Second Language Literacy and Its Impact on the Writer's Identity

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Abstract

Identity and literacy range can change as the technology develops (Lotherington, 2007). This means that everybody can express different identity depending on the situation they are in. Besides, the scope of literacy itself is not merely about conventional writing (O'Brien, 2005). It becomes broader to multi-literacies as technology areas are considered to be the means to mediate literacy development which would influence the identity formation or identity act. This can be seen from the language used in the internet or the 'netspeak' (Crystal, 2006). 'Engdonesian' which is the combination of English and Indonesian languages as one of the 'netspeaks' is chosen to be analysed in this paper. The 'Engdonesian' which may perform certain role to express the users' online identity is the real sample of English as a second language effect on Indonesian as the first language. The data containing 'Engdonesian' was taken from the writer's blog or personal online journal on Friendster site that was individually published on 24 February 2008. Two questions are formulated in this study. They are (1) *how does English as the second language influence Indonesian as the first language as in 'Engdonesian' appeared on the blog? (2) how is the second language identity of the writer (me) manifested seen through the influence of second language on the first language as in 'Engdonesian' on the blog?* The analysis shows that English influence on the first language is to express the writer's online second language identity which might be different to when the writer is offline. English was inserted on Indonesian writing on the blog so that the writer may feel accepted in the online community. That is because the alterations of language as on the code-switching and the reverse transfer may not mean that there are no Indonesian words to express what the writer wants to say on the blog. Therefore, the Indonesian language containing English influence as in code-switching and backward transfer was employed so that it would be more blog-friendly.

Keywords: second language identity, internet literacy, first language

1. Introduction

English as an international language is widely used around the world today. It plays a great role as a means of communication in business, technology, media, and education, as well as other sectors globally. Lotherington (2007) mentions that the dominant use of English in technology area can be clearly seen in the internet. This phenomenon may arouse concerns with the influence of the internet users' language. In addition to this, Gill (1986) as cited in Roberts and Street (1997) claims that the changes in information and technology and the impact on the users may not be treated as technical progress only, but it would be more as an issue of 'power/knowledge and identity'. This would imply that language used on the internet may relate to the literacy and identity of the users, as I see it.

In my experience, the influence of English on Indonesian language is clear in the use of 'Engdonesian' which is the combination of Indonesian and English languages. Several commonly heard 'Engdonesian' expressions are "So what *gitu loh*?", "By the way, *kita ada* meeting *hari ini*", *"*Please*, jangan berbelit-belit*, to the point *aja deh*". Some of the italicised Indonesian words above are also from the Jakarta dialect which in general has also influenced the way Indonesian people speak. 'Engdonesian' is mostly used by Indonesian youth to communicate with people surrounding them, particularly their peers. Along with the development of English as global language, 'Engdonesian' occurs in both real world and digital context. The use of 'Engdonesian' in the internet then may play certain role in the way the users perform their identity while they are online.

'Engdonesian' is a real example of the effect of the English considered as a second language on Indonesian as the first language. The effect second language (L2) has upon first language (L1) is called 'reverse' or 'backward' transfer (Cook, 2003). This is named 'reverse' or 'backward' transfer because for long time, Second Language Acquisition research has been focusing on the interference or transfer of first language to the second language rather than its reverse. The effect of L2 on L1 has been researched recently and some of the studies of this 'backward' transfer will be mentioned below. Since the 'reverse' transfer can be considered new, it is hardly to find the research contrasting or arguing this transfer.

Pavlenko (2000) asserts that the 'backward' transfer occurs in all linguistic areas, such as: semantics, phonology, lexis, morphosyntax, and pragmatics. Pavlenko (2003) investigates the influence of English as an L2 on Russian lexicon and semantics and morphosyntax areas. She suggests that in the area of lexicon and semantic the influence was visible in lexical borrowing, loan translation and semantic extension, as well as in lexical retrieval difficulties. Meanwhile, in morphosyntax area, the results show that there are violations of tense and prepositional choice. Another study on the effect of L2 on L1 by Jarvis (2003) reveals the effects such as on

certain limited areas of grammar and general idiom on the inter-language of an advanced adult Finnish-speaking learner of English. Although there are limited previous studies on the effects of any L2 on Indonesian as an L1, the studies mentioned above can be the scaffolding to investigate 'Engdonesian' further in the area of lexicon, semantics, and morphosyntax.

2. Second Language Literacy and User's Identity

As regards literacy, I understand from Lotherington (2007) that as technology keeps evolving, the scope of literacy may not only be limited on reading and writing. It becomes broader as it would cover web community, as an example, to be the new environment in literacy. This would mean that literacy would always change because it relates to the development of the world we live in, including the areas of culture and identity.

2.1 Internet Literacy

Nonetheless, being net-literate may provoke pros and cons. The opponents of the internet argue that to be net-literate may lead to language problem. The global use of the internet may endanger the standard and correct language of the internet users in general because English becomes the dominant language on the internet and there has been enormous numbers of slang and non standard language shaped by the net community. However, rather than seeing the internet as a threat toward standard language, Crystal (2006) proposes that the internet has encouraged a remarkable growth in the variety and creativity of language. This variety of language is employed according to the situation the users are. Therefore, it is predictable in the sense that it is more likely to say how people from a particular region will speak and or how people will perform their language based on their function. I understand this as online communicators can adapt their language when they interact with other people. For example, the language a student uses to his or her lecturer during online interaction may be more formal compared to the language used to communicate with their peers where they tend to use more slang and non standard language.

Crystal (2006) identifies this interaction in the internet as 'Netspeak' that is indeed concise and functional in which 'speak' involves writing and talking as well as has receptive elements of listening and reading. Although the internet is obviously dominated by the written medium, the speech can be poured into online writing. The language users produced in the internet is dependant heavily on reactions to written messages because the main aspect of the internet is its potential interactivity. Similar to traditional written expression, the medium may affect the common language characteristics used on it. Let me take the acronyms used in online interaction as the examples to interpret this. The acronym 'lol', which stands for 'laugh out loud', may be more familiar to many internet users than those who are rarely in online interaction. This 'lol' is popular as one of the digital linguistic characteristics to respond to something funny during online interaction. It can be understood that those who read this 'lol' may hear the laugh and may respond back to it. Another online linguistic feature is the acronym 'brb' that stands for 'be right back'. This acronym seems unlikely to be used in traditional written version because it is commonly used when the internet users would not be in their online room for a certain time. Therefore, I interpret this 'Netspeak' to have the characteristics to encapsulate basic communicative skills, such as writing, speaking, reading, and writing.

Heller (1982) as cited in Hansen and Liu (1997) emphasises the choice and the use of language in particular context. Based on her study on language choice during interaction in one of the brewery in Quebec to examine how language used among workers from various ethnicities, she comes to a conclusion that besides as a means of communication, language is considered as a symbol of ethnic identity and relations. Language choice enables to indicate the social relationships of the users whether they belong to a certain ethnic group or not and helps construct social identity in specific context. For me, these findings imply that language chosen to communicate with would show that the users are from certain ethnic background and this would form their social identities.

According to O'Brien (2005), digital technology, is potential to facilitate communication among different language groups as well as improve visual literacy. For example, many people may be easily play video-game in which the instruction is in English just through the pictures or certain words. What I understand from what O'Brien meant here is that although people can hardly communicate in English, they can play the device because the device enables them to understand the instruction in certain ways, such as through the images and clues attached to the tool. I can link my interpretation here to the internet where English is predominantly used. Internet users who actually do not know English may be able to access the internet because the images or other features on it enable them to do so. Gradually, they can understand English used on the internet because they are accustomed to accessing it.

2.2 Net-user's Identity

In helping bridge the communication between different language groups, the interaction in the internet itself may improve the net-literacy and shape the identity of the users. One of the examples of the net communication

mentioned in Huffaker and Calvert (2005) is blogs, which are online journals written by individual and published on the web. Blogs could help the users to be digitally literate because its features are distinctive in terms of its ease of use. Bloggers do not have to master certain web language programming to publish their personal journals. Besides, blogs can help construct identity of the bloggers because there are spaces for others to give comments or feedbacks for every post and there are links to shape online society. These comments, feedbacks, and interactions in blog online community can affect bloggers in their identity formation, as I interpret it.

To discuss further how net-literacy relates to identity, it is better to define identity first. Calvert (2002) delineates identity as individual interpersonal characteristics, such as self-definition or personality traits, the roles and relationships individual takes on in various interactions, and the personal values or moral principles. This definition would mean to me that identity is how individuals characterise themselves based on their position and relationship in different situation. This is also supported by Paltridge (2006) who asserts that identity is not natural and fixed, even will not remain the same during the life. Atay (2009) suggests similar view that social, cultural, religious, and political contexts build identity which is considered to be a product of social, cultural, religious, and political mechanisms. This is how I understand from Calverts (2002), Paltridge (2006), and Atay (2009) that a person may perform different identity dependant on the situation they are in social, cultural, religious, and political contexts.

To be more details about identity, Block (2007, p.43) describes seven different perspectives of identity. The first is racial identity which relates to biological or genetic form. Another two types of identity are ethnic and national identities, which are identified with shared history, belief systems, language and religion, all associated with a cultural group and a nation state, respectively. The fourth is migrant identity regarding ways of living in a new country or place. Gender identity is the fifth which identifies the nature of conformity to socially constructed notions of femininities and masculinities, as well as orientation to sexuality and sexual activity. The sixth is social class identity which regards the income level, occupation, education, and symbolic behaviour. The last one is language identity which is associated with relationship between individual "sense of self and a means of communication, known as language, such as English, a dialect, such as Geordie or sociolect as in football-speak" (p.40). For me, Indonesian is the language, 'Engdonesian' is the dialect, and 'Nestspeak' is the sociolect. From these seven perspectives, ethnic, national, migrant, social class and language identities may be closely related to net-literacy as I perceive it.

I also found in Block (2006, p.40) that language identity is mainly about three types of relationship between the language users with language, dialect and sociolect itself. The relationship can entail language expertise, language affiliation, and language inheritance. Expertise is about how proficient a person is in a language, dialect, or socialect, that is, whether he or she can communicate a particular talk in such a way then be accepted by other users of the language, dialect, socialect. Affiliation is about the attitudes of a person towards a language, dialect, or sociolect and individual affective relation to them. As a consequence, it is the extent to which a person identifies with and feels attached to a certain form of communication. Inheritance is a matter of being born into family or community setting associated with a particular language or dialect. It is important to note that this birthright does not mean that the person is expert in that language or dialect or that the person feels positively affiliated to the language or dialect. A person can inherit a language or dialect, but does not feel any affiliation towards it or have expertise in it. As is the case with other types of identity, language identities can shift dramatically during lifetime. That is why, an individual can be born into a language community in which inheritance and expertise could be possibly questioned and later as life goes on, they can develop a strong affiliation to and expertise in another language community.

Many factors may influence the development of identity. Chen and Haris (2009) contend that the engagement in making sense of community practices is fundamental to identity formation and development. This is visible in both online and offline community practices. As revealed in their study, the involvement of Mary who is also an immigrant in her children literacy process helps shaping her identity to be a literate mother. She may know the best ways to assist the learning of her children as she learned from her own participation in her children's school life. What Mary learned from her engagement in her children learning process may evolve Mary's existence from being an immigrant mother who may have limited knowledge of her children current learning situation to be a mother who is knowledgeable in her children literacy practices which then enables her to provide the best ways in assisting her children. This evolvement can be seen as a process of identity formation. Regarding online community interaction, a study by Thomas (2000) as cited in Paltridge (2006) has explored the issues of language and identity in online chat environments. It is examined on it how girls use words and images to establish online identities which reflect both their fantasies and desires in this particular setting. This would show that people can shift their places and express different identities based on the situation where they are whether they are online or in real world. Therefore, identity development tends to keep changing and to be situated.

It is suggested in this literature review that along with the technological development, identity and the scope of literacy shift. Many experts have enthusiastically studied the ways language and identity are manifested

in virtual communication. Being inspired by previous studies on language and identity, I find it interesting to explore further how identity and language are interacted in the online communication. My consideration is also based on the fact that there are effects of English as an L2 on Indonesian as an L1. These effects are visible not only in spoken communication but also in written interaction. English which is predominantly used on the internet may affect Indonesian standard language as there are many slangs and non standard languages created by online communities. Although there are limited studies on Indonesian cases, this literature review leads me to several inquiries, such as what effects of English has on Indonesian in lexicon and semantic as well as morphosyntax areas in the internet users language, particularly in facebook site and how these effects relate to net literacy and identity of the users. This literature review also leads me to question the implications of L2 effects on L1 and its relation to net literacy and identity for English as foreign language learning in Indonesia.

3.   Methodology
The data containing 'Engdonesian' was taken from the writer's blog or personal online journal on Friendster site that was individually published on 24 February 2008. To make the attached raw data more easily understood, sentences containing the deviant standard Indonesian words, phrases, clauses due to English influences were italicised. The English elements, such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences found on the italicised were then bold. Meanwhile the Indonesian sentences containing no influence from English would not be counted in as data and would not be analysed in this essay.

4.   SL Influence on the First and The Manifestation of SL Identity of the Writer
This paper attempts to answer two main questions, such as: *how does English as the second language influence Indonesian as the first language as in 'Engdonesian' appeared on the blog?* and *how is the second language identity of the writer (me) manifested seen through the influence of second language on the first language as in 'Engdonesian' on the blog?*. Therefore, this essay will be split into two main parts, namely the influence of second language on the first and the manifestation of second language identity of the writer.

4.1 The Influence of Second Language on the First
English as a second language of the writer has influenced the writer's Indonesian language on the blog. This influence which is called 'Engdonesian' is marked by the deviant standard Indonesian language appeared on the blog due to the use of the code-switching and the reverse transfer on the language aspects, such as in lexical, phonological, and morphological aspects. They can be explained as follow.
Code-switching in which the writer used the Indonesian and English back and forth is mostly found in the data. Starting from the first line of the blog, the writer used English and then she continued with Indonesian and then with the combination of both English and Indonesian. This can be directly seen in the appendix.
In most lines, there were three English words that occurred more frequently, namely **coz**, **n**, and **thanx** which referred to *cause* as the simple way of saying *because*; *and*; and *thanks*, respectively. The letter *z, n, x,* in **coz**, **n**, and **thanx** were phonologically incorporated to those words as they had almost similar sounds to the original words **cause**, **and**, and **thanks**, respectively. Macswan (1999) names this phenomenon as phonological incorporation.
Other sentences containing code-switching can be seen in the following underlined clauses and sentences and its translation is provided after the underlined:
*...**coz** setiap orang bisa saja merasakan gugup **n** berbuat **something stupid**.*(line 16)
> *...because everybody can feel nervous and do something stupid.*

*...namun kita jgn **feel inferior n** jadinya ga bisa melakukan yg lebih baik.* (line 20)
> *...but we should not feel inferior and that should not make us unable to perform better.*

***thanx a lot** Pak Peter,* (line 24)
> *thanks a lot Mr. Peter*

*Aku juga bersyukur bisa mendapat beragam **info** yg tentunya **useful n important** bgt bt aku kelak klo dah di aussie. gmana klo msuk negara tsb, buka **account** barux gmana, trus **communication to the home country** gmana2, pokoknya **lots of info** deh dari beliau.* (line 27-30)
> *I was also thankful to get various useful and important information for me when I would be in Aussie later on, such as how to enter the country, to open new account, and how the communication to the home country will be, indeed lots of information from him.*

***It's alright**, yg penting aku mo bilang, syukur bgt bisa kenal Pak Peter.* (line 37)
> *It's alright, importantly I wanted to say, it was so great to know Mr. Peter.*

From the underlined examples above, it is obvious that English words were inserted in Indonesian not because there were no Indonesian words to express them, but basically the writer switched the language for certain purposes that will be explained in the second part of the analysis later.

The writer also used English complete sentences on the blog as follow:

__"Don't be afraid to admit you are less than perfect. It's this fragile that binds all of us together."__ (line 22&23)

__thanx for encouraging me all the time, and then i never say "sorry" again after all the interpreting.__ (line 25)

The quotation in line 22 and 23 seemed to show that writer was quoting somebody else speaking in English. In line 25, the writer seemed to thank the person whose words were quoted in line 22 and 23. It might be assumed that the person the writer was talked to may speak English as well. Then, the writer wrote English complete sentences to express them.

Regarding the 'backward' transfers as suggested by Cook (2003), it is mostly visible in borrowings or borrowing transfers, convergence, restructuring transfer, and shift (Pavlenko, 2003) and. They can be displayed in the following examples.

Aku sedih __coz__ aku ingat __n__ sadar bahwa beliau teramat membantuku dalam hal meningkatkan __self-confidenceQ__. (line 4&5)
> *I was sad because I remembered and realised that he had been really helpful in boosting my self-confidence.*

terang aja, sebelumnya aku rada ga pede dg __interpretingQ__. (line 6)
> *That was obvious, I was less confident about my interpreting.*

Itulah sebabnya, rasa ga pedeku meningkat __n__ membuatku kehilangan konsentrasi terhadap apa yg harus __Qinterpreting__. (line 12&13)
> *That was why my unconfidence increased and made me loose concentration on what I should interpret.*

In line 5, 6, and 13, the letter *Q* in **self-confidenceQ**, **interpretingQ**, and **Qinterpreting** were to replace the Indonesian word *ku* which referred to English personal pronoun *my* and single first person *I*. This is because *Q* in English sounds like Indonesian word *ku*. This is called convergence or creation of system that is different from both the first and the second languages (Pavlenko, 2003). The alphabet *Q* in Indonesia sounding like English word *key* does not carry any particular meaning to this sense, but with the influence of English, the alphabet *Q* in English which sounds like Indonesian words *ku* was used to replace the Indonesian word *ku* itself.

Another second language transfer to the first occurred in the following sentence.

…itu tandanya kan __Q expresiv__… (line 35)
> *…that meant that I was so expressive…*

The word **expresiv** in line 35 shows the restructuring transfer in which English is incorporated into Indonesian resulting some changes. The word *expressive* in Indonesia should be *ekspresif*, not **expresiv** as written above. By assimilating English word into it, the Indonesian word change into incorrect English and Indonesian, but a restructuring of both.

It is interesting to note that there was the combination of code-switcing and reverse transfer displayed in the last line of the blog.

sukes ya Pak, __4 karir n fam__. (line 38)
> *Success for you Sir, for career and family.*

In line 38, the word **karir** and **fams** are not in both languages. In Indonesian the word **karir** should be *karier*, whereas the word ***fam*** might have different meaning as English *family*. It is assumed that **karir** was used because the word *career* in English has double **e** which usually sounds as [i:]. Thus, *i* is used in the **karir** not *karier*. However, this can also be because the writer did not know that the Indonesian word for *career* should be *karier* not **karir**. Both words, **karir** and **fam** were used as their meanings and sounds might approximate to English words. Besides, **fam** in Indonesian means *surname*, not *family*. This can be seen as code-switching in which the contraction **fam** can indicate the borrowed word *family*. This is called morphological nativization (Macswan, 1999).

In addition to this, the number **4** was to replace *for* because *four* has almost similar sound to *for*. This is called shift in which the second language element is shifted into the first language structure or value (Pavlenko, 2003). The English **4** read as **four** which approximates to sound *for* was used to substitute Indonesian word *untuk*. This is also to show that the phonological incorporation as in code-switching did occur.

4.2 The Manifestation of the Second Language Identity of the Writer

The influence of second language on the first language as explained in the previous part reveals that code-switching from English and Indonesia back and forth, and reverse transfer from English as the second language on Indonesian as the first language occurred on the blog. This may be related to the second language identity of the writer as discussed below.

As regards the second language identity, it is about the relationship between the writer and the language itself (Block, 2006). The relation can be in language expertise, affiliation, and inheritance. Since English is a foreign language for the writer, the relationship between both may not be inherited.

Nonetheless, it is more unlikely to say that the writer is expert in English as it may be hard to measure here how expert the writer is in that language. If the influences as in code-switching and backward transfer are considered as the values to measure the second language expertise, it seems less convincing or unreliable. This is because the influences themselves were the deviances of the first language, Indonesian, not because English is mostly used on the blog and there might be some errors that can be taken into account as the basis for analysis.

Moreover, English was used occasionally in terms of the occurrences on the phrases, clauses and sentences on the blog. Besides, there might have been several deviances from the standard English as in the words **coz**, **n**, and **thanx**. Thus, it might be difficult to measure how expert the writer is in using English on that blog.

However, the deviances mentioned earlier can be done purposely as the writer did play with the language. Expertise that Block (2006) means is about how proficient a person is in a language, dialect, or socialect, that is, whether he or she can communicate a particular talk in such a way then be accepted by other users of the language, dialect, or socialect. Therefore, the deviances as described earlier may show that the writer may be proficient in that 'netspeak' and accordingly might be accepted by other bloggers in the online community for they tend to share similar language or 'Engdonesian' as a sociolect on the internet.

In addition to the expertise and inheritance, the writer and language relationship can be in affiliation. The writer seems to feel attached to the 'Engdonesian' containing the code-switching and backward transfer. That is to say that the writer has the affiliation to the English considered as second language in this essay. The deviances may show that the writer tended to assume that other bloggers or the readers may understand what was written on them. This is because they may also use the same language or 'netspeak' and become familiar to this 'netspeak'.

The discussion of second language identity of the writer may not be finished around the points of relationship between the writer and the language used on the blog. It can be expanded further related to the net-literacy as the new type of literacy. This is to explain why the influence of second language on the first could occur on the blogger language.

These influences also may contain the texting lingos which may be commonly used in virtual communication, such as the alphabets **n** and **q** as analysed on the previous part. By switching the code from English and Indonesian back and forth, and showing backward transfer from second language on the first, it can be assumed that the writer expected other bloggers to understand the lingos. The alteration of Indonesian to English and conversely seems to be due to its practicality that the second language constituent carries. Most of the alteration did not show that the English insertions were to replace the Indonesian expression due to its unavailability in Indonesian, but they are more practical and efficient to show the flow of information and communicative purpose, as I interpret them.

Another implication in the influence of English on Indonesian is that the writer wants to show her expertise in using English vocabulary in between Indonesian words. As Gal in Grosjean (1982:152) contends, the alteration of language may imply the writer has temporary attitude, purpose and emotional states to show through the language used on the blog. The writer's attitude and purpose of employing 'Engdonesian' on the blog may be to display her online second language identity on the blog. This was done due to her intention to be more sociable and 'stylish' and to be accepted by other bloggers on the virtual community. The writer's second language identity on the blog may be different to her second language identity when offline or in real life. That is to confirmed what Paltridge (2006) says that every person may perform different identities depending on their roles on particular time and place.

5.   Conclusion

Many experts have enthusiastically studied the ways language and identity are manifested in virtual communication. This essay reveals that the influence of English as a second language on Indonesian as the first language of the writer was visible in the code-switching and the backward transfer.

The influence of L2 on L1 as seen on the blog reflect that the second language identity of the writer. That is to say that relationship between the writer and English as the second language tends to be affiliated and proficient in 'Engdonesian' as the 'netspeak'. However, it is obvious that the language is not inherited as English which is reflected on the code-switching and backward transfer is a foreign language to the writer.

The language containing English influence on it was used to express writer's online second language identity which might be different to when the writer is offline. The language was used on the blog so that the writer may feel accepted in the online community, as I see it. That is because the alterations of language as on the code-switching and the reverse transfer may not mean that there are no Indonesian words to express what the writer wants to say on the blog. Thus, the Indonesian language containing English influence as in code-switching and backward transfer was used to be more blog-friendly.

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