

PROCEEDINGS

The 3rd International Language and Language Teaching Conference Friday-Saturday, 21-22 October 2016 at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

English Language Education Sanata Dharma University Jl. Affandi, Mrican, Caturtunggal Depok, Sleman, Yogyakarta 55281 (+62) 274-513301







Proceedings

THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE TEACHING CONFERENCE (LLTC 2016)

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Preface

The Organizing Committee are delighted to present the proceedings of the Third International Language and Language Teaching Conference (LLTC 2016). The main of the conference is: Pursuing Meanings in English Language Teaching. This year's proceedings contain 64 full papers, covering various topics in language learning-teaching, linguistics and literature.

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CONTEXTUAL TRANSLATION EXERCISES IN TEACHING TENSES IN GRAMMAR CLASSES

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Abstract

This paper has the purpose to investigate the application of contextual translation exercises in teaching tenses in grammar classes. A previous study (Veniranda & Tutyandari, 2008) showed that translation exercises could help students see the contrasts between source and target language in grammar classes of higher semester, i.e. semester 4, and the students had a positive perception about the use of translation in grammar classes. Indonesian and English have some basic similarities and differences that bring about consequences to the L1 (Indonesian) to L2 (English) transfer. At an early stage of grammar classes, two main differences are shown on the use of tenses and noun markers. Different from English, Indonesian has no changes of verb forms, and nouns are not obligatorily marked by singularity or plurality. In this on-going study, there are examples of contextual translation exercises in teaching tenses and comments from students about the exercises. The responses show that from the translation exercise about Simple Present Tense and Present Progressive Tense, the students also observed other relevant facts about the differences between Indonesian and English.

Key words: contextual translation exercises, L1 to L2 transfer

Introduction

The phenomenon that English learners have good fluency but lack of language accuracy has been my concern for these few years. Different from what the students have experienced these days, senior high students, say, twenty years ago, did not have the experience to learn speaking or listening in their English classes. I remember that when I was in senior high school, learning English means learning examples of English conversations, reading to review the vocabulary, and a detailed discussion of English grammar. Junior and high school students have a different experience. They are exposed to a lot of reading passages, have the experience to access audio materials and opportunity to speak English. However, Interference of L1 is quite obvious in the learners' speech.

I believe that an understanding of the contrasts between Indonesian English can help learners to be more aware when they want to express themselves. In advanced levels, teachers would prefer to suggest their students to think in the target language rather than thinking in L1 and try to translate their ideas into L2. At the beginning levels, teachers need to help the learners to make smooth transitions from a familiar to an unfamiliar language system.

There are two basic contrasts between Indonesian and English grammar. The first one: It is grammatical to be "verb-less" in Indonesian sentences, as shown in the following sentences:

(1) Kami mahasiswa USD 1pl student USD 'We are students of USD.' (2) Saya senang sekali 1sing happy very 'I am very happy.'

The examples above show that the subjects are followed directly by a noun in sentence (1) and an adjective in sentence (2) in Indonesian.

The second basic contrast between Indonesian and English is: There is no verb change in Indonesian, as shown in the following examples:

- (3) Kami **bertemu** orang aneh minggu lalu 1pl meet person weird week last 'We met a weird person last week.'
- (4) Kami sering **bertemu** orang aneh 1pl often meet person weird

'We often meet weird people.'

The examples above show that in Indonesian, time reference, whether past or present, does not change the verb *bertemu* 'meet.' There is a book we used in my undergraduate studies called *Changing Time Changing Tenses*. The title of the book reflects the basic nature of English. At the center concern of English grammar learning, changing verb forms occur as there are changes of time references, thus changes of tenses. Tense changes reflect time changes in English. Observing a few simple sentences above, I have my belief confirmed repeatedly over the years, that translation can be a powerful learning tool.

Educational research on teachers' beliefs shares the assumption that teachers' beliefs influence their classroom practices. Further, knowledge on their own beliefs is crucial in improving teaching practices (Johnson, 1994). An interesting research was conducted by Farrell and Lim (2005). They interviewed teachers and then observed the teachers' classroom practices. Integrating my beliefs into classroom practices, I intend to make grammar teaching as a meaningful experience. This study investigated students' perception on the use of translation exercises in grammar classes, especially in the meetings discussing Present Simple and Present Progressive Tense.

Research Methods

In this study, the students were given Indonesian sentences that can be expressed in two tenses in English: Present Simple Tense and Present Progressive tense. Some reflective questions were given after they finished the exercise. Their answers are shown in the next section.

There are four questions to obtain the students' preliminary perception about translation exercises:

- 1. Can you draw a conclusion that we need to make some necessary adjustments when we express ideas in Indonesian and English?
- 2. Mention some of the basic differences between Indonesian and English you observed from the exercise above.
- 3. Can translation exercises help you see the differences between Indonesian and English?
- 4. Can translation exercises help you show the differences between the two tenses? There were 25 students of the first semester in their first grammar class in the Extension Course program. The students were from various backgrounds, fresh senior high school graduates, undergraduate and master program graduates, undergraduate students. The students are from various arts, social and science majors, and from different private and public institutions in Yogyakarta.

Findings and Discussion

The answers to the questions provide the information that the majority of the students see the exercise as helpful. More than 80% of the students answered "yes" the three yes/no questions. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 1. The results of the responses to the three yes/no questions

Questions	Yes	No	Others
Q#1 Can you draw a conclusion that we need to	20 (80%)	3 (12%)	2 (8%)
make some necessary adjustments when we			
express ideas in Indonesian and English?			
Q#3 Can translation exercises help you see the	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
differences between Indonesian and English?			
Q#4 Can translation exercises help you show the	22 (88%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)
differences between the two tenses?		, ,	, ,

The short questionnaires did not require the students to provide their reasons for their answers. Only one student wrote "still confused."

The traditional Grammar Translation Method may be considered a monotonous learning of grammar rules. Moreover, if the activities of translation from and to the target language contain sentences that the students do not feel connected to, the activities may cause the students to lose their interests. Memorizing lists of words and error correction may also become tedious when the sentences are not "down-to-earth" sentences. Therefore, as one of the highlighted descriptions of contextual translation exercise is the Indonesian sentences are spontaneous, natural, casual, and familiar. The challenge is the students have to translate them into grammatical written English. Although in casual English conversations we hear chunks or phrases of incomplete sentences, in this exercise, the results of the translation have to grammatical and complete sentences. An example of the exercises can be seen in the Appendix.

The following examples of Indonesian sentences are expressed in their English counterparts by using Present Progressive tense:

- 1. A: Kalian sedang ada di mana? Lagi ngapain? 'Where are you? What are you doing?'
 - *B: Kami sedang duduk di bawah pohon beringin Soekarno*. 'We are sitting under Soekarno Banyan tree.'
- 2. Kami mahasiswa EEC dan kami sedang di ruang I/K.07 sekarang.'We are students of EEC and we are in Room I/K.07 now.'
- 3. Kami sedang membahas rencana kami pergi ke Bali. Saya belum tahu tanggal pastinya.'We are discussing our plan to go to Bali. I don't know the date yet.'
- 4. Sekarang saya mengerti mengapa dia tidak hadir.'Now, I understand why he is absent.'

In addition to understanding that sentences showing an action or a situation that is in progress, the students need to formulate grammatical sentences in English that have complete NP+VP as the subject and predicate. Sentence number 2 is an example that shows NP + NP can form a grammatical sentence in Indonesian, but when expressing the idea in English, the students learnt that a form of "be" needs to be inserted:

(5) Kami mahasiswa EEC

1pl student EEC
*'We students of EEC.'

It should be: 'We are students of EEC.'

Another observation is needed to understand that to be grammatical, we need to add a verb if an English sentence does not have one:

(6) kami sedang di ruang I/K.07 sekarang

1sg in progress in room I/K.07 now

*'We in room I/K.07 now.'

It should be: 'We are in Room I/K.07 now.'

In the example above, without adding "are," the sentence is ungrammatical. The exercise also helped the students learn about "non-progressive verbs" in English, i.e. verbs that are not used in –ing forms, although the meaning is now or at this moment (sentence number 4).

The following sentences are examples of general truths or repeated actions/habits:

- 1. Jam berapa kamu biasa makan siang? 'What time do you usually have lunch?'
- 2. Kamu mirip siapa? Kamu mirip mamamu atau papamu?'Who do you look like? Do you look like your mother or father?'
- 3. Ketika bertemu banyak orang baru, saya biasa grogi. 'When I meet many new people, I am usually nervous.'
- 4. Saya tertarik belajar keempat ketrampilan berbahasa Inggris. 'I am interested in learning the four English skills.'
- 5. Air mendidih pada suhu berapa Celcius? 'At what degrees Celcius (or centigrade) does water boil?'
- 6. *Mereka biasanya tepat waktu. Kenapa belum ada orang di sini?* 'They are usually punctual. Why isn't there anybody here yet?'

From these few sentences, let us draw our attention to the word *grogi* 'nervous.' If many of the students produce *I usually nervous, it is not surprising. Teachers are familiar with their students' common mistakes, such as *we surprised, *I shocked, *he hungry, *we bored, *the story interesting, *the picture colorful. The reason for these mistakes is the influence of Indonesian. The class discussion is now drawn to "part of speech." These are examples of adjectives. When the students are asked to remember the first rule about English sentences, i.e. every English sentence has to have a verb, some students raised this question: 'How can we differentiate adjectives from verbs?'

My answer is: 'Let us learn these commonly used adjectives as adjectives.' It is true that many English adjectives are derived from verbs, e.g. interest – interesting - interested, attract -attractive, surprise – surprised - surprising, shock – shocked - shocking. When *surprise* is used a verb, it will follow the rules of verbs. For example,

- (7) She surprised everyone in the party (as a verb, a past action)
- (8) She often surprises her friends with her poses in Instagram (as a verb, repeated actions).
- (9) His speech in the opening ceremony was surprising (as an adjective 'mengejutkan')
- (10) I was surprised to hear the news (as an adjective 'terkejut') Azar (1999, pp235-238) exercise 26 to 29 can be useful to show these participial adjectives.

From the discussion above, a set of translation exercise, which is intended to show the explicit ideas of activities in progress (thus expressed in sentences using Present Progressive Tense), and activities that are repeated, routines, or some general facts or truths (thus expressed in sentences using Present Simple Tense), turns out to lead the

class into discussions about other relevant differences between Indonesian and English. Some of them are discussed as follow:

- 1. In Indonesian, noun markers are optional (*Ada buku* or *ada sebuah buku*), but in English, nouns need to be explicitly marked singular or plural when it is a countable noun (Not *there is book, *there are book, but there is a book, there are books).
- 2. English sentences require a verb, and when there is not yet a verb, a verb has to be inserted or "created," so that the sentences can be grammatical (*We students of EEC, or *I happy).
- 3. There is a group of non-progressive verbs in English and there are verbs that belong to both this group and action verbs. Non-progressive verbs are verbs that are used in –ing form, even though the time is now or at the moment of speaking, e.g. *I know* and not **I am knowing, I understand* and not *I am understanding*. Some verbs that can be used as an action verb and a non-progressive verb express somewhat different ideas: e.g. *The soup tastes salty* (as a non-progessive verb that means 'rasanya') and *The cheft is tasting the soup* (as an action verb that means 'mencicipi'). Further examples can be seen in Azar (1999, p.16).
- 4. Another interesting and challenging point of discussion is Yes/No Questions and Questions with question words. A simple question in Indonesian *Siapa namamu?* Or *Namamu siapa?* cannot be freely expressed in English with the changing question word: *What is your name?* but *Your name is what?

Comparing asking questions in Indonesian and in English turns out to shed a light how the two languages are different. The inversion of an auxiliary and the subject in English poses another challenge. This is one of the difficult points in the exercise for the students. Many students asked what the difference between *do you* and *are you* is.

The results of question number 2, i.e. Mention some of the basic differences between Indonesian and English you observed from the exercise above, show the exercise invited various kinds of responses from various perspectives. The following is the list of the students' responses. Some of them have written the answers in Indonesian. I will quote them in English. Their answers were in phrases and sentences.

One group of the same category: The students pointed out the idea of changing time changing tenses in different ways: "the use of adverbs of time influences the sentence; change of verbs; tenses; adding s/es to the verbs in English; there is no verb change in Indonesian, different from English; English has V1, V2, V3, V-ing; there is no past forms of Indonesian verbs; Indonesian does not know tenses; different time means different tenses; time is very influential." Some of the students noticed the difference in questions: "English differentiates 'how much' and 'how many' (both are expressed as 'Berapa banyak?'). In Indonesian; structure of questions; there is a change of patterns when the declarative sentences are changed to interrogative/ questions." The following statement from a student may be debatable: "Indonesian is simpler." Another main difference the students noticed: "Quantity markers: English has a rule about singular and plural differences."

These responses show that from the translation exercise about Simple Present Tense and Present Progressive Tense, the students also observed other relevant facts to consider when expressing the ideas in English sentences. Understanding these basic differences is crucial to show the students that after all, they are the ones who have to revise these sentences if they use a translation machine: *You're no where? What are you doing? We were sitting under *a banyan tree Sukarno. *What time did you regular lunch? You're like who? You look like your mother or your father? When meeting new people, I usually groggy. I copied the first four sentences in the exercise and pasted the

results here. The machine can help us with the vocabulary to a certain extent, but the grammar needs to be reviewed.

Conclusion

Transferring ideas from L1 to L2 may be one of the processes many beginning foreign language learners do. This can be one of the causes that most Indonesian students produce English sentences that are influenced by Indonesian. Translation exercises may sound old-fashioned, because it is associated with the Grammar Translation Method and at the same time, associated with Latin or ancient Greek learning. This study has tried to modify GTM into more contextual and meaningful language learning, so the exercise is called contextual translation exercises.

Teachers can use various techniques to improve the students' mastery of a particular language skill or element. Observing that some common mistakes have been the influence of direct transfer from Indonesian to English, I believe that at the beginning level, students need to have the understanding that there are some basic differences between Indonesian and English. When trying to express their ideas in English, the students need to make some essential adjustments, especially in one of the basic nature of English grammar: tenses.

For future research, other tenses or other grammatical constructions can be the focus of study. Teaching productive language skills by contextual translation exercises can pose other challenges to investigate.

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