

# The Challenges Encountered by Thai Students in Learning Bahasa Indonesia as Second Language

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**Abstract.** People nowadays should master more than one language. Therefore, they are not left behind by the advancement of languages and technology. One of the languages that is in demand by various nations in the world is Bahasa Indonesia. This study describes the challenges encountered by Thai students in learning Bahasa Indonesia as second language. For the time being, many studies merely focus on English Language. The results of this study were used to find the effective strategies to teach Bahasa Indonesia for Thais through qualitative descriptive research. The location of this study was at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya. The research subjects were ten Thai students with transcripts as the data. The results of the study indicated that the challenges encountered by the students were mainly in the aspect of competence (error not mistake) in speaking Bahasa Indonesia. The competence aspect includes the competence to understand sentences, phonemes, diction (first language Thai interference and first language Malay interference) and competence in understanding Indonesian (mis-formation). Then, the alternative in solving the challenges of second language learning was by using the immersion method. By using this technique, the learners were forced to always use a second language in every communication.

**Keywords:** *second language, error, challenges, Thai students*

## INTRODUCTION

Many countries, such as Canada, Japan, Vietnam, Australia, Ukraine, South Korea, the Hawaiian Islands of America, Suriname-South America, Thailand, China, Morocco, have their citizens learn Bahasa Indonesia. Even, Bahasa Indonesia in those countries is studied as the second language along with English or other international languages. Learning a second language (foreign languages) will make learners become more successful than learners who do not learn a second language [1].

Bahasa Indonesia for Thai students is a language learning program that is aimed for the foreign speakers. Studies that has been being carried out, generally, investigate English as the subject of second language not Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, Bahasa Indonesia in spoken form. Spoken language is one of the most important language skills to be developed

and improved as effective means of communication. The skill is considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of second language learning [2].

The use of Bahasa Indonesia as a second language for Thai students is inseparable from errors. Therefore, in learning languages, the students should understand how the language works and how to use it. As if the case of music students, a student who has been taught a lot of grammar but was not able to use the language, was similar with a guitarist who has learned a lot about harmony but could not play guitar. Corder defined 3 (three) terms to limit the language errors: (1) Lapses, (2) Error, and (3) Mistake [3]. The three terms have different domains in viewing language errors. Corder explained that a *lapse* was a language error due to the speaker had switched the way to express something before all the utterances have been completely stated. For the spoken language, this type of error was termed as “slip of the tongue”, while for written language it was called as “slip of the pen”. *Error* was a language error due to the speaker in breaking the rules (breaches of code). This error occurred because the speakers already have their own grammar that was different from the other grammar. *Mistake* was a language error due to the speakers was wrong in choosing words or phrases for a particular situation, not because of a lack in mastering the second language. This mistake occurs accidentally and subconsciously. Language errors might occur because of many things, for example the influence of the first language, the lack of understanding by language users on the language that they use, and the flaw in language teaching.

In the learning process of Bahasa Indonesia for foreign students, particularly Thai students who are studying at University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, most of them speak Thai and Malay languages. It is not surprising to find the use of imperfect Bahasa Indonesia. A similar situation is found in other second language learners, for example English Language learners. The errors were made by students subconsciously and students did not understand the rules of language that was being studied [4]. Language errors could occur in interlingual errors, morphology, vocabulary and grammatical errors including, 1) negligence, 2) additions, 3) incorrect information, 4) and misunderstandings [5]. While errors often occurred in second language speaking were called as silent pauses (87%) and full pause (13%) [6].

The challenges encountered by Thai students in

learning second language learning by Thai learners was identified in their speaking competency. Speaking is utterances with the aim of having the intention to be recognized by the speaker and the listener to process a statement in recognizing that intention [7]. Based on the background described, the problems raised in this paper are: 1) Which aspects of linguistic competence are the challenges that are found in the transcripts of Thai students spoken language? 2) How are the solutions to encounter the challenges in learning second language done by the Thai learners?

#### METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. There were ten (10) Thai students who were studying at University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya. The data collection techniques were in the form of transcripts of records containing the conversation of Thai learners with natural / spontaneous settings in a cross-sectional time range (carried out in one-time unit).

#### RESULT

Based on the transcripts, the analysis was carried out in accordance with the formulation of the problem. The results are as follows:

##### Competency Challenges

Competency was a cause of language errors. Language errors were deviations of the rules target language. The error was a deviation of the use of language because the language learners did not know the correct rules as well. Errors were the manifestation of inadequacy or lack of language competence. Language errors was a phenomenon of competency. As a matter of fact, a mistake was occurred if the learner failed to express a competency, when in fact he has mastered it. The mistake concerned about the problem of language production process, which was the difficulty of accessing standard rules so that the learners used nonstandard language. Moreover, a mistake is a performance phenomenon which is not included in competency that occur because of limited planning, lack of memory and loss of automatic mechanisms. Errors of learners of second languages were dominated by intralingual errors [8].

##### Syntactic Competence

- Interviewer : *"Apa kabar?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Kabar baik"*  
 Interviewer : *"Sudah berapa lama di Indonesia?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Sudah satu bulan tiga minggu, seperti satu tahun lama sekali"*  
 Interviewer : *"Belajar disini sudah berapa tahun?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Dua tahun, jurusan pendidikan agama Islam, Tarbiah, semester lima"*  
 Interviewer : *"Mengapa ingin belajar di Indonesia?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Mengapa saya datang disini mau bicara lebih baik, karena saya*

*menjadi orang Thailand yang tidak bisa berbicara bahasa Melayu, bahasa ibunda saya bahasa Thai, saya datang disini saya mau bicara lebih baik"*

The data showed the syntactic competencies of Thai learners. The interviewer was a student who had an ability to speak Indonesian fluently compared to the interviewee. Generally, the interviewee seemed to understand the Interviewer by the interviewer. However, in terms of syntactic aspects, the sentence had a deficiency that the sentence structure was not well-structured, and no subject mentioned.

##### Phonemic Competence

- Interviewer : *"Sekarang banyak tugas?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Tugas apa?, tugas yang banyak sedikit, yang kuru ini pesan banyak, yang kuru ini tidak ada, saya suka hadis yang enak, tugas hafal tentang olang-olang alim, Allah mengangkat olang alim dengan wafatnya, sehingga dunia ini, olang bodoh sebagai pemimpin, dekat ahir zaman olang yang sedikit"*  
 Interviewer : *"Kuliah jurusan apa?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Jurusan akama Islam, semester lima"*

Phonemic errors are language errors that occur because of the errors in pronunciation of phonemes pronunciations. This case happened due to the lack of vocabulary mastery. The data showed that the students are unable to form certain words, for example, the words "tugas", "kuru", "hadis", "olang" and "ahir". These errors were happened because of the influence of the first language or mother tongue, Thai. As Brown [9] stated that second language acquisition was a part of learning that involved cognitive variations. These variations were related to one's personality and second cultural learning which involved the scientific side and communicative functions of a language. This was indicated by the learning stage and the development processes that were in the form of trial and error.

The challenges in this field were students' inability to mention a consonant "g", so it made the pronunciation of "agama" became "akama"; a word "guru" became "kuru" and the word "tugas" to "tukas". The word error occurred due to the influenced of the first language, Thai. Thai merely have a "k" sound but not a "g" sound. Thus, it made the Thai students replaced the sound "g" with the similar sound, "k" sound.

##### Interference Challenge

##### The challenge of Malay Interference

- Interviewer : *"Mengapa tidak kuliah hari ini?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Ada dua kuliah, kuliah yang mairu (ไมรุ) (ada dua kuliah, kuliah tidak tahu)"*  
 Interviewer : *"Biasa masak apa?"*  
 Interviewee : *"Thod khai (ทอดไข่), telur goreng enak" (goreng telur, telur goreng enak)"*

Interviewer : “Sebelum bisa bicara bahasa Indonesia atau tidak?”  
 Interviewee : “Maidai, ma phud thi (ไม่ได มาพูด) Indo” (tidak bisa, datang bicara di Indonesia)

The transcript showed that the student was unable to speak Bahasa Indonesia. This could be seen in the dominance of the use of Thai. In the transcript, the student knew the vocabulary but was not used to speak so due to the learner’s habit. The students often used Thai when they spoke in their daily lives. Moreover, when they had meeting with friends at the same age, it was certain that Thai would be used.

In speaking Bahasa Indonesia, Thai students mixed Bahasa Indonesia with their first language. The data described many unknown vocabularies for the learners, for example, “tidak tahu” was spoken as “ไมรู” (mai ru) in Thai, “goreng telur” was mentioned as “thod khai” (ทอดไข่) in Thai, and the emergence of sentence “mai dai, ma phud thi Indo” (ไม่ได มาพูดตอนใด) (tidak bisa, bisa bicara di Indonesia). The influence of first language was difficult to avoid because the first language habits were well-attached to the language users. The influence meant was on the vocabularies, structure and speech. This influence was only clearly known if the first language and Bahasa Indonesia were sought for the difference in rules. The errors in speaking Bahasa Indonesia could arise if the language users were solid with their first language habits and brought those habits into Bahasa Indonesia.

#### The challenges of Malay Interference

Interviewer : “Mengapa tidak kuliah hari ini?”  
 Interviewee : “Sayo tak kuliah, dosen sakit” (saya tidak kuliah, dosen sakit)  
 Interviewer : “Apa yang menarik bagi kamu ketika di Indonesia?”  
 Interviewee : “Variasi bahaso, banyak sekali Bahaso Jawo, Bahaso Sunda, Bahaso Madura” (variasi bahasa, banyak sekali Bahasa Jawa, Bahasa Sunda, Bahasa Madura)

The data showed that the student was able to Interviewee the Interviewers, but the use of Bahasa Indonesia vocabularies was incorrect. In the transcription, there were some vocabularies error, for example, the word “saya” became “sayo” in Malay; the word “bahasa” became “bahaso” in Malay; the word “banyak” became “banyok” in Malay and “bahasa Jawa” became “bahaso Jawo” in Malay.

From the data, there were vocabularies error form at the last syllable, the sound “a” became “o”. The error was caused by the influence of the learner’s first language, Malay. The students generally came from families who communicated both in Thai and Malay.

#### The competence in understanding Indonesian

Interviewer : “Mengapa ingin kuliah di Indonesia?”

Interviewee : “Tidak wif”  
 Interviewer : “Kamu sendiri disini?”  
 Interviewee : “Ngak, saya lupa cing-cing (จรงจรง) benar, saya lupa buat tugas” (tidak, saya lupa benar-benar, saya lupa buat tugas)

The data showed that the student was unable. The student did not know, did not understand anything that was asked by the interviewer resulting in mis-formation [6][9]. The student Intervieweeed the Interviewers but did not Interviewee on what was being asked. Shinbo (2004) identified two challenges in second language learning. First, it is concerning with the difficulty of learning Japanese because it was unusual with its terminology. Second, there is a tendency to mix discourse styles [10] [11]. While Faliyanti and Prasesti found that the causes of students’ speech errors were internal errors which included mother tongue, similar words, tongue slips (lapses) and speech organ errors. Moreover, the external factors included laziness and missing the language use in daily activities. [12] Humaera [13] stated that speaking inhibition happened due to the lack of motivation, shame, low self-confidence, low self-esteem and language ego [13] [14].

#### The Immersed Method as an Alternative

Based on the observations, it was found that Thai students on both inside and outside the campus did not want to mingle with Indonesian students. They were always together with their own fellow countrymen (Thailand). In addition, they did not use Bahasa Indonesia in daily speaking with their fellow countrymen. On the contrary, they utilized Thai or Malay. The use of the first language was in almost every speaking opportunity. The learners had a tendency of laziness in enriching the Bahasa Indonesia vocabularies, with an argument that Bahasa Indonesia seemed difficult to be learnt [12].

In order to overcome the problems faced by Thai students to speak Indonesian fluently, it was suggested that the immersion method be applied. In this type of integrated learning, all subjects became the part of individual perspective learning skills. The students filtered out all the concepts that they learnt according to their point of view and immersed themselves in experience through activities that they did. This method was effective to use. Thus, the students quickly succeeded in mastering a second language (foreign language) that was being studied. The immersion method was conducted by the students who stayed in the homes of local residents. They were not allowed to stay with friends of their country. Thus, the students were required to be able to communicate so that their needs were met. Efrizal suggested the use of communicative method and Jaya Sundara suggested the use of brainstorming method, debate and role playing in the process of learning a second language because it was also considered effective [15] [16].

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it showed that the challenges encountered by Thai students in learning Bahasa Indonesia at University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, were competency aspects (error not mistake) in Bahasa Indonesia. This was certainly proven with the analysis of the students' transcript. Once the descriptive analysis was carried out, the serious errors were found. The students did not understand the meaning of the questions. As a result, the interviewees were far from the expectation (misinformation).

In addition, errors were also found in the sentence structure, phonemes and dictions. Diction errors were the words choice errors which dominantly influenced by interference factors. Interference referred to the first language interference, Thai and Malay. In overcoming the problem, it was proposed to apply the immersion method. This method has proven effective to be used in second language learning. By this technique, the students were forced to use a second language in every communication. The next solution, Thai students must enrich their Bahasa Indonesia vocabularies by organizing special classes in Bahasa Indonesia, with lecture subject matters while at the similar time, assisting in completing learning tasks. Besides, it was ensured to Thai students that Bahasa Indonesia was not difficult to be learnt, it was merely cultural belief. This belief could make the level of second language learning achievement lower [4].

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