

Studies on language friction in producing English utterances: Systematic literature review

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Abstract: Speech errors can occur due to language activation and competition in the human brain as a symptom of language friction. Many re-seaethnosociolinguisticshe language friction and published their findings, indicating that the study about this issue is interesting to conduct. The current literature study aims to review previous research on language friction in terms of methods and linguistics theories applied in those studies. A systematic method was used in this research to select research articles on the language friction, and resulted in 17 articles to be reviewed. Those articles are published in Scopus indexed journals. It is found that in the last seven years, studies on language friction have shown an increasing trend, indicating that this issue is still relevant to study. In addition, most of them indicate that language friction has been analyzed based on psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics theories. However, it is not enough to study language friction from psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives, but also needs to be studied from ethnosociolinguistic perspective. This literature study can help educators and English language learners to choose learning methods by considering the language friction experienced by learners. Furthermore, by understanding the language friction, speech participants can overcome misunderstandings in communication.

Keywords: *ethnosociolinguistics, language friction, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics*



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INTRODUCTION

Language friction often occurs in a speaker's brain when he/she is desiring to express utterances in different language. Expressing utterances means converting a message from mind into speech (Levinson, 2016; Setiawan, 2013). The conversation of the message which is intended in this context is the conversation in the oral form. Language friction that occurs among conversation participants can influence their understanding in communicating. Therefore, this issue is still important to study.

Language friction or language disagreement is a situation in which a speaker cannot produce the intended utterances as fluently as expected in a conversation. The speakers potentially experience language friction when producing and accepting the target language because of the existence of multiple languages in their brain (Innocentia, 2020). Based on that definition, it can be understood that the phenomenon mainly occurs when the speaker is going to produce utterances in a foreign language which is being learned.

Languages are activated and competed among them before finding the intended word in the target language. In line with that, Winn and Teece (2020) stated that a slip of the tongue

and speech errors can be due to language activation and competition exists in the human brain. It is understood as the process of language production, and that is a symptom of the language friction.

Language friction which is also called language conflict is related to the cross-language intrusion. The speaker's cross-language intrusion was characterized by code-switching and code-mixing (Anjum & Batool, 2017; Declerck et al., 2017; Ishida et al., 2019; Nkrumah & Neumann, 2018; Ratner & MacWhinney, 2018). Those symptoms could be seen from the speaker's use of fillers, repetition, false start, lengthening the word, asking for the appeal, and pauses during the speech production. In addition, a study conducted by Tarrayo et al. (2021) indicated that the use of pauses, repetition, word lengthening, and ask for help will make the research subject's psychology decrease. Those studies examine language friction from a psycholinguistic perspective.

The utterances production has three major stages of processing, namely the processes of conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. The complexity and the trickiness of the utterances production can be seen from the processes and the stages before producing the intended words (Justice et al., 2018; Peeters & Dijkstra, 2018; Rowe & Snow, 2020). This is also related to the language friction in the speaker's brain (Canut et al., 2023; Golinkoff et al., 2019; Zarei et al., 2018). Those studies also examine language friction from a psycholinguistic perspective.

When producing utterances in language learned, the language friction that happens in the speaker's brain is also related to language attitudes towards that language (Getie, 2020; Gomashie, 2022; Lubińska, 2021; Romera & Elordieta, 2020; Yin & Li, 2021). They found that the impact can be seen from the affective, behavioural, and cognitive aspects. According to Dragojevic et al. (2018) and Kkese (2020), when people surrounding a speaker always laugh at her/him, the speaker's language attitudes can change from positive to negative. It can also change the speaker's language attitudes from good language attitudes to bad language attitudes.

The utterances production for the people who have more than one language, called bi/multilingual people, is more complex than those who have only one language called monolingual people (Garrido & Sabaté-Dalmau, 2020). A monolingual speaker has only one name for one thing. It is contrast with bi/multilingual people brain which consists of more than one language. One meaning has more than one language representation. It means that one word meaning has more than one meaning. The structure of one language in the bi/multilingual speaker's brain is different from other language structures. These complexities make the speakers hard to find and retrieve the target words in the target language from the mental lexicon. One language in the bi/multilingual speaker's brain competes with other languages in the speaker's brain when producing one of those languages. Therefore, those studies examine language friction from a sociolinguistic perspective.

In an English language learning activity, all learners have their own ethnic or national language, but not all of them have the same feeling about their language. The studies that have been presented by previous researchers through their papers, examine language friction or language discordance from the psycholinguistic perspective and from the sociolinguistic perspective. Previous researchers had not yet studied the language friction from the ethnosociolinguistic perspective.

By understanding previous research trends regarding language friction experienced by English language learners, certain learning methods and strategies can be chosen to make it easier for learners to overcome the language friction in learning. Many previous researchers have applied several different methods in researching the language friction issue. By understanding their methods, future research can be further improved. This is because the issue of language friction experienced by

English language learners is always relevant for further research. Through this paper, the researchers review the previous studies to reveal the following research inquiries. What are the recent trends in the studies on the language friction? What are the theories that have been applied in the studies about the cause of the language friction?

METHOD

The current study employs a systematic review approach, with research questions guiding the selection of studies for review inclusion (Pico et al., 2021). The purpose of this study is to investigate the previous research about language friction experienced by English language learners when they producing the English language. Besides that, a systematic review is not the same as a literature review. A systematic review studies a particular issue methodically, and has a very neat structure (Alexander, 2020). On the contrary, the literature review method is less systematic (Haddaway et al., 2020).

The research articles, published during 2017–2023, and pertinent to the objectives and research questions of this study were gathered by using a search engine application, namely Publish or Perish (PoP). The database of these articles comes from Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis, Elsevier, and MDPI, but all of them are published by Scopus indexed journals. The present research investigates the language friction experienced by EFL learners when they producing the English language. Those selected articles about “language friction related to the cross-language intrusion”, “language friction related to the complexity and the trickiness of the utterances production”, and “language friction related to the language attitude”, were guided by research questions.

Content analysis by theme was used to analyse the included studies. It allowed researchers to compare, contrast, and categorize the data. After inputting the search terms on the search engine application, only articles

that matched the search parameters were included. Initially the numbers of selected articles from the databases are 10 from Google Scholar, 10 from Taylor and Francis, 5 from Elsevier, and 5 from MDPI. Following the elimination of studies that were duplicated, the final studies are 25. The inclusion criteria of the articles included: (1) research on the linguistics field, (2) publications in 2017 to 2023, and (3) published in Scopus indexed journals. After examining the title and abstract, 5 studies were excluded as they deal with the non-linguistics field. The rest of the 20 studies were reviewed for eligibility. Among these studies, 3 were removed as they were related to other languages (not English). After the mentioned process, the seventeen studies were reviewed in the present study. The results of searching for articles using PoP can be seen in Figure 1.

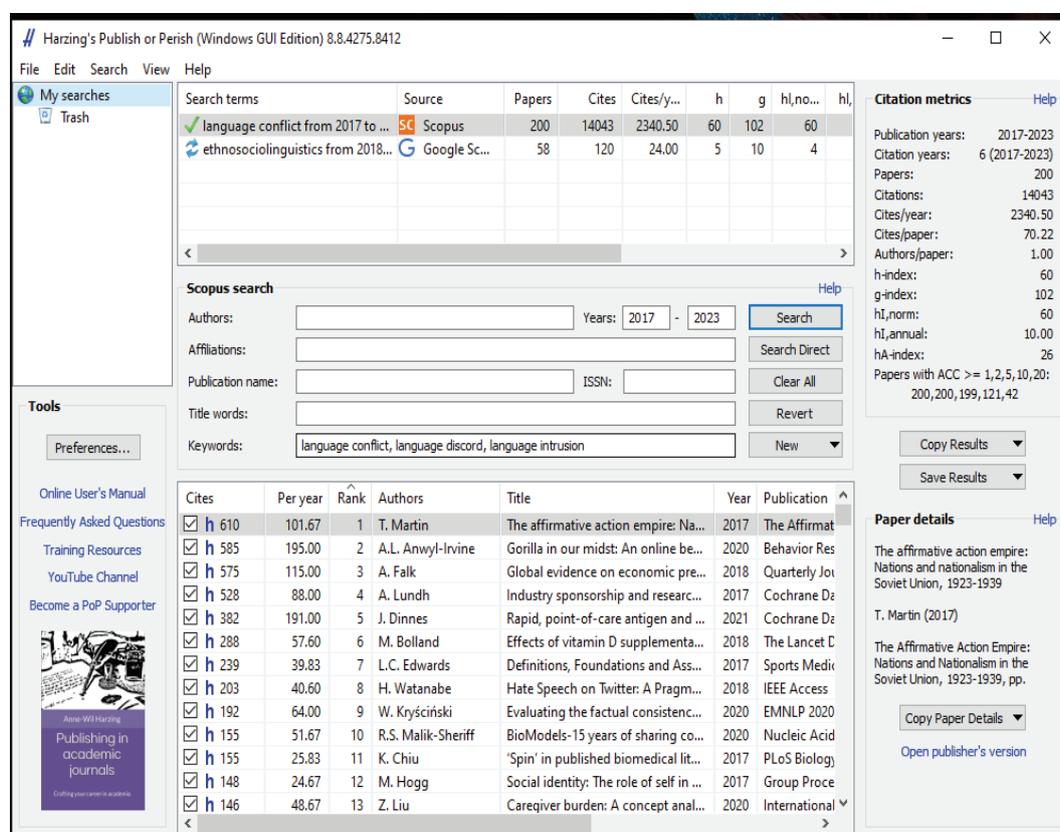


Figure 1. Searching results with Publish or Perish

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The subcategories in the first research question are by year distribution of the studies, research methods and the linguistic studies involved in the source text data about the language friction. This section will cover each of these categories. The distribution of the selected articles on the language friction by year is shown in the following Figure 2.

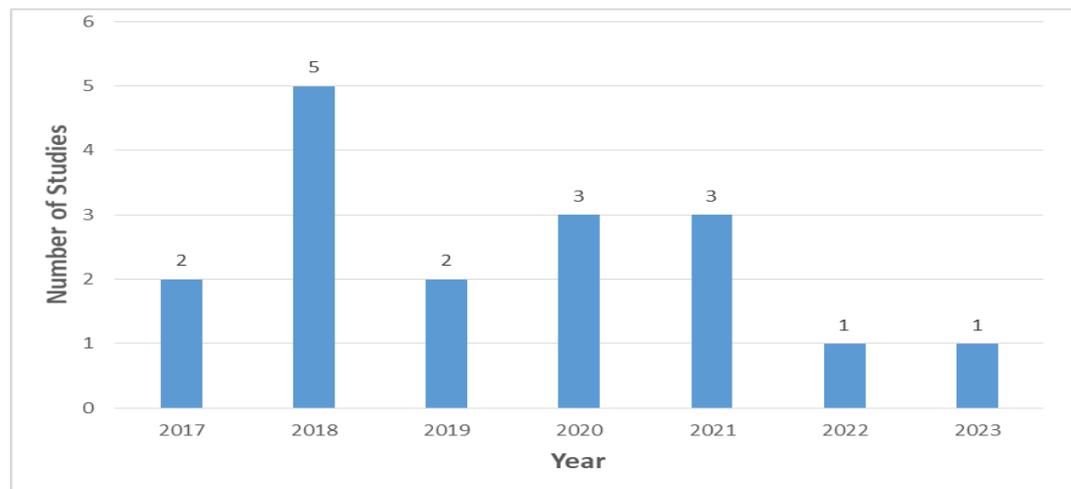


Figure 2. The distribution of included articles by publication year

Figure 2 illustrates the significant rise from 2017 to 2018, in the number of the studies on language friction (Declerck et al., 2017; Justice et al., 2018; Nkrumah & Neumann, 2018; Peeters & Dijkstra, 2018; Zarei et al., 2018). However, the number of studies decreased in 2019. The number of studies on the language friction increased slightly in 2020, and remained constant in 2021 (including three studies every year, see Getie (2020) and Tarrayo et al. (2021)). However in 2022 and 2023 the number of studies decreased again (including one study per year, see Canut et al. (2023)).

It is also necessary to know the research methods used in those studies. Figure 3 below illustrates the research methods used in those studies.

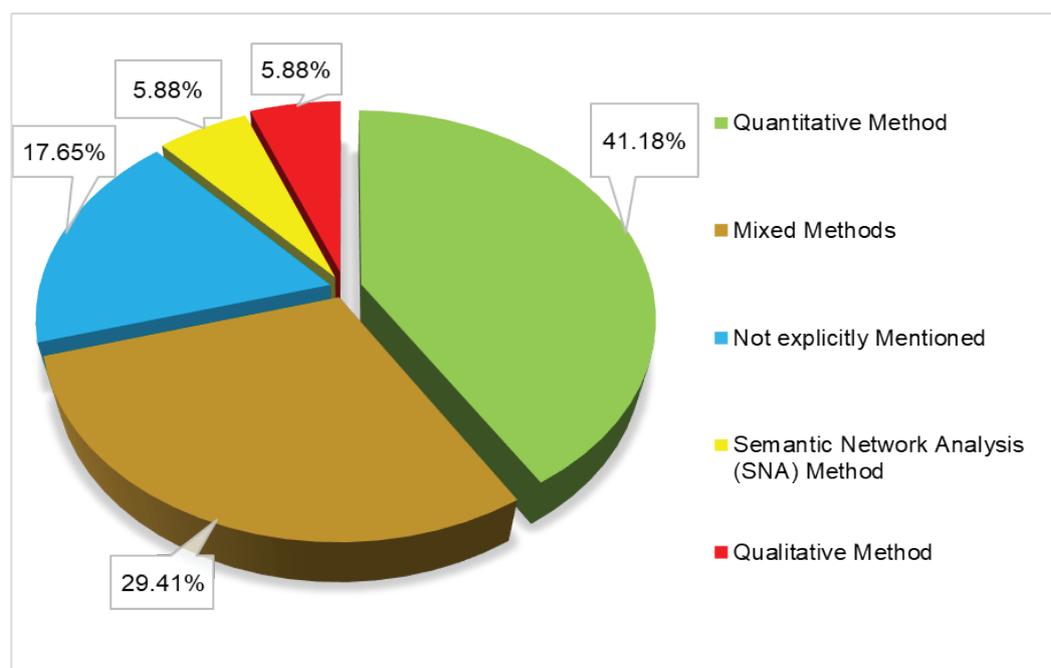


Figure 3. Research methods used in the reviewed studies

Figure 3 highlights that seven studies (41.18%) applied quantitative research method (Declerck et al., 2017; Ishida et al., 2019); and five studies (29.41%) have stated that they have carried out research using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Getie, 2020; Tarrayo et al., 2021). There are three studies (17.65%) have not explicitly mentioned the adopted research methods (Golinkoff et al., 2019; Rowe & Snow, 2020). Moreover, only one piece of research (5.88%) has adopted the Semantic Network Analysis (SNA) Method (Zarei et al., 2018), and also one research (5.88%) has applied qualitative method (Lubińska, 2021).

The distribution of the linguistic studies involved in the previous research about the language friction is shown in the following Figure 4.

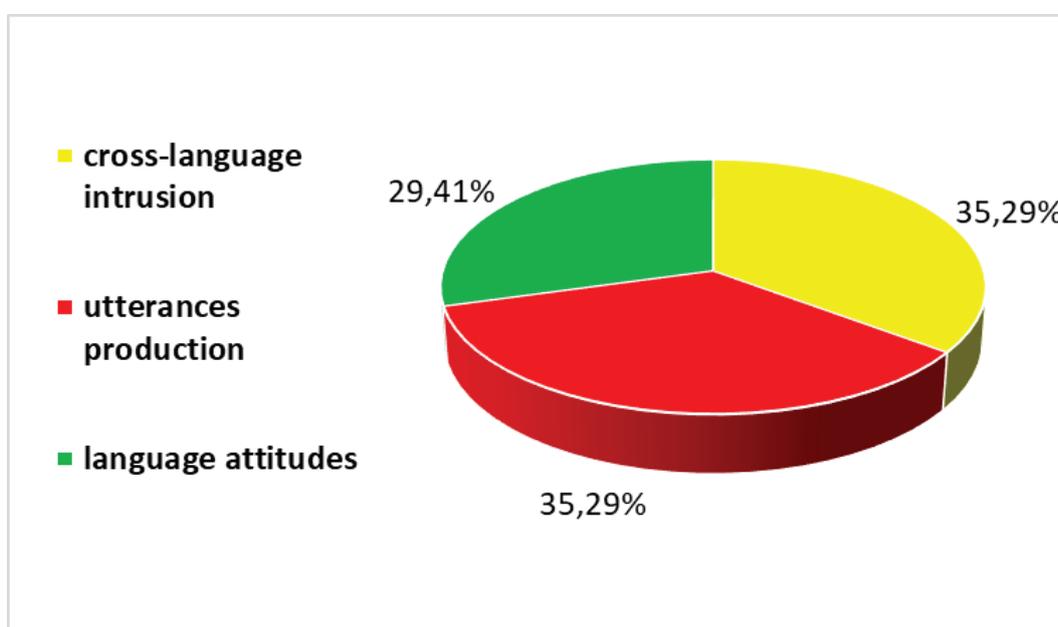


Figure 4. Linguistic studies involved in the previous research

Figure 4 indicates the linguistic studies involved in the research on the language friction. There are six articles (35.29%) that discuss language friction in relation to the cross-language intrusion, see Anjum and Batool (2017), and Nkrumah and Neumann (2018). Six articles (35.29%) link the language friction with the complexity and the trickiness of the utterances production, see Justice et al. (2018), and Zarei et al. (2018). Moreover, five articles (29.41%) examine the language friction in relation to the language attitude, see Romera and Elordieta (2020), and Gomashie (2022).

As the point of investigating the trends in the studies on the language friction can be explained here. In the last seven years, studies on language friction had shown an increasing trend, although those were punctuated by a decline in the middle of the period. This shows that the language friction issue is important in language learning. Language friction experienced by English learners in producing English speech can influence their enthusiasm for learning. Likewise, in conversations, the language friction experienced

by speech participants can disrupt their understanding in communicating.

From the articles reviewed, it was found that some previous researchers observed language friction from a psycholinguistic perspective, and some others from a sociolinguistic perspective. Researchers who studied the language friction from a psycholinguistic perspective believed that language friction arose due to speech production factors and language competition in the brain. On the other hand, researchers who studied it from a sociolinguistic perspective assessed that language friction was influenced by multilingualism and language attitudes held by speakers of that language.

The next, this section deals with the linguistic theories applied in the selected previous research regarding the language friction. It means for reviewing theories that different researchers have employed when they examined the language friction in their respective studies. The results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Applied theories and findings of the studies on language friction

| No | Authors & Year | Method | Focus | Linguistic Theory | Findings |
|----|---|---------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| 1 | Anjum and Batool (2017) | Quantitative Method | Language friction related to the cross-language intrusion | Psycholinguistics | The cultural context of Pakistan was taken into consideration when translating from English to Urdu, and certain factors emerged. One of them is language friction. |
| 2 | Declerck et al. (2017) | Quantitative Method | Language friction and evidence from language intrusions | Psycholinguistics | Switch trials had a higher language intrusion repair rate than repetition trials, indicating that bilingual language interference triggers error detection, in line with the language friction account. |
| 3 | Ishida et al. (2019) | Quantitative Method | Language friction, disfluent speech, and language intrusions | Psycholinguistics | A positive correlation was found between the frequency of language friction and activity in the right superior temporal gyrus region. An indicator of language friction can be found by looking at changes in cerebral blood flow. |

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| 4 | Nkrumah and Neumann (2018) | Quantitative Method | Cross-language and language friction: evidence for two sources of selective inhibition | Psycholinguistics | The findings substantiate inhibition-based accounts by showing that sources of inhibition operating at the local and global language levels of word abstraction, leading to the emergence of language friction. These encourage bilingual language representations that incorporate words from both languages. |
| 5 | Ratner and MacWhinney (2018) | Not explicitly Mentioned | Language friction, language intrusions, and fluency bank | Psycholinguistics | Fluency problems and stuttering are central to both theory and clinical practice, and these are related to the emergence of language friction. |
| 6 | Tarrayo et al. (2021) | Mixed Methods | Language friction | Psycholinguistics | The “native-speakerism” ideology, which has been preserved by cultural norms and educational infrastructures, is agreed having correlation with language friction. |
| 7 | Peeters and Dijkstra (2018) | Quantitative Method | Language friction and bilingual in the utterances production | Psycholinguistics | The results show that unbalanced bilinguals use prolonged inhibition to speakers dominant L1 in mixed language settings. In that mixed language settings, speakers experience language friction. |
| 8 | Justice et al. (2018) | Quantitative Method | Language friction and language production | Psycholinguistics | Teachers’ communication-facilitating behavior is one of the dimensional model to be characterized in the classroom language environment, to overcome language friction experienced by language learners. |

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------|--|
| 9 | Zarei et al. (2018) | Semantic Network Analysis (SNA) Method | Language friction, Delay Causes Analysis in utterances production Analysis | Psycholinguistics | The researchers argue that SNA leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the main causes of the language friction in communication. |
| 10 | Golinkoff et al. (2019) | Not explicitly Mentioned | Language matters: language friction and language production | Psycholinguistics | Language is essential for children to succeed in school, therefore, denying the language friction and emphasizing overheard speech can be harmful |
| 11 | Rowe and Snow (2020) | Not explicitly Mentioned | Language friction and input quality | Psycholinguistics | Input features interact across dimensions to promote language learning. The researchers argue that input best designed to overcome language friction in language learning is interactionally supportive, linguistically adapted, and conceptually challenging for the learner's age/level. |
| 12 | Canut et al. (2023) | Mixed Methods | Language friction and impact of language-training programs | Psycholinguistics | This study showed that learners' development of their syntax is significantly impacted by the syntax complexity of educators' input, so this can help learners who experience language friction in language learning. |
| 13 | Getie (2020) | Mixed Methods | Language friction and factors affecting the attitudes towards learning FL | Sociolinguistics | Educational context factors cause students having negative attitude towards EFL. However, teaching materials, and social factors, such as language friction, make positive attitude of students towards EFL. |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|------------------|--|
| 14 | Romera and Elordieta (2020) | Mixed Methods | Language friction and its correlation with language attitudes | Sociolinguistics | The great relevance of subjective social factors in the degree of convergence between two languages, has an impact on language attitudes, and has no impact on language friction. |
| 15 | Gomashie (2022) | Mixed Methods | Bilingual youth's language friction, language choices and attitudes | Sociolinguistics | A need to expand the domains in which a language is used, starting with the parents in the home front, to solve the language friction problem. |
| 16 | Lubińska (2021) | Qualitative Method | Language friction in intra-familial language choice | Sociolinguistics | The policy regarding family language is a diverse social phenomenon, so practically, family members alter the rules in various ways. This language management is primarily verbalized as a language choice to overcome language friction that may arise. |
| 17 | Yin and Li (2021) | Quantitative Method | Language friction, solidarity, vitality and language attitudes | Sociolinguistics | Concerted efforts in schools, homes, and communities, especially in urban communities, must be devoted to bridge intergenerational gaps in language attitudes, so that language friction does not occur. |

As seen in Table 1, it has been found the studies included in the review utilised two primary theoretical perspectives, namely, sociolinguistics & psycholinguistics. There are 12 articles that examine language friction from psycholinguistic perspective, namely 6 articles discussing language friction in relation to the cross-language intrusion, and 6 others discussing language friction in relation to the utterances production. Furthermore, 5 articles examine language friction from sociolinguistic perspective, namely discussing language friction in relation to the language attitudes.

In analysing the data, of the 17 studies, there were 7 studies that used only the quantitative method, 1 study that used only the qualitative method, 5 studies that used both (mixed methods), 1 study used the semantic network analysis method, and 3 studies did not specifically explain the methods used.

Table 1 shows that language friction has been generally studied within psycholinguistics. It refers to the challenges and inefficiencies in communication that arise when people speak or understand multiple languages or dialects. Research in this area examines how these challenges affect cognitive processes, communication effectiveness, and social interactions. Studies that examine language friction from a psycholinguistic perspective indicate that language friction impacts various aspects of language processing. For instance, bilingual individuals often experience language interference, where elements from one language intrude into another, causing slips in speech or comprehension difficulties. This interference occurs because the brain's language centres must constantly inhibit non-target languages to maintain fluency. Psycholinguistic studies suggest that while language friction can pose challenges, it also fosters cognitive flexibility and creativity, demonstrating the complex interplay between language management and cognitive processes.

Table 1 shows that the phenomenon of language friction among language speakers is still rarely studied from the sociolinguistic perspective. On a social level, language friction can influence interpersonal dynamics and cultural integration. For example, individuals who frequently navigate different languages may experience stress or social anxiety related to their language skills, affecting their confidence and social interactions. Conversely, bilinguals often develop enhanced communicative strategies and problem-solving skills due to their experience with language friction.

As found by the 5 studies listed in Table 1, from the sociolinguistic perspective, language friction often refers to the social tensions and challenges that arise when people use different languages or dialects in various contexts. Studies in this area examine how language friction can impact social identity, group dynamics, and power relations. For example, in multilingual societies, language friction can manifest as social stratification where certain languages are associated with higher social status and prestige while others may be marginalized.

Moreover, sociolinguistic studies highlight how language friction affects intercultural communication and integration. In contexts where multiple languages are spoken, friction can arise from misunderstandings, miscommunications, or cultural differences. This can affect relationships between individuals and communities, shaping attitudes towards language and fostering tensions between groups. The section that follows goes into further detail about these.

Discussion

The current rising number of studies on language friction or language discordance might be linked to the rising popularity as a psychological phenomenon, worldwide, and in particular the recent explosive growth of linguistic studies' interdisciplinary character. The great interest in this top-

ic's research points to the potential for rapidly growing admiration in the upcoming years. The analysis of the reviewed articles in terms of language friction works indicates that that most of them (12 of 17) have been analysed based on psycholinguistic theory, and only 5 of 17 that have been analysed based on sociolinguistic theory. The following discussion is based on the ways the psycholinguistic theory and sociolinguistic theory have been used in the analysis of those previous studies.

A research conducted by [Anjum and Batool \(2017\)](#) examined the language friction that occurred between English language and Urdu language in the translation process. It had 15 self-reported and uni-dimensional items, with 9 points rating scale ranges from 1 = not at all true to 9 = definitely true. That research was reliable and valid tool to measure the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components of passionate language in Pakistani cultural context. Implication of that study was also discussed that translation from English language to Urdu language according to Pakistani Cultural context revealed some factor structures, one of them was language friction.

[Declerck et al. \(2017\)](#), [Ishida et al. \(2019\)](#), [Nkrumah and Neumann \(2018\)](#), and [Ratner and MacWhinney \(2018\)](#) had conducted a research with the focus on language friction and language intrusions. The bilingual error detection was investigated by calculating the percentage of language intrusions that were repaired when bilinguals produced sentences in a situation where language switching was required ([Declerck et al., 2017](#); [Ishida et al., 2019](#)). Those studies found that evidence that bilingual language interference triggers error detection can be found in the higher repair rate of language intrusions in switch trials compared to repetition trials, in line with the language friction account. In addition, word abstraction led to the emergence of language friction ([Nkrumah & Neumann, 2018](#)), and disfluency was related to the emergence of language friction ([Ratner & MacWhinney, 2018](#)).

Furthermore, previous researchers also examined the relationship between the language friction and the utterances production or language production ([Golinkoff et al., 2019](#); [Justice et al., 2018](#); [Peeters & Dijkstra, 2018](#); [Tarrayo et al., 2021](#); [Zarei et al., 2018](#)). Those studies indicate that the language production, which cultural norms and educational infrastructures have preserved, unbalanced bilinguals in utterances production, in the classroom language environment, and children's school achievement in language production, all are agreed having correlation with language friction.

The most recent studies on language friction were carried out by [Rowe and Snow \(2020\)](#) and [Canut et al. \(2023\)](#), which investigated input factors that influence the occurrence of language friction. The input best designed can overcome language friction in language learning ([Rowe & Snow, 2020](#)), and the impact of the syntax complexity of educators' input is noteworthy

to help learners who experience language friction in language learning (Canut et al., 2023).

Apart from a psycholinguistic perspective, some researchers also examined language friction from a sociolinguistic perspective. Getie (2020), Romera and Elordieta (2020), and Yin and Li (2021) investigated the language friction and its correlation with language attitudes. Educational context factors cause students having negative attitude towards learning EFL. However, the teaching materials of EFL, and the social factors, such as language friction, make positive attitude of students towards learning EFL (Getie, 2020). In addition, social factors in the degree of convergence between two languages, has an impact on language attitudes, and has no impact on language friction (Romera & Elordieta, 2020). Besides that, efforts in schools, homes, and communities, need to be committed to bridge inter-generational gaps in language attitudes, so that language friction does not occur (Yin & Li, 2021).

Gomashie (2022) and Lubińska (2021) did not only view that language friction was related to language attitude, but also related to language choice. Those studies found that the domains in which a language was used, starting with the parents in the home front, to solve the language friction problem. In addition, family language policy could be a language management that was primarily verbalized as a language choice to overcome language friction.

Studies have found that when bilingual or multilingual individuals switch between languages, it can create cognitive friction due to the mental effort required to manage and control multiple linguistic systems. In line with that, linguists argued that this phenomenon is known as code-switching (Altun, 2021; Fu, 2019). Furthermore, while it can facilitate communication by providing more appropriate vocabulary or expressions, it also requires additional cognitive resources, which can lead to slower processing or increased errors (Pérez-Sabater, 2022; Yang, 2020).

The research investigated in this literature study contrasts with previous theories. The functional MRI techniques have shown that managing the language friction involves increased activation in brain areas responsible for executive control, highlighting the cognitive load of maintaining multiple languages (Alsaawi, 2019; Joshi & Lahiri, 2015). However, this literature study has demonstrated that this process can vary in efficiency depending on factors such as the frequency of language use and individual proficiency.

Language friction can lead to stigmatization or discrimination against speakers of less dominant languages or dialects, affecting their social mobility and access to resources (Joshi & Lahiri, 2015). However, this literature study found something different. Research has shown that language choice can influence perceptions of competence and social inclusion, often reflecting and reinforcing existing social hierarchies. This dynamic can either facilitate cross-cultural understanding or exacerbate social divides,

depending on the societal attitudes towards the languages involved. Overall, sociolinguistic research emphasizes how language friction is not just a cognitive challenge but a socially embedded phenomenon with significant implications for social interaction and cohesion.

Language friction can be experienced by speakers when communicating with interlocutors due to the influence of their ethnic culture. The influence of ethnic culture towards the communication interaction is a part of theory of communication ethnography. The communication process between speakers and speech partners is a part of the sociolinguistic study. Thus, it is necessary to examine language friction from an ethnosociolinguistic perspective.

From the psycholinguistic perspective, the language friction arose due to speech production factors and language competition in the brain. On the other hand, from the sociolinguistic perspective assessed that language friction was influenced by multilingualism and language attitudes held by speakers of that language. However, in the environment of learners who are learning English as a foreign language, cultural and ethnic factors also influence the speech produced by the learners. Likewise, in a community, cultural and ethnic factors also influence communication participants in choosing the words to produce. This phenomenon gives rise to language friction. This is a strong reason that the issue of language friction needs to be studied from an ethnosociolinguistic point of view.

CONCLUSION

This work provided a systematic review of the language friction or language disagreement experienced by EFL students when they produced the English utterances. This is significant research for those who work within the paradigm of language friction and it serves as an introduction to know the research perspectives on the language friction. Moreover, it offers comprehension of the research contexts (language intrusions, language production, bilingual, language attitude, and language choice) from the selected studies. Based on the findings from the reviewed studies, here are things that need to be developed. Firstly, language friction is not only related to linguistic studies as explained by previous researchers in the articles reviewed in this study, but language friction is also related to the ethnic factor in language speakers who communicate to one another. Secondly, in the articles reviewed, it was found that some researchers studied language friction based on psycholinguistic theory, and others studied it based on sociolinguistic theory. However, it is recommended to study the language friction based on ethnosociolinguistic theory, because the language friction is also related to ethnic factors of speakers, as proposed by [Hrytsiv \(2020\)](#) and [Hodge and Goico \(2022\)](#).

This systematic literature review can provide a positive implication in learning English as a foreign language. Understanding previous research

trends and methods related to language friction will help EFL teachers to choose appropriate teaching strategies to overcome the language friction experienced by EFL learners. Apart from that, the result of this study can also have a positive implication for communication relationships within a community. Understanding that language friction is a phenomenon in communication due to ethnic and cultural differences will prevent misunderstandings among communication participants.

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