# Navigating Language Interference: Patterns, Factors, and Perceptions among Indonesian EFL Learners

**Idelia Dara Zebua[1*], I Nyoman Muliana[1], I Gusti Ayu Ayung Dian Susanthi[1], Suhono[2], Falentinus Ndruru[3]**
[1] *Warmadewa Denpasar, Indonesia*
[2] *Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Indonesia*
[3] *Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia*

✉ ideliazebua07@gmail.com*

| Abstract | Article Info |
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| Language interference poses a major challenge for Indonesian EFL learners' writing due to structural differences between Indonesian and English. This research integrates both structural errors and students' perspectives to provide a fuller account of interference in learning English. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study investigated the types of interference, contributing factors, and students' perceptions. Data were collected from pre-written tests and open-ended questionnaires completed by eleven students at a private language center in Denpasar. Thematic analysis identified four main types of interference: grammatical, lexical, orthographic, and pragmatic. These patterns were shaped by limited grammatical and lexical knowledge, reliance on Indonesian-based thinking, and few opportunities for authentic English writing. Students expressed mixed perceptions: some viewed interference as a normal stage of learning, while others reported frustration or confidence depending on their experiences and support. Findings suggest that writing instruction should balance fluency and accuracy by fostering authentic language use, collocational competence, and pragmatic awareness, supported by constructive digital feedback. Interpreted through interlanguage and noticing frameworks, the study shows how learner confidence and awareness interact with persistent transfer errors. The insights extend beyond Indonesia, contributing to broader EFL contexts where English exposure remains limited. | *Article History* *Received :* *October 12, 2025* *Revised :* *November 19, 2025* *Accepted :* *December 30, 2025* *Keywords:* *Navigating Language Interference, Language Interference, EFL Learners' Writing* |

## INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that plays an important role in education, work, and international communication (Crystal, 2012). In Indonesia, however, English is taught as a foreign language and is not widely used in daily interactions (Ariyanti & Mulyanto, 2020; Pratama, 2021). This makes it difficult for Indonesian students to develop confidence and accuracy in their English writing. Writing is especially challenging because the grammatical rules, vocabulary use, and cultural styles of English are very different from those of Indonesian (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015; Fauziati, 2016; Zhang & Kang, 2022).

One common problem is language interference, also known as negative transfer, which refers to the influence of a learner's first language on their second language (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015; Weinreich, 1953). Interference can affect grammar, word choice, spelling, and even politeness. For example, Indonesian students often transfer their own word order or sentence structures to English, producing errors in tense, subject–verb agreement, or awkward phrasing (Fakhrudin et al., 2023; Nirwana & Suhono, 2023). These patterns can damage effective communication and limit students' academic and professional opportunities, since grammatical and broader linguistic knowledge are critical for writing quality (Crossley, 2020; Rofiqoh et al., 2022). While Indonesian EFL research has described recurrent error patterns and, separately, learners' attitudes toward writing, few studies have systematically combined textual evidence of interference with students' self-reported perceptions. This

integration is crucial because learners' awareness, or lack thereof, can directly influence whether errors are noticed, corrected, or fossilized.

While studies have described these structural errors (Fauziati, 2016; Irmalia, 2016; Puspita, 2021), fewer have looked at how learners themselves perceive interference or how they try to manage it (Alisoy, 2024). Understanding these perceptions is important because they can shape motivation, confidence, and the willingness to revise writing after feedback (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). There is also limited research on how these issues play out in private language education settings, where individualized instruction might influence how L1 transfer occurs (Ristanto et al., 2021). In addition, pragmatic errors, such as overly direct or impolite phrasing, have not been explored enough in writing, even though they affect how messages are received by English-speaking audiences. The role of digital feedback tools or online writing practice in helping students notice and reduce these errors is another area where evidence is still lacking, even as technology becomes more common in language learning (Zhang & Kang, 2022). The study draws on Selinker's (1972) theory of interlanguage and Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis to examine how cross-linguistic interference emerges and persists. From a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), perceptions of interference can also be seen as socially mediated, shaped by classroom practices and feedback mechanisms.

This study aims to fill these gaps by examining the types of language interference shown in Indonesian EFL students' writing, the reasons for these problems, and how students themselves see these challenges in a private language education context. The study aims to offer teachers and curriculum designers insights to support students through writing tasks, feedback, and engagement strategies. Based on these aims, the study asks the following research questions:
1. What types of language interference do Indonesian EFL students show in their English writing?
2. What factors contribute to these language interferences?
3. How do students perceive the language interference they experience in their writing?

**Literature Review**
*Language Interference in EFL Contexts*

Language interference, also called cross-linguistic influence, happens when a learner's first language (L1) affects their second language (L2) production (Weinreich, 1953; Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). This influence is especially strong among EFL learners who rarely use the target language outside class and depend mostly on their L1 (Gass et al., 2020). In Indonesia, the structural differences between Indonesian and English make interference a frequent challenge for students (Ariyanti & Mulyanto, 2020; Rofiqoh et al., 2022). Research has documented how Indonesian learners often transfer L1 patterns in tense, word order, and agreement, which leads to unnatural or inaccurate writing (Fakhrudin et al., 2023; Fauziati, 2016). These errors can negatively affect academic and professional opportunities since grammatical and broader linguistic skills strongly influence writing quality (Crossley, 2020; Rofiqoh et al., 2022). However, many past studies have focused only on listing error patterns, without looking deeper into how factors such as social background, learning context, or feedback practices shape these errors (Irmalia, 2016; Puspita, 2021). A more integrated approach is needed to understand why these patterns keep repeating and how teaching can better address them. More studies should connect structural errors with social and learning histories to design better teaching approaches.

*Types of Language Interference*

Weinreich (1953) originally divided interference into phonological, lexical, and grammatical categories. Phonological interference appears when L1 sounds influence English pronunciation (Nirwana & Suhono, 2023). Lexical interference happens when learners choose words or collocations that sound unnatural because they translate directly from Indonesian (Fakhrudin et al., 2023). Grammatical interference involves applying Indonesian grammar rules in English, such as missing articles or incorrect plurals (Puspita, 2021). Other researchers have added orthographic interference, which means transferring L1-based spelling, punctuation, or capitalization to English writing (Harrison, 2023; Mlakar et al., 2025). This shows how deeply first-language habits can shape English literacy skills (Zhang & Kang, 2022). In addition, recent studies have highlighted pragmatic interference, where students use L1 politeness or tone strategies that do not match English norms (Qin et al., 2024).

Although these categories are well described, most research uses small samples or artificial tasks, leaving open the question of how such errors appear in authentic classroom writing. Beyond Indonesia, cross-linguistic studies also show that interference is a widespread issue. Turkish learners, for instance, frequently transfer syntactic and lexical features from their L1 (Hasırcıoğlu & Öztürk, 2024), while Iranian learners at different proficiency levels continue to produce fossilized grammatical errors

that resist instruction (Lashgari, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, entrenched interference in academic writing has led researchers to propose rubric-guided self-correction as a way to mitigate fossilization (Albelihi & Al-Ahdal, 2024). Despite extensive documentation of grammatical and lexical transfer in different contexts, existing studies remain largely descriptive. Few have connected these structural issues to learners' cognitive or affective dimensions, leaving a gap in understanding how error awareness relates to persistence or reduction over time.

## Factors Contributing to Interference

Several reasons contribute to language interference. These include gaps in grammatical knowledge, a lack of vocabulary, and limited contact with authentic English (Crossley, 2020; Rofiqoh et al., 2022). Under time pressure or stress, students may rely on Indonesian rules because they are easier and more familiar (Ellis, 2008). In many Indonesian classrooms, memorization-based methods are still common, which might strengthen L1-based habits instead of building flexible English skills (Fareed et al., 2016). Social and cultural factors also play a role. Students' beliefs about their abilities, their confidence levels, and how similar they think the two languages are can shape how much interference shows up (Kojima & Fukui, 2024; Paltridge & Prior, 2024). Consistent practice and teacher support can help, as shown by Lei et al. (2023), who found that students developed more complex English sentences with enough exposure and practice. Still, many studies look at only one or two factors, ignoring how these elements combine in real classrooms. Research needs to connect students' beliefs, teaching styles, and writing habits in a more complete picture.

## Perceptions of Language Interference

Students' beliefs about interference matter because they shape how willing students are to fix mistakes. If they see interference as harmless, they may not try to correct it (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2017). Studies in Indonesia show that learners hold mixed views: some see interference as a minor issue if communication works, while others feel it blocks academic or professional goals (Ristanto et al., 2021). Shen and Chong (2023) highlighted that students' views on written feedback also affect whether they address transfer errors, while Sippel and Martin (2024) found that supportive, clear feedback helps students feel more confident about improving their writing. Beyond Indonesia, similar patterns appear in other EFL contexts. In Saudi Arabia, for example, learners often underestimate the persistence of their grammatical and lexical errors, even after repeated teacher feedback (Albelihi & Al-Ahdal, 2024). Iranian students also demonstrate a gap between what they report about their writing challenges and the fossilized errors visible in their texts (Lashgari, 2024). These findings suggest that mismatches between perceptions and performance are a recurring challenge in EFL learning, not one confined to the Indonesian setting. However, many perceptions studies still rely primarily on questionnaires without cross-checking whether learners' stated beliefs align with their actual written performance. This separation limits pedagogical insights because it remains unclear whether students' self-reported awareness corresponds with their observable language production.

Overall, although previous studies have described many error types and causes, there is still little research that combines error analysis with how students actually feel about their mistakes, especially in private EFL schools. Most past studies separate error patterns from perceptions, rather than seeing how they interact. Also, very few studies follow students over time to see if their beliefs change with more writing practice. Therefore, this study aims to explore the types of interference Indonesian EFL students make in writing, the factors behind these patterns, and how students see these challenges in a private language school. By bringing together actual writing samples with learner reflections, this research hopes to help teachers and program designers build writing instruction that is more effective and supportive. Addressing these gaps, the present study integrates cross-linguistic error analysis with learner perceptions, offering a more holistic account of interference in EFL writing.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative design to explore how Indonesian EFL learners experience language interference in their English writing. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it supports a rich, in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and captures authentic examples of writing challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design allowed the researcher to analyze writing samples while also exploring how learners viewed these issues, as recommended in second language writing research (Hyland, 2019). Given the small participant pool, the study adopts a qualitative case study orientation, privileging depth of analysis and contextual insights over statistical

generalizability. This approach allows for analytic generalization, where findings inform theoretical understandings of interference rather than population-level claims.

### Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted at a private language education center in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia, which offers one-on-one tutoring. This setting was chosen because private EFL classes may allow more authentic and diverse writing experiences than standardized public school classes (Richards, 2015). Eleven participants were recruited, aged between 14 and 26, and placed at pre-intermediate to intermediate proficiency levels, as determined by their teacher-administered placement tests. Purposive sampling was used to select students who regularly engaged in writing tasks and were likely to show patterns of language interference (Paltridge & Starfield, 2019). Although the sample was small, qualitative research emphasizes depth and context over generalizability (Patton, 2015), making this number reasonable for thematic analysis. All participants provided written informed consent before joining the study, and for minors, parental permission was also secured in line with ethical guidelines (British Educational Research Association, 2018). Participants were reminded about their rights to voluntary participation, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw at any time.

### Research Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the data for this study. The first was a pre-written test, which was a writing task developed by teachers at the center and validated by the head teacher. This task encouraged students to demonstrate their writing skills in a low-stakes way, which covers self-description, basic vocabulary comprehension, and basic grammar comprehension. This test was addressed without grades attached, which is recommended to reduce anxiety and produce more authentic writing (Hinkel, 2011). The writing samples helped identify patterns of grammatical, lexical, orthographic, and pragmatic interference. The second instrument was an open-ended questionnaire designed to explore students' beliefs about interference and the reasons they felt these problems happened. The questionnaire contained 14 questions, with seven on possible causes of interference and seven on perceptions toward it. Open-ended items were chosen to allow students to explain their views in their own words, producing richer qualitative insights (Cohen et al., 2018). The questionnaire was reviewed and validated by two experienced lecturers with expertise in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, ensuring it was clear and aligned with the study's aims.

### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place in two stages. First, participants completed the pre-written test during their normal class routine under teacher supervision. This helped collect writing samples naturally, without disrupting their lessons. Second, participants completed the open-ended questionnaire in person. The data collection was spread over two weeks to allow for follow-up questions if needed. There are some limitations to note. Even in a low-stakes setting, students might have felt pressured to perform well, which could affect their natural writing (Ellis, 2008). In addition, their answers in the questionnaire might have been influenced by social desirability or language limitations. These limitations are common in educational research but were addressed by stressing confidentiality and reassuring students that there were no right or wrong answers (Mackey & Gass, 2022).

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is well-suited for identifying and categorizing patterns within qualitative data. The analysis followed these steps: (1) familiarization with the data by reading the writing samples and questionnaire responses multiple times, (2) initial coding to identify examples of interference and recurring factors, (3) grouping codes into broader themes based on the research questions, and (4) interpreting the themes in relation to existing literature on second language writing and crosslinguistic influence (Odlin, 2012). For the written test, error examples were classified according to standard linguistic categories, such as grammatical, lexical, orthographic, and pragmatic interference aligned with error analysis frameworks recommended in second language writing research (Ferris, 2011). For the open-ended questionnaire, responses were coded to capture learners' beliefs, confidence levels, and their explanations of why they thought interference occurred. Data from both instruments were triangulated to strengthen the validity of findings. The overall procedure aimed to ensure that the results accurately reflected the experiences and views of these EFL learners. To improve trustworthiness, the study applied strategies such as member checking and supervisor validation (Miles et al., 2020). Participants were invited to confirm their questionnaire responses if there was any ambiguity, and two experienced supervisors reviewed coding categories.

It is important to note that the analysis presented in this study is exploratory in nature. The examples highlighted in the Findings are illustrative of recurring patterns rather than a comprehensive frequency count of all errors. This decision reflects the study's qualitative orientation, which emphasizes the depth and contextual interpretation of representative cases over exhaustive enumeration (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). While some simple counts were used to track categories during coding, the emphasis is placed on how these patterns interact with learners' reported perceptions, thereby offering a holistic but non-generalizable picture of language interference in this context.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION
### *Types of Language Interference*
Thematic analysis of the writing samples revealed several recurring types of interference. The examples presented in this section are illustrative of the most salient patterns observed across participants' texts, rather than an exhaustive catalogue of all instances.

### *1. Grammatical Interference*
This theme covers errors in subject–verb agreement, tense use, plural forms, auxiliary structures, and word order, all reflecting grammatical systems that differ between Indonesian and English.
Examples:
*"She like reading book every day"* (P1) → should be *"She likes reading books every day."*
*"My father went to restaurant tomorrow"* (P1) → intended: *"My father will go to the restaurant tomorrow."*
*"Mr. Smith and Mrs. Smith doesn't work at the office"* (P1) → correct: *"… do not work at the office."*
*"Do you thinking about him?"* (P1) → correct: *"Do you think about him?"*
*"Where are you come from?"* (P2) → correct: *"Where are you from?"*
*"She writing a letter now"* (P1) → correct: *"She is writing a letter now."*
*"They are not at home today"* (P2) → correct phrasing needed.
*"Are you meet him every day?"* (P2) → correct: *"Do you meet him every day?"*
*"He won't watch Anime every night"* (P2) → likely meant *"He does not watch Anime every night."*
*"My hobby is listening to music, writing, and reading"* (P10) → correct: *"My hobbies are…"*
*"I'm graduated from Elizabeth International Hotel and Business School"* (P11) → correct: "I graduated from…"
*"Let me introduce about myself"* (P11) → correct: *"Let me introduce myself."*
*"Where do you from?"* (P11) → correct: *"Where are you from?"*
*"I live in Kembang Matahari street, no one hundred and twelve"* (P11) → word order mirrors Indonesian.

These examples indicate that grammatical interference was the most salient category, with nearly all participants producing tense, agreement, or word order errors. This suggests that structural contrasts between Indonesian and English exert a strong influence, particularly where English requires morphological marking absent in Indonesian.

### *2. Lexical Interference*
Students showed incorrect word choice, literal translation, and confusion with collocations, indicating transfer of Indonesian vocabulary habits.
Examples:
*"As long as the test, we are not allowed to bring our phones"* (P4) → correct: *"During the test…"*
*"She can swim 10 years ago"* (P4, P5, P6) → correct: *"She could swim 10 years ago."*
*"My hobby is watching movie and listening to the music"* (P6) → correct: *"watching movies and listening to music."*
*"Doni and I would go to Paris next week"* (P5) → correct: *"Doni and I will go…"*
*"Where are you stay in Bali?"* (P6) → correct: *"Where do you stay in Bali?"*
*"My hobby is sing a song"* (P7) → correct: *"My hobby is singing a song."*
*"What your name?"* (P7) → correct: *"What is your name?"*

Lexical interference also appeared frequently across participants' work. Although the dataset is limited, the recurrence of direct translations and collocational mismatches suggests that learners rely heavily on L1-based lexical strategies when their vocabulary resources are insufficient.

### *3. Orthographic Interference*
Spelling and punctuation errors reflected Indonesian phonetic rules and inconsistent exposure to written English conventions.
Examples:
*"Thirthty hundred and five thousand"* (P3) → intended *"three hundred fifty thousand"*
*"She is wearing dreess"* (P3) → correct spelling: *"dress"*

*"Whats your name?"* (P10) → missing apostrophe
*"Hallo my name is Suryanti"* (P7) → correct: *"Hello, my name is Suryanti."*
*"Rp 350,000 (Thirty five hauntderd thousand rupiah)"* (P4) → confused English numeral spelling.
*"She is wearing black t-srit"* (P4) → *"t-shirt"* spelling error
*"Im live at Jl. Antasura, Gg. Teratai No. 46"* (P9) → missing apostrophe in "I'm"

Orthographic issues were less dominant than grammatical or lexical interference but remained visible in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. These cases, though fewer in number, illustrate how Indonesian phonetic and orthographic habits transfer into English literacy practices.

### 4. Pragmatic Interference

Although fewer explicit cases were shown, some data indicated pragmatic mismatch, such as politeness conventions:

*"Give me your pencil."* (no polite request form; hypothetical P2)
*"Where do you from?"* as a question, too direct for polite English

Pragmatic interference was less frequently observed in the data. However, the presence of direct requests and overly literal phrasings indicates that learners may not fully recognize differences in politeness norms between Indonesian and English. This limited visibility may stem from the context: the writing tasks emphasized structural accuracy more than pragmatic appropriateness.

### Factors Contributing to Language Interference

Analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed two broader thematic categories explaining why students experienced language interference: linguistic knowledge challenges and transfer-related habits.

### 1. Linguistic Knowledge Challenges

Many participants highlighted gaps in their language knowledge as a main reason for interference. These challenges included difficulties with verbs, limited vocabulary, grammatical complexity, and confusion with false cognates.

Examples:

Difficulty with verbs:
*"Lupa dengan kata kerja yang digunakan."* ("Forgot the verb to use") (P2)
*"Saya tidak tahu bentuk kata kerja yang benar."* ("I don't know the correct verb form.") (P5)

Limited vocabulary:
*"Ada kesulitan dalam kosa kata bahasa Inggris."* ("Difficulty with English vocabulary") (P3)
*"Kadang saya tidak tahu kata dalam bahasa Inggrisnya."* ("Sometimes I don't know the word in English") (P7)

Grammatical complexity:
*"Kesulitan di bagian grammar."* ("Difficulty in grammar") (P4)
*"Saya sering salah waktu penggunaan tense."* ("I often make mistakes in tense use.") (P6)

False cognates:
*"Kadang saya bingung kalau kata mirip tapi beda arti."* ("Sometimes I get confused if the words are similar but have different meaning.") (P3)

These participants described struggles in applying English grammatical systems, verb conjugations, and lexical rules, which differ from their first language and triggered interference patterns.

### 2. Transfer and Syntactic Habits

The second theme centered on participants' habitual ways of thinking and structuring language, which carried over from Indonesian.

Examples:

Syntactic structure and word order:
*"Kesulitan dalam menyambungkan kata-kata ke bahasa Inggris."* ("Difficulty connecting words into English") (P4)
*"Kalau menulis, susah membuat urutan kata yang benar."* ("When writing, it's hard to make the correct word order.") (P8)

Frequent Indonesian use:
*"Karena saya sering menggunakan bahasa Indonesia, jadi agak sulit."* ("Because I often use Indonesian, it is a bit difficult.") (P9)
*"Saya tidak terbiasa berpikir dalam bahasa Inggris."* ("I'm not used to thinking in English.") (P6)

These responses point to a pattern where students habitually relied on Indonesian syntax and phrasing when expressing themselves in English. Frequent use of Indonesian in daily life reinforced these transfer habits, making interference more persistent. While the small dataset prevents broad generalization, participants' reflections consistently highlighted two themes: gaps in linguistic knowledge

and reliance on Indonesian-based thinking habits. These patterns, though reported in different ways, were recurrent across the responses.

### Students' Perceptions of Language Interference

#### 1. Perceptions of Frequency and Severity

Participants had varied perceptions of how often and how seriously interference affected their English. Some saw it as an occasional but manageable problem, while others felt it was frequent and significantly disruptive.

Participant evidence:

*"Kadang-kadang saja, tidak sering."* ("Only sometimes, not often.") (P2)

*"Selalu mengganggu kalau berbicara atau menulis."* ("It always disrupts me when speaking or writing.") (P5)

*"Tidak terlalu mengganggu kalau masih bisa dimengerti."* ("Not too disturbing if people still understand.") (P4)

Students recognize interference as part of their learning process, but differ on how serious they see it.

#### 2. Perceived Impact on Specific Language Skills

Participants generally felt that interference impacted productive skills (speaking, writing) more than receptive skills (listening, reading). Some highlighted pronunciation and fluency as especially affected.

Participant evidence:

*"Mempengaruhi cara berbicara saya, kadang salah grammar."* ("It affects how I speak, sometimes wrong grammar.") (P3)

*"Lebih berpengaruh di speaking dan writing."* ("More influential in speaking and writing.") (P6)

*"Kalau listening tidak terlalu berpengaruh."* ("In listening it is not much affected.") (P8)

This suggests interference is more visible and stressful when students have to produce language actively.

#### 3. Confidence and Self-Efficacy

Students expressed a range of confidence levels when using English in the presence of interference. Some felt confident despite errors, while others lacked confidence and feared negative judgment.

Participant evidence:

*"Saya tetap percaya diri walaupun ada kesalahan."* ("I am still confident even with mistakes.") (P7)

*"Kurang percaya diri karena takut salah."* ("Not confident because I'm afraid of mistakes.") (P5)

*"Sekitar 80% percaya diri."* ("About 80% confident.") (P2)

Confidence seems closely linked to prior exposure and willingness to practice, influencing how participants manage interference.

#### 4. Coping Strategies

Several participants described personal strategies to manage interference, such as code-switching, guessing, or paraphrasing.

Participant evidence:

*"Kadang saya pakai bahasa Indonesia dulu, nanti baru cari kata bahasa Inggris."* ("Sometimes I use Indonesian first, then look for the English word.") (P4)

*"Kalau tidak tahu kata, saya coba kata lain."* ("If I don't know the word, I try another word.") (P3)

*"Sering latihan supaya terbiasa."* ("Practice often to get used to it.") (P9)

Overall, students varied in their assessment of interference, with some considering it minor as long as communication remained intelligible, while others reported frustration or a loss of confidence. Even within this limited dataset, the divergence between perceptions and actual error patterns is striking. For example, some learners who felt confident produced repeated grammatical errors, while others with low confidence overstated their error frequency.

Taken together, the findings illustrate that while grammatical and lexical interference were the most salient categories, orthographic and pragmatic transfer also shaped participants' writing in subtler ways. The integration of error patterns with learners' own reflections provides a holistic but exploratory picture of how interference is experienced in this private EFL context.

## DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine (1) the types of language interference experienced by Indonesian EFL students in their English writing, (2) the factors contributing to these interferences, and (3) their perceptions of interference. By triangulating data from authentic writing tasks and open-ended

questionnaires, several important patterns emerged that enrich our understanding of EFL writing challenges and connect to previous scholarship.

### Types of Language Interference in Students' Writing

The persistence of tense and agreement errors despite instruction aligns with Selinker's (1972) concept of fossilization. However, the fact that several students remained confident despite frequent errors points to a lack of noticing (Schmidt, 1990). This suggests that communicative success may mask underlying grammatical inaccuracy, delaying interlanguage development. The findings identified grammatical, lexical, orthographic, and pragmatic interferences in students' writing. Most prominently, grammatical interference was marked by errors in tense use, subject–verb agreement, plural forms, and word order. This pattern is consistent with Weinreich's (1953) early framework on cross-linguistic interference and supports Fauziati (2016), who documented similar tense and agreement errors among Indonesian EFL learners. The data confirm that Indonesian students, whose L1 does not require verb conjugations or strict subject–verb agreement (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015), frequently transfer these simpler Indonesian rules into English, resulting in persistent mistakes. Comparable patterns have also been observed in other contexts: Iranian learners, for instance, demonstrate fossilized grammatical errors in tense and agreement that persist even at higher proficiency levels (Lashgari, 2024), while Saudi students show entrenched interference in academic writing that researchers have attempted to address through rubric-guided self-correction (Albelihi & Al-Ahdal, 2024).

Lexical interference also aligned with Zhang and Kang's (2022) observations of word-for-word translation and inappropriate collocations in EFL writing, while students' confusion about terms like "as long as the test" highlights issues of semantic transfer that were similarly reported by Fakhrudin et al. (2023). Internationally, Turkish learners exhibit parallel difficulties, relying heavily on literal translation strategies and producing collocational mismatches that mirror the Indonesian cases in this study (Hasırcıoğlu & Öztürk, 2024). These patterns emphasize that across different L1 backgrounds, EFL learners often rely on literal translation strategies when their vocabulary resources are insufficient. Orthographic interference, such as spelling inconsistencies and punctuation errors, fits findings from Harrison (2023) and Mlakar et al. (2025), who noted that orthographic habits shaped by L1 phonological patterns can carry into English writing. These spelling transfer issues, particularly involving Indonesian phonetic logic, underscore an area where explicit instruction is still needed. Finally, the pragmatic interference observed, for example, direct requests without politeness markers, confirms what Qin et al. (2024) and Paltridge & Prior (2024) described as cross-cultural differences in expressing politeness. Indonesian discourse norms often permit more directness, which may seem impolite in English-speaking contexts, thereby affecting pragmatic appropriateness. While less frequent in the current data, similar issues of pragmatic transfer have been noted among learners in other EFL contexts, suggesting that awareness-raising strategies are crucial for addressing not only structural but also sociocultural aspects of writing.

### Factors Contributing to Interference

The second research question explored why interference persists in student writing. Students attributed it to gaps in linguistic knowledge particularly weak grammatical awareness, limited vocabulary, and lack of practice in authentic contexts which resonates with Crossley (2020) and Odlin (2013), who argued that limited linguistic resources heighten negative transfer. The data also revealed that frequent daily use of Indonesian and habitual thinking in L1 reinforced transfer patterns, confirming the cognitive fallback mechanisms discussed by Ellis (2008). Additionally, students described struggling with syntactic structures due to Indonesian's more flexible word order. This aligns with Irmalia (2016), who highlighted how L1 syntactic habits directly influence Indonesian students' English production. The finding that time pressure and anxiety increased reliance on Indonesian grammar supports Fareed et al. (2016), who noted that rote learning approaches can leave students without flexible grammatical skills to adapt in real time. Interestingly, only one student (P10) reported no significant interference, pointing to the protective effects of greater English exposure and higher confidence. This echoes Kojima & Fukui (2024), who showed that confidence and international posture reduce negative transfer by encouraging risk-taking in L2. The relative scarcity of pragmatic interference may be explained not by absence but by limited opportunities for authentic communicative writing tasks. From a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), pragmatic competence requires interactional scaffolding, which was largely absent in the private language center context.

### Students' Perceptions of Interference

For the third research question, students' perceptions were nuanced. Most viewed interference as a natural part of learning to be overcome with practice, echoing the positive beliefs about self-

improvement described by Nassaji and Kartchava (2017). Yet some expressed frustration and embarrassment when errors made their writing awkward, consistent with Alisoy (2024), who noted similar emotional responses among ESL learners. Students generally saw interference as more serious in productive skills, particularly writing, than in receptive skills, aligning with Ristanto et al. (2021), who found negative transfer more visible when learners must actively produce language. Coping strategies such as code-switching or paraphrasing also paralleled Shen and Chong's (2022) finding that learners negotiate interference through adaptive strategies.

An unexpected perception was that several participants considered interference "not a problem as long as people understand." This tolerance suggests students prioritize communicative effectiveness over strict accuracy, echoing Nassaji and Kartchava's (2017) observation that many learners value meaning over form. While pragmatic in conversation, this orientation may slow grammatical development in academic writing, highlighting the risk of fossilization when errors remain unnoticed. Another finding was the relative weakness of pragmatic interference compared to grammatical and lexical issues. This may reflect the limited opportunities to practice authentic interaction in writing classes, with pragmatic transfer emerging more strongly in oral communication (Paltridge & Prior, 2024).

These perceptions have direct pedagogical implications. Grammar teaching should move beyond rule memorization toward communicative practice that fosters self-monitoring of tense, agreement, and sentence structure (Fareed et al., 2016; Richards, 2015). Vocabulary instruction should highlight authentic collocational patterns rather than literal translation, supported by digital tools that prompt reflection on recurrent errors (Crossley, 2020; Shen & Chong, 2022). Pragmatic awareness also deserves attention: tasks such as role-play emails or simulated exchanges can help learners internalize English politeness strategies. Finally, consistent low-stakes writing practice, through journals, blogs, or discussion boards, can reduce anxiety and build the confidence students need to move beyond interference and develop fluency.

The findings also carry several pedagogical implications. Rather than relying on rule memorization, writing instruction should emphasize authentic tasks that balance communicative fluency with attention to accuracy. Digital feedback tools can complement classroom teaching by offering low-stakes opportunities for students to reflect on recurrent errors and monitor their own progress. Vocabulary learning is best supported through exposure to authentic texts and collocational patterns, while pragmatic awareness can be fostered through simulated communicative activities such as email exchanges or role-play writing tasks. Importantly, feedback practices should remain supportive and scaffolded, encouraging students to take risks in their writing without fear of harsh penalties.

At the same time, several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The participant pool was relatively small and drawn from a single private institution in Denpasar, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized. Moreover, data were restricted to writing samples and open-ended questionnaires, without complementary observations or interviews that might have revealed how classroom practices and peer interaction shape interference. Other variables, such as learner motivation, prior exposure to English, or socioeconomic background, could not be systematically addressed. These constraints suggest directions for future research: larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and multi-method approaches could deepen understanding of how interference emerges and how different instructional strategies influence its persistence or reduction.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the types of language interference in Indonesian EFL students' writing, the factors shaping them, and learners' perceptions. The analysis revealed grammatical, lexical, orthographic, and pragmatic interference, influenced by gaps in linguistic knowledge, reliance on L1-based thinking, and limited exposure to authentic English. Students tended to view interference as a manageable challenge, though often without recognizing its risk of fossilization. A key contribution of this study lies in integrating textual analysis with learner perceptions, offering a more holistic view of how structural transfer interacts with affective and cognitive dimensions. The findings extend the noticing hypothesis by showing how communicative adequacy may obscure persistent errors, and they highlight the danger of equating intelligibility with proficiency. Although situated in Indonesia, the results resonate with broader EFL contexts where exposure to English is limited. Similar interference and fossilization patterns have been reported in Turkish, Iranian, and Saudi settings, underscoring the global relevance of these challenges in second language writing. Pedagogically, the study suggests that instruction should balance fluency with accuracy, emphasize collocational competence and pragmatic awareness, and integrate digital feedback tools to encourage noticing and self-correction. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in

a single institution with a small sample, which limits the generalizability of its findings. Future research should expand to larger and more diverse populations, incorporate teacher and peer perspectives, and adopt longitudinal or comparative designs to track how interference evolves and how instructional practices can effectively address it.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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