SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN INDONESIAN AND TETUN: A REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF BIPA IN TIMOR-LESTE"

Author (s), Alexandre dos Reis

INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste, a country with two official languages—Tetun and Portuguese—recognizes Indonesian as a significant foreign language, particularly in the context of diplomatic and economic relations with Indonesia. Consequently, the teaching of Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) in Timor-Leste holds considerable importance. According to Rejeki and Asari (2019), Indonesian is widely used as a working and instructional language in various educational institutions across Timor-Leste, despite not being an official language. This sociolinguistic reality underscores the strategic role of BIPA programs in fostering cross-cultural communication and regional cooperation. One crucial aspect to consider in BIPA instruction is the difference in sentence structures between Indonesian and Tetun, which can significantly influence learners' comprehension and sentence production. Dirga (2017) emphasizes that structural mismatches between the two languages often lead to grammatical errors among BIPA learners, particularly in constructing interrogative and compound sentences. Therefore, understanding these linguistic contrasts is essential for educators to anticipate potential learning difficulties and to design pedagogical materials that are both linguistically appropriate and culturally responsive.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Indonesian, sentence structure generally follows the Subject–Predicate–Object–Adverbial (SPOK) pattern, which serves as the foundation for constructing effective and grammatically correct sentences. A. Moeliono and S. Dardjowidjojo, in *Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia* (1988), state that a sentence is a unit of utterance that conveys a complete thought and possesses a grammatical structure consisting of a subject and predicate, which can be expanded with objects and adverbials. Gorys Keraf adds that a sentence is a segment of speech preceded and followed by pauses, with intonation indicating that the utterance is complete. Meanwhile, Sultan Takdir Alisyahbana views a sentence as the smallest group of words that expresses a complete idea, and Fachruddin A.E emphasizes that a sentence consists of a subject and predicate, independent of larger grammatical constructions. In practice, the subject is typically a noun or noun phrase, the predicate is a verb, the object serves as the target of the action, and the adverbial provides additional information such as time, place, manner, or purpose. Indonesian sentences can be either simple (single clause) or compound (multiple clauses), and they serve various functions, including declarative (statements), interrogative (questions), imperative (commands), and exclamatory (expressions of emotion). Understanding this structure is crucial in teaching Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA), as it forms the foundation for developing communicative and contextually appropriate language competence.

This study employs a qualitative approach using the **contrastive analysis method**, a linguistic technique that compares the structures of two languages to identify their similarities and differences. This method is particularly relevant in comparative language studies, especially in the context of second language

METHOD

Instruction such as BIPA. According to Carl James (1980), contrastive analysis is a linguistic endeavor aimed at producing a typology of two languages in contrast, based on the assumption that languages can be systematically compared. Fisiak (as cited in Nababan, 1984) describes contrastive analysis as a branch of linguistics that examines the comparison of two or more languages to uncover significant differences. In this study, sentence data in Indonesian and Tetun were collected from various sources, including written texts and everyday conversations, to ensure diversity and authentic representation. The analysis was conducted synchronically by comparing the sentence structures of both languages, as explained by Ellis (1986), who emphasizes that the linguistic and psychological aspects of contrastive analysis can help predict learning difficulties caused by first-language interference in second-language acquisition. Thus, the findings of this analysis are expected to contribute to the development of more effective BIPA teaching strategies in Timor-Leste.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Similarities in Sentence Structure Both languages—Indonesian and Tetun—share basic structural elements, namely subject, predicate, and object. However, the order of these elements may vary depending on the focus of the sentence and the context in which it is used. This reflects a degree of syntactic flexibility that can influence how meaning is conveyed in each language.

Differences in Sentence Structure The primary differences lie in the use of conjunctions and the arrangement of sentence elements. For instance, in Indonesian, interrogative sentences typically begin with a question word (e.g., *apa*, *siapa*, *mengapa*), whereas in Tetun, interrogative structures are more flexible and may be marked by intonation or by placing the question word at the end of the sentence. This syntactic variation can lead to challenges in comprehension and sentence construction for learners transitioning between the two languages.

Continu.....

Implications for BIPA Instruction These structural differences have significant implications for the teaching of Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA) in Timor-Leste. Understanding these contrasts enables educators to design instructional materials that are better aligned with learners' linguistic backgrounds. As highlighted by Yutriani Andhika (2019) in her study on BIPA learners in Dili, structural mismatches often result in grammatical errors, particularly in sentence formation. By anticipating potential difficulties arising from sentence structure differences, educators can implement targeted strategies to support learners and enhance their communicative competence in Indonesian.

CONCLUSION

The contrastive analysis of sentence structures between Tetun and Indonesian reveals both significant similarities and differences. Understanding these structural distinctions is essential for the development of effective BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) teaching materials in Timor-Leste. As highlighted by Dirga (2017), challenges in BIPA instruction often stem from linguistic mismatches and limited exposure to Indonesian, making structural awareness a key pedagogical concern. Therefore, further research is needed to design instructional content that aligns more closely with the linguistic needs and backgrounds of learners in Timor-Leste, ensuring that BIPA programs are both culturally responsive and linguistically accessible.

REFERENCES

- Alisjahbana, S. T. (1936). *Tata Bahasa Baru Bahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- Andhika, Y. (2019). Analisis penggunaan tata bahasa Indonesia dalam penulisan ragam kalimat: Studi kasus pemelajar kelas 11 SMA Cristal Dili. Jurnal Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (JBIPA), 1(2), 83–88. https://doi.org/10.26499/jbipa.v1i2.1848
- Dardjowidjojo, S., & Moeliono, A. M. (1988). Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia (Ed. 1). Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.
- Dirga, R. N. (2017). Problematika pemelajaran Bahasa Indonesia bagi penutur asing (BIPA) di Timor Leste. Makalah PPSDK, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. https://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/9974/
- Ellis, R. (1986). Understanding second language acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fachruddin, A. E. (1999). Ritumpanna Wélenrénngé. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Fisiak, J. (1984). Contrastive linguistics: Prospects and problems. Mouton.
- James, C. (1980). Contrastive analysis. London: Longman.
- Keraf, G. (2009). Diksi dan gaya bahasa. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Rejeki, S., & Asari, C. (2019). Peluang pengajaran BIPA di tingkat pendidikan tinggi di Timor Leste. Bahastra, 39(1), 55–60. https://doi.org/10.26555/bahastra.v39i1.11309

THANK YOU!

Follow us @...