A Comparative Study of The Indonesian
and English Articles

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1. Introduction

Commonwealth Department of Education in Australia (1983:222) has concluded that articles will be an area of difficulty for Indonesian students. This is because the "Bî (Bahasa Indonesia) has no real equivalents of the English definite and indefinite articles. In many cases where the articles are used in English no corresponding word occurs in Bahasa Indonesia". Errors related to the use of articles deserve close attention because articles are not only one of the grammar elements, but also extremely frequent in English (Berry, 1991:252). Carol et al. (1971) have found that articles account for almost every tenth word in English. This paper means to explore the similarities and differences of the articles in Indonesian and English, and how the findings may affect Indonesian students' difficulties in using the English articles.

It is essential for learners of English either as a second or foreign language, Fromkin, et al. (1984:11) write that "to understand the nature of language we must understand the nature of this internalized, unconscious set of rules which is part of every grammar of every language. There are some definitions about grammar, and 'the word grammar has various meanings' (Quirk et al., 1985:12). Robin (1971:17) states that grammar "is concerned with the patterns and arrangements of units established and organized on criteria other than those respectable to phonetic features". Ur (1988:4) defines grammar as "the way a language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning". Quirk et al. do not want to define grammar (1985:10) but stress that grammar includes both syntax and the aspect of morphology (the internal structure of words) that deals with inflections. However, they provide a definition about prescriptive grammar (Quirk et al., 1983:14) i.e., a set of regulations that are based on what is evaluated as correct or incorrect in the standard varieties.

There are several thousands of languages (Finegan et al., 1992:247) all over the world. Those languages can be identical to one another or strikingly different. These differences may include the sound, grammar, syntax, morphology, meaning, etc. There have been studies on grammar comparisons from one language to another. The result of the study may not only deepen the understanding of the language users in general but also the advancement of the study of languages in particular. It is with that in mind that this paper, about the comparative study of the Indonesian and English articles, is written.

Sentences used as examples are numbered for easier reference, and certain symbols and special printing effects are used in this paper, for clarity and ease in reading. They are:

1. Underlining: for specifically referred English words e.g. The indefinite article an is used before a noun beginning with a vowel sound.

2. Italic: for specifically referred Indonesian words

Humambara III/1996
In Indonesian, a noun phrase may be defined as a phrase with a noun in its structure. As in English (Leech, 1989: 296) the noun normally functions as the head of the noun phrase. The noun phrase typically functions as a subject, an object, a complement of sentences, a complement of prepositional phrases (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:59). Indonesian noun phrases may be expanded not only to the left of the head noun, as premodifiers, but also to the right, as postmodifiers.

The premodifiers may consist of adjectives, articles, numerals, nouns, while the postmodifiers mostly consist of phrases with prepositions. Consider the examples below:

1. Empat rumah
   - four houses
   Empat is a numeral and rumah is a noun. The structure is similar to that of the English four houses.

2. Bush is a noun classifier. There are many noun classifiers in Indonesian, which will be discussed in the later part of the paper. The complexity of the noun classifiers may cause difficulties to those learning the Indonesian language. The noun classifier is put between the noun and the numeral. In English, there are noun phrase structures with noun classifiers identical to those in Indonesia, such as four sheets of paper, four pairs of shoes, four pieces of meat. Perhaps, empat bush rumah may be best expressed into four units of houses.

3. Rumah empat bush
   - house four CLASS
   The numeral and noun classifier may be put on the right of the head noun. When other determiners exist, such as ini (this), itu (that), nya (possessives: her, his, its), adjectives, the numeral and noun classifiers should be put on the left of the head noun, e.g.

   3a. Empat bush rumah ini
       - four CLASS houses these
       - shee four houses

   3b. Empat bush rumah itu
       - four CLASS houses those
       - those four houses

   3c. Empat bush rumah nya
       - four CLASS houses HIS/HER
       - his/her four houses

   3d. Empat bush rumah besar
       - four CLASS houses LARGE
       - four large houses

   4. Rumah indah
       - house beautiful
       - beautiful house

   The adjective indah is put on the right of the head noun. The noun phrase in English has the adjective on the left of the head noun. More adjectives in the Indonesian noun phrase can be put after indah, for example besar(big), kuat(strong). The word yang (which) is used, e.g.

   4a. Rumah indah yang besar
       - house beautiful which large
       - large beautiful houses

   4b. Rumah indah yang kuat
       - house beautiful which strong
       - strong beautiful houses

   4c. Empat bush rumah indah
       - four CLASS houses beautiful
       - four beautiful houses

   The combination of a numeral, noun classifier, head noun and adjective is also possible. The acceptable structure is the numeral and noun classifier should be
put before the head noun and the adjective after the head noun.

(6) empil bush rumah indah ketak danau
tour CLASS house beautiful means there's lake
four beautiful houses near that lake

Dekat danau is a qualifier. This is considered a prepositional phrase in Indonesian context, because dekat may function not only as an adjective, the opposite of far, but also as a preposition preceding a proper noun (danau). The position of such a qualifier is always after the head noun, which is similar to the position of a qualifier in an English noun phrase.

Ter dekat bush rumah kuyu inden dekat danau
our CLASS house white beautiful near lake
four beautiful wood houses near that lake

The word kuyu (wood) from which the house is made is added. As kuyu modifies house and becomes an integral part of it, the word is put closest to house. Indah comes afterwards. The noun phrase *rumah indah kuyu is unacceptable. Sometimes, *beng is put between kuyu and indah, because yang *(which) is useful to put adjectives after adjectives. Similarly, in English *wood beautiful house is not acceptable.

Empil bush rumah kuyu putih indah dekat danau
tour CLASS house wood white beautiful near lake
four beautiful white wood houses near that lake

In the phrase above, another adjective path is added. Adjectives denoting colours are put after kuyu. In the long phrase scap phrase *rumah indah kuyu is unacceptable. Sometimes, yang is put between kuyu and indah, because yang *(which) is useful to put adjectives after adjectives. Similarly, in English *wood beautiful house is not acceptable.

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Daging for sapi (beef), ikan (fish), telur (egg), sayur (vegetable), sayur asai (fresh vegetable), and other things.

(10) Nahtemus asak daging Tiger like meat

In the sentences above the use of indefinite articles is known before daging and sekar before ikan, ikan, and nahtemus are not common.

Bab 3 (1975: 129) writes that in "(11) A cat is a small domestic animal" the presence of indefinite article is obligatory. In Indonesian, the sentence is expressed without any article at all:

(12) a. Kucing bisa dan tidak.

Cat naurml domes tic little

It will even sound funny when indefinite articles are added:

(12b) 'Seks kucing seekor bisa dan tidak.

A CLASS cat a CLASS animal domes tic little

or

(12c) "Kucing seekor bisa dan tidak.

A CLASS animal domestic little

or

(12d) 'Sekel mat makanan.

A CLASS cat animal domestic small

According to Close, R.A. (1975:129) a in (11) with the noun refer to a class of thing as a whole. In (12) kucing (cat) does not refer to one or a certain kucing either. It is of similar structure by:

Anjing suka makan dog like bone.

(Mellor, 1993:313) and in this case no article is needed.

A very common word to express definiteness is suatu which means a and one in English. Suatu is frequently substituted by satu meaning one. The phrase pada suatu hari meaning one day can be expressed alternatively as pada satu hari. But suatu does not always express the same meaning as satu. In the phrases pada satu jam lagia meaning one hour late, satu cannot be replaced by suatu.

In English the definite articles are more clearly defined. A is used before a word beginning with a consonant or a vowel standing like consonant, while an is used before words beginning with a vowel (Wood and McLeod, 1996:160).

Thompson and Marple (1982:1) state that an indefinite article is used before a singular countable noun and certain numeral expressions.

When compared with the use of indefinite articles in Indonesian, the presence of indefinite articles in English cannot be easily deleted, as illustrated in the following figure:
The comparison indicates that in English the deletion of articles in (13), (14), (15), and the addition of an article in (16) is unacceptable. In Indonesian the omission of articles of any sort as can be seen in (13a) and (15a) will not change the meaning; it is possible before suffixed (in an abstract manner) where in English no article may be put before advice. The word as before this which means that cannot be omitted, though safe also means unit can be used instead.

4. Definite Articles

Morison et al. (1993:346342) explain the three different kinds of articles expressing definiteness in Indonesian. They are articles referring to singularity, referring to groups and plurality, and referring to neutrality.

Articles which refer to singularity are sang, as hanyang (definite) dang (definite), all of which have the equivalent of the in English. Interestingly sang is used to show the high position of the noun, but also sometimes used to mark the noun it precedes.

(17) Sang apa feter biar
ART. hanyang has arrived may refer to the real situation where the hanyang has arrived, or a situation in which when a chair of the student council enters the classroom, for example, others may mothering say "Sang apa feter biar". Else is used to denote high respect to someone, e.g. Sri Rasa (the pope), Sri Sultan (the sultan), Sri Ratu (the queen), Sri Paduka (Your Highness), Sri Sopha (the king). In old Indonesian, Dangg for woman and Hanyang for man is commonly used to show their very high position, and these are found mostly in literature.

Para is the article used to denote plurality or group. This para is for human only. Animals and plants cannot be preceded by para. So para cannot be used with nonhuman nouns such as dog, table, book, tree. The plural noun in Indonesian is formed by repeating the singular form. Gua (teacher) is singular and guru (plural) is plural. When para is used the nouns must not undergo repetition to show plurality. Para guna is right but para gunung is wrong, because it contains two plural expressions.

The definite article which has reference to neutrality is si (Morison et al.,1993:342), Morison et al. (342) ev-
plain that "Di samping artikel yang menyangkut makna tunggal dan kelompok, ada pula artikel yang sifatnya netral. Artikel SI dapat mengacu ke makna tunggal atau generic, bengantung pada konteks kalimatnya." Besides the articles which refer to singularity and group or plurality, there is also an article which refers to neutrality. This article SI may be used to express definiteness and generic reference ( depending on the sentence context). The use of si is limited as it should only be used with human nouns. This article can be used with both singular and plural nouns. The examples are "Di dunia ini si kaya seharusnya membantu si miskin. In this world the rich should help the poor." "Si anak ini sungguh mumpuni rujin. (This child is really a hardworking pupil)."

"Zang, Si, Dang, Hang, are not extensively used. Para, and si also have their limitations. The widely used and accepted forms to denote definiteness are itu (that), i.e. (this), tadi (mentioned just now), felsebut (as previously mentioned), ruya (possessive forms: his, her, it) which are not originally articles. Ini and itu are demonstrative pronouns, tadi and felsebut are adverbs meaning previously mentioned. There are no limitations in both oral and written discourse, to what nouns should come with itu, ini, tadi, felsebut, ruya. The examples are:

(18a) anak itu
child that
-> that child

(18b) anak-anak itu
children those
-> those children

(18c) kambing itu
gos that
-> that goat

(18d) kambing-kambing itu
gos those
cows those
gos those
gos those

(18e) kambing tadi
gos previously mentioned
gos the previously mentioned goat

(18f) kambing-kambing tadi
gos previously mentioned
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cane: the destruction was so devastating) (Thompson 1983:3). This is also used with nouns made definite by reference forward with superlative and ordinal number (first, second, next, same) (Close, Fla., 1975:134). Examples are:
(20a) Beijing is now the largest city in the world.
(20b) The same car accident happened to me yesterday.
(20c) This is the second first he has lost the book he borrowed.

Certain comparisons with adjectives also use the (Close, 1975:135136) as in the sooner the better. This is also used to refer to a class distinct from the other (Close, 1975:35) (Thompson and Martin, 1983:6) as in the housemate has a better life than the office worker.

The is used in sentences such as John is in the garden, waltering the flowers, because the speaker refers to some object or person that he assumes the listener can identify in the environment that they share.

The is also used as part of a name of a country, seas (oceans), rivers, mountain ranges, cities, hotels, newspapers, organizations (Thompson, 1980:4) (Close, 1981:37). Examples are: (20a) The United States of America (20b) The Atlantic (20c) The Yangtze (20d) The Andes (20e) The Jakarta Lloyd (20f) The South Cross Hotel (20g) The Nile (20h) The United Nations

The usage of the definite article in Indonesian and English can be roughly contrasted as shown in the figure below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To refer to singularity:</td>
<td>the as noun;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sungai</td>
<td>the river;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bangsal</td>
<td>the house;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(den gang)</td>
<td>the house;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To denote plurality or group:</td>
<td>the as noun;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paru (plural human noun)</td>
<td>the plural;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. To denote neutrality:
- noun (Human + non-human) - singular/plural
- noun

4. To denote definiteness:
- new, this, that, this
- the singular/plural

5. Zero definite article - the

6. Discussion

From the viewpoint of position, the definite articles in Indonesian and English are relatively similar. They are placed in front of the head nouns. The meaning carried by the definite articles are also identical, e.g. the and the in (20). The function of the articles are and is basically expressing the notion of definiteness. The form of the articles are different. The Indonesian article takes the forms of a plus a suitable nounclassifier, while in English the article used is a or an depending on the first sound of the noun.

Understanding the definite articles in Indonesian and English is not easy. Indonesian definite articles can be but before the head noun such asサンジ (sang), インディ (indi), パラ (para) and after the head noun such as サイド (side), タイプ (type), サイ (say), イニ (ini). In English they are placed only in front of the head noun.

Understanding the underlying ideas behind the value of indeterminacy and definiteness in both languages may reduce the errors in using them. The report of the Commonwealth Department of Education writes that (1983:22) "the most common approach to a definite article is the use of in, this, or these, is sometimes used in places where English would use the definite article." Quirk et al. describe the eight usage types of the (1985:265-272). For the Indonesian learners, the
use of the definite and indefinite articles in English is a problem unless the under-lying concepts are well understood. Heathford (1993:56) makes it clear that "while much attention has been given in the past to the presentation and explanation of structures, comparatively little thought has been devoted as to how best to help learners across the semantic barrier" and "the relationship between concepts as indicated by syntax must remain nebulous wherever the concepts themselves are unknown or imprecise". The deeper problem is not the similarity of form and function, but how the conceptual ideas actually lead the language users to a decision about using a definite article or an indefinite one.

To grasp the key concept, the description proposed by Hawkins (1991: 406-407) and Declerck (1985:28-33) may help the students. Hawkins (1991: 406) describes the concept behind the sentence. The professor is drunk includes three claims: (a) Existence: There is a professor (b) Uniqueness: There is only one professor (c) Predication: This individual is drunk. The logical analytical translation of the sentence would be: there is an X who is a professor, and there is no Y such that Y is a professor and nonidentical to X, and X is drunk. The sentence The professor is drunk is different from A professor is drunk because of the uniqueness claim. In A professor is drunk there is a sense of a nongeneric reading, and the analytical translation would be: there is an X who is a professor, and he is drunk. Besides A professor is drunk implies there should be at least one professor who is drunk. It is logically compatible with there being more than one such, or with one only.

The explanation is repeated in Declerck (1985:30) who proposes two examples: John is the victim of his own generosity. Declerck explains that in the first sentence John is the only victim while in the second sentence it is suggested that at least one other person is also a victim of John's generosity.

The greatest problem when comparing the articles in Indonesian and English is perhaps the fact that when definite articles are used in English frequently zero articles are used in Indonesian. It is possible however to grasp the concept of definiteness in the Indonesian language, as can be seen in the following comparis:

(1) Dalam ruangan gelap, Malaka dia menyalakan lampu.
   It was dark in the room, so Malaka turned on the light.

In the English sentence, the in the light is used because of the definiteness quality of the light i.e. its existence is in the room which is dark. In Indonesian, similar understanding of the definiteness value of the light can also be felt by the speakers, and shared by the hearer, and so it is not obligatory to explicitly express the definiteness using any definite arti-
cles.

Certain words in English may cause problems for Indonesian learners because of the concept of countability and uncountability. Words and McLeod (1990:159) list words which are uncountable in English but may be countable in other languages. They are: ad-
vice, anger, burden, clothing, conduct, courage, education, equipment, furniture, homework, information, machinery, news, parking, photography, poetry, pro-
gress, publicity, research, safety, scen-
ery, shopping, sunshine, traffic, transpor-
tation, violence, weather. In Indonesian it is absolutely right and acceptable to put the equivalent of a or an before these words, because they are considered countable. As they are considered countable, they can also be transformed into plural noms, which is not acceptable in English.

Daily observation indicates that Indo-
nesian learners often use the articles when they do not have to, and omit the articles when they are supposed to use them. The examples are the omission of the before the nouns when because of the nouns' definite uniqueness should be given a definite article, and the addition

humaniora III/1996 54
of a or as before uncountable nouns. Forth and Naymani (1995:86) suggests that in order for learners to have more confidence in grammar they can be asked to: change or modify rules presented in their coursebooks so that they are clearer and more accessible; add their own examples; represent rules in the form of classroom postcards, perhaps with the addition of pictures or diagrams. The suggestion above seems suitable for Indonesian learners. It will be better if the changes and modification are made after the students really understand about the underlying concepts of the two articles. Diagrams and pictures may also make the learners remember more about the rules they have conceived.

Berry (1991:255) states there are incorrect or misleading formulations, unwarrented emphasis on certain usage types and the lack of variety in forms. According to Berry, a formulation that ends up the learners' awareness as the first time you mention a noun use a, the second time you use the' is incorrect and misleading. He proves this by presenting an example: "Joey wants a bike for Christmas, but I am not sure a bike is a good idea". Berry (1991:256) suggests some learning principles. They are among others the need to concentrate on the make varied exercises, not to rely on rules but use them only as back up activities, give exercises focusing not only on production, but also comprehension. In the Indonesian context, the suggestion proposed by Berry would be suitable, especially in the mixing of varied exercises and including both production and comprehension aspects in the exercises. By following the above principles, it would be possible for the Indonesian learners to use articles in the varied exercises with better understanding.

6. CONCLUSION

The articles in Indonesian and English differ in form, position (1991:256) suggests some learning principles. They are among others the need to concentrate on the, make varied exercises, not to rely on rules but use them only as back up activities, give exercises focusing not only on production, but also comprehension. In the Indonesian context, the suggestion proposed by Berry would be suitable, especially in mixing the of pictures or diagrams. The suggestion above seems suitable for Indonesian learners. It will be better if the changes and modification are made after the students really understand about the underlying concepts of the two articles. Diagrams and pictures may also make the learners remember more about the rules they have conceived.

References


