What are the morphological difficulties that encounter the IBHSs?
- What are the syntactical difficulties that encounter the IBHSs?

II. METHOD

The study is a descriptive analytical study at Al-Syifa B.S. Subang, Indonesia. The participants are the seven and tenth classes with total of (N 17) students who have stayed and studied abroad and now are studying at Al-Syifa Boarding School. Seven males and eleven females were chosen because they are fresh arrivals and have linguistic problems with the Indonesian language. The data are obtained through direct interview with the Indonesian language teachers and the IBHSs and collecting some samples of the IBHSs writings in

Indonesian Language. The analysis was processed accordingly.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Indonesian Language Teachers Perspectives Towards IBHSs Language Difficulties

Table 1 presents the teachers' difficulties in teaching Indonesian language for IBHSs in the seventh and tenth grades.

Table 1. teaching difficulties

Difficulties in Indonesian Language Learning
• Teaching Indonesian language for IBHSs needs an effective language teaching.
• More techniques in teaching Indonesian Language for IBHSs is highly required.
• The available textbooks contain less literature.
• The textbooks should not include difficult vocabularies because the teacher is obliged to translate into English.
• IBHSs cannot catch the learning process.
• IBHSs seem to understand the material, but they fail to answer the questions in exams.
• Students need more attention and repeating the lesson for many times.
• Additional classes *klinik belajar* (for students with law achievements including IBHSs).
• The same problem is persists at Al-Syifa every year.
• Some students cannot understand English and Indonesian.
• IBHSs are afraid of making mistakes in communicating in the class.

The eleven points are the problems encountered by the teachers who are involved in teaching BIPA for IBHSs at Al-Syifa Boarding School. In addition to that, there are three levels in Indonesian language basic, intermediate, and advance for testing IBHSs.

Table 2 shows students' linguistic difficulties and challenges in the Indonesian classes from the perspectives of the teachers and IBHSs. Their challenges are morphological, syntactical, vocabulary and semantic, communicative competence, and formality of language.

Table 2. ibhss linguistic difficulties

Morphological Difficulties
• Difficulties in the affixation.
• They don't understand the basic components of morphology Indonesia.
Syntactical Difficulties
• The students lack the confidence in making complex or even simple sentences.
• Some students write in a foreign language rather than the Indonesian language (e.g., Japan, news land).
• Difficulties in forming S. V. O sentences in Indonesian Language.
• Sentence structure.
• Active and passive forms.
Vocabulary and Semantic Challenges
• Difficulties in the meanings of the words (semantics).
• Lack of vocabularies.
• Have limited vocabularies.
Communicative Competence Challenges
• Difficulties in communicative competence.
• Have vocabularies but have difficulty to communicate that language.
• Less communicative.
• IBHSs are less communicative with their teachers and their classmates.
• Students cannot catch the teacher's because those students have not more vocabularies.
• Difficulties in understanding and giving feedback.
Formality of Language Challenges
• Students lack the confidence to talk in front of the class because they use informal language every day.
• Mostly IBHSs use informal language in their communication with their peers.
• The use slang language in their class that is inconvenient for teachers and their peers.
• Difficulties in understanding Indonesian language for academic purposes.
• In poetry, students are not qualified to form a systematic rhythm.
• IBHSs use informal language than formal one. For example, in writing, they use of formal language rather than the formal one. For example, *ngga, tolong beliin* instead of *belikan.*
• IBHSs use an informal language in the formal class.

The basic morphological components of the Indonesian language and the affixation system and the limit to the Indonesian vocabularies causes further difficulties such as communicative competence and forming feedback in the Indonesian classes. The use of informal or slang language in formal classes is inconvenience for Indonesian language teachers.

B. IBHSs Perspectives of ILLDs

The issue of ILLDs is a serious issue in the sense that IBHSs have very limited language awareness or 'shock'; a term introduced by Michael Ager 1994 concentration on how complex the cultural dimensions are of language in their social setting.

Tabel 3. Learners Difficulties

IBHSs Perspectives of Indonesian Language Learning
• I just understand 25% of the lesson and sometimes less than that and I cannot understand what my classmates are talking about.
• In our former school in Al-Khorr City in Qatar, teachers use English at the school, I had studied Indonesian language at my former school but I still have challenges in communicating the language and in class, I cannot get what the teachers are explaining. I cannot understand when my friends are making jokes in an Informal one.
• I have difficulties in Indonesian especially in writing. I have no difficulties in communication in informal language. I have difficulty in understanding the teachers' explanation in Indonesian language because they speak fast.
• I cannot speak Indonesian language fluently because I did not study Indonesian language at school. It is hard to be understood in the class and mainly the exams. I still have some difficulties in morphosyntax
• I have difficulties with the vocabulary. In class, I do not like to answer because I feel scared if I make a mistake.

According to table 3, the learners' difficulties is varies from one student to another based on two external factors, namely the family and the school. The family factor is related to using Indonesian language in the daily conversations between parents and the children. The second factor is the school where many of the IBHSs studied at international schools in which English is the language of instruction. In some countries (e.g., Qatar) international schools provide additional languages than English as school subjects like Indonesian language. Students who studied in such international schools have slight difficulties in Indonesian language when they back to Indonesia. Those students still have difficulties with understanding the formal language of the classroom instruction, language of textbooks, and academic language (writing). The point is that, the most IBHSs who have serious difficulties with Indonesian language are those students who enrolled at public schools in a foreign country that they were living in.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Teachers difficulties in teaching Indonesian language for IBHSs

Teachers at Al-Syifa B.S. have different and similar perspectives about what makes teaching and learning Indonesian language for IBHSs difficult. The similar perspective is the persistence of the problem of ILLDs and still more challenging compared with the previous years. Therefore, the school is trying to solve this persisting problem by launching the BIPA program to enhance the students' language competence of Indonesian Language. However competence is necessary in daily communication, the school has less attention to identify the exact needs of IBHSs that is 'Indonesian language for academic purposes'. The need for Indonesian academic language is a necessity in the sense that teachers of Indonesian language are criticizing the current textbooks claiming that IBHSs reflects to these textbooks as basic and ease.

B. Linguistic challenges

The vital issue in L2 language acquisition by IBHSs is the linguistic challenges. Study on students' linguistic challenges suggests that students have difficulties in the basic skills like reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Students who have difficulties in the basic skills are more likely to have difficulties in the academic work. In line with Kanno and Varghese findings, this article found that there are five different areas of ILLDs encountered by IBHSs, namely morphological, syntactical, communicational, semantic, lexical, and language formality. IBHSs are explaining their problem *Saya masih kesulitan berbicara bahasa Indonesia* (lit. I still have difficulties in speaking Indonesian Language), *Aku lebih tahu bahasa inggris dari pada bahasa Indonesia. Aku dulu Sekolah di newton British Academy yang memakai curriculum british/Cambridge. Jadi di sana aku jaran memakai bahasa indonesia tetapi saya sedikit-sedikit memakai bahasa indonesia bersama orang tua* (lit. I know English more than I know Indonesian. My school is the N*ewton British Academy which has a Cambridge curriculum.* Thus, the Indonesian language is less used.

The linguistic challenges introduced in the students' witting are mostly related to the lack of speaking skills; the communicative competence.

1) Morphologicl difficulties

IBHSs have two major morphological difficulties, namely difficulties in the affixation and difficulties in understanding the basic morphological components of the Indonesia language. For example, students still confused about the different variations of the prefix *meN-* in words like *mengtemukan* (find) which requires the prefix *meng-* instead of *men-* only. To illustrate that consider this example from the IBHSs writings *pada permain kemudian mentemukan sisa* […] (lit. all are playing then found …). Other example is the verbs *menyapu*, *mengontrol*, and *menulis* which have the word stem *sapu*, *tulis* and *kontrol* (lit. to clean, to write, to control) respectively in which the exact prefix to be added to the stem in order to form a verb is *me-*. Students still have difficulty to differentiate between the different variations of the affixation *meN-*.

2) Syntactical Difficulties

There are five different syntactical challenges like forming simple and complex sentences, the transfer of L1 to L2, difficulties in forming S. V. O sentences, and forming of passive voice. To illustrate the lack of sentence structure, consider the following example.

Guru	:*apakah anda tinggal satu kamar dengan dia?*
Teacher	:are you staying with her in the same room.
Siswa	: *tidak, saya kamar satu dengan Nia.*
Student	: no, I am room no. one.
[x]	:*Maksuk (X) itu kamar satu=satu kamar. (X) masih suka terbalik menemputkan kata.*
[x]	:she meant, she is staying with her in room number one.

Simply, the phrase '*saya kamar satu dengan* …' is semantically and pragmatically different from the phrase

'*saya satu kamar dengan ...*'. Indonesian language is a post-nominal modifiers and can be direct or indirect in which adjectives has the function of predictive and attributive (Cheng & Sybesma, 2014). Therefore, IBHSs have the difficulty of whether the preceding is the modifier or the attributive.

Another syntactical challenge is in the passive formation where some of the IBHSs cannot form passive forms, for example:

> *Hana membaca buku* (active form).
> Hana reads a book.
> *Hana dibaca Buku* (student answer)
> *Buku dibaca Hana.* (correct passive form),
> The book is read by Hana.

The passive sentence written by the student in the example above is syntactically correct but has no semantic and pragmatic functions. In the passive form the direct object (O) in the active sentence becomes a subject initial in the passive sentence.

3) Lexical and semantic difficulties

It seems that lexical and semantic are among the most challenging linguistic domains for IBHSs. In line with the lexical and semantic challenges, IBHSs are lacking of vocabulary knowledge, which leads to communication barriers between them and their Indonesian peers who have great vocabulary knowledge. IBHSs lack productive or active vocabulary; a vocabulary they use in formal communication and academic writings, for some IBHSs they lack both formal and informal vocabulary knowledge. Research on vocabulary acquisition has suggested that L2 learners have to master at least a quarter of the native speaker in order to understand 80% of a running text. Numerically, 5000 words are needed in order to facilitate understanding an authentic texts, for more see (Moghadam, Zainal, & Ghaderpour, 2012). Semantically, the acquisition of vocabulary in L2 requires a great knowledge in the word meaning and moreover its use (pragmatics). IBHSs claim that the problem lies in the fact that they cannot understand the semantic and pragmatic meanings, which make the learning process even harder. For example, a student whose school background is Arabic language claims that *I just understand 25% of the lesson and sometimes less than that and I cannot understand what my classmates and classrooms are talking about*; a student whose school background is an international school *I have difficulty in understanding the teachers' explanation in Indonesian language because they speak fast.*

4) Communicative competence challenges

As mentioned above that the limitation of vocabulary makes the IBHSs less communicative. Communicative competence is the ability to use the linguistic resources of L1x or L2x in different communicative settings. The communicative competence is concerning with the successful process of performing a different types of speech acts (M. L. Bergman and G. Kasper, 1991: 139-176). Most of the IBHSs are considering Indonesian language as a second or a foreign language. Therefore,

when they back to Indonesia they feel frustrated and unable to perform a successful communicative speech acts. Their challenges in a communicative competence lie in the fact that they lack the vocabulary knowledge which makes them less confidence when speaking. To illustrate that the students and teachers listed some difficulties: student said I still have difficulties with the vocabulary.

5) Formality of language challenges

Language formality is related to the different variations of language registers or styles (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). IBHSs are highly required to use formal language rather than informal language when in academic settings. There are different challenges resulted by using the informal language in an academic settings at school. These challenges are the lack of confidence to talk in front of the class because they use informal language every day, they use of slang language in their classes which is inconvenient for teachers and their peers as well, difficulties in understanding Indonesian language for academic purposes, are not qualified to form a systematic rhythm. In writing, IBHSs use informal language rather than the formal one. For example, *ngga*,(no) *tolong* (help) *beliin* (buy) instead of *belikan* (buy) … etc.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the most crucial problems are the students' lack of effective teaching and students' lack of linguistic resources; the different skills needed in an academic setting. Vocabulary limitation is the biggest challenge for the IBHSs in the sense that they cannot perform any type of communication perfectly. There are five different linguistic challenges, namely morphological, syntactical, and lexical and semantics, communication skills or competence, and formality of language. These linguistic challenges are the results of the influence of L2 (Arabic & English) upon L1 (Indonesia) that is known as including L2 influence, reverse/backward transfer, bidirectional transfer, interference, interlingual effects, crosslinguistic influences, cross language transfer, cross language influence (Liu & Ni, 2016). In this regard, the study recommends that Al-Syifa boarding School has to establish a language center to measure the linguistic and academic abilities of the IBHSs. Students with low linguistic and academic abilities have to be placed in a short language course called 'Indonesian language course for formal communication and academic purposes'.

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