

Investigating The Grammatical Interference of Indonesian-Gayonese EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the causes of Indonesian interference in the writing of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and to examine the types of such interference. In order to figure out the issue of Indonesian grammatical interference, a descriptive qualitative approach was adopted by utilizing fourth-semester students of the English Department IAIN Takengon, Aceh, Indonesia, as the target population for the research. Subsequently, the data was derived from both tests and observations. Data analysis indicates that the students still experienced interference from the Indonesian grammar due to it being their first language. In this research, grammatical interference is divided into two categories: the interference of syntax and morphology. Syntactic interference comprises words, prepositions, superfluous words, and word omission. The most prevalent occurrence of syntactic interference is in the area of prepositions. Morphological interference replicated itself in determiner omission, incorrect determiner usage, subject-verb agreement discrepancies, the incorrect verb 'to be,' incorrect usage of verb tenses, and confusion regarding singularity and plurality. Though, the most prevalent type of morphological interference is the omission of a determiner. It was observed that the disparity in the structure of Indonesian and English grammar accounts for the interference. In addition, another cause was that students typically composed it first in Indonesian and translated it into English.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Most Indonesians do not consistently utilize English in their daily conversations, as it is deemed a foreign language in Indonesia. Instead, the Indonesian uses their native or Indonesian as their official national language for communication. Within the educational context, students interact with one another utilizing the Indonesian language. It is entirely feasible that Indonesian is utilized as the communicative medium in English classes. It follows the contention of Gujord (2020) that foreign language is taught in educational settings yet is not typically employed in everyday discourse. It is undeniable that English has become indispensable in the current epoch, even though it is not a part of daily life communication. The proliferation of technology in the current epoch necessitates a frequent utilization of English by individuals. English has been adopted as a compulsory subject in secondary schooling. Sermsook et al. (2017) highlighted the inefficiency of English as a foreign language in the EFL context. The impact of utilizing a mother tongue or any other native language on target language acquisition cannot be disregarded.

Indonesian students often display influence from their native language when employing English as a second language (Syaputri, 2019), (Sukandi, 2014). Regrettably, they are often not cognizant of the influences. It is generally believed that comprehension in communication is sufficient. Although the adherence to traditional grammatical patterns may be disregarded, provided that the listener can comprehend the speaker's message, this is deemed sufficient. An example of this would be when an Indonesian individual expresses "dia sangat suka memancing," they would use it as a substitute for saying, "he likes fishing very much."

Given that the language production is not grammatically sound, it will be difficult for others to comprehend their utterances. The influence of an L1 on a second language can be observed across different language systems. Employing specific linguistic systems in another language is referred to as transfer. Foreign language acquisition is inherently impacted by an individual's pre-existing linguistic knowledge, patterns, and conventions derived from their native language (Budiharto, 2019). Hence, it is arduous for them to acquire a novel pattern of a foreign language. Prior knowledge of the language will have been transferred to the target language. The transfer process can further aid foreign language learners in acquiring the target language or impede their mastery. Given its nature, language learning transfer can be categorized into two distinct categories. Positive transfer is the initial phenomenon. The potential for mutual intelligibility between the two languages can benefit language learners. Negative transfer can be observed as a second-order effect. Negative transfer can lead to confusion. This phenomenon is attributed to learners of a language adapting to the linguistic structure of a language disparate from their native linguistic system (Houmanfar et al., 2005). Negative transfer, alternatively referred to as language interference, is a well-documented phenomenon. In bilingual or multilingual countries, language interference is a common phenomenon. Mistakes may manifest in various areas, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon, both in written and spoken contexts (Archvadze, 2015).

This research aims to investigate the influence of Indonesian as an L1 on the writing proficiency of EFL learners. Given that the objective of writing instruction in TEFL is to empower learners to generate written content as a communication medium (Munandar & Sukria, 2021), studies on writing and the issues associated with its grammar are essential. The researcher seeks to ascertain the determinants of Indonesian grammar interference in EFL students' writing and the specific types of interference that arise.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 First Language Interference

In the context of second language learning, specific interferences can be perceived as the obstructive force undermining the process of language acquisition. The native language of a learner is often seen to be an obstacle in acquiring a second language. Ellis (2015) elucidates two ways of conceptualizing interference. Psychologists have characterized interference as a cognitive state of confusion caused by the still-present tendency to use one's native language when attempting to use a newly acquired language. Interference in Sociolinguistics is defined as an interaction between two languages, such as borrowing words or a shift in language use due to contact between them. Interference from first-

language features can be observed in second-language acquisition. Schmitt (2019) pointed out that interference analysis can be categorized into three categories. They are as follows:

1. The Loanword Transference of Elements between Languages,
2. The incorporation of components that are not pertinent to the second language into the first language,
3. There is no equivalent in the first language due to its structure in the instance of second language disobedience.

2.2 Types of Grammatical Interference

Schmitt (2019) further categorizes interference forms into three distinct types: phonological, lexical, and grammatical. Grammatical interference can manifest in second-language learners when they transfer the grammatical pattern of their first language to the target language. Grammatical interference can be classified into two categories. The absorption of affixes from other languages causes morphological interference. The second form of linguistic interference is the syntactic transfer of one language into another. In Indonesian and English contexts, it is common to observe syntactic interference. For example, "brave man" is grammatically incorrect in Indonesian due to the structure of the language. The correct phrase would be "man brave." When considering definitions of grammar and interference, interference of a grammatical nature might manifest in writing due to the involuntary transference of structures from the native language. Indonesian, to the language being studied. A study of grammatical errors in students' writing can be utilized to gauge grammatical interference in students' writing. Analyzing the errors in writing can provide insight into the grammatical interference in the language acquisition of L2 learners, as well as how much they have managed to learn. In their study, Muziatun et al. (2020) analyzed that the syntactic mistakes resulted from first language interference.

2.3 Previous Studies on L1 Interference

Recent studies have been conducted on the issue of L1 interference concerning students' writing. Syarif (2014) researched Indonesian interference in students' written output. The research revealed that learners often struggle with employing the appropriate verb in tenses. Syaputri (2019) conducted another study evaluating grammatical interference in Indonesian EFL. Other studies on the same topic have been carried out by Sukandi (2014), Samingan (2016), Zulfikar (2020), Amaluddin et al. (2020), M. Isa et al. (2017). The results of this research series indicated the existence of two types of grammatical interference; morphological mistakes and syntactic errors.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

When engaging in qualitative research, there are two possible methods of approach (Riazi, 2016). The initial strategy is to theorize prior to conducting research. Through the research process, the researcher conceptualizes an idea, delves into existing theories, delineates the research design, gathers data, analyses the data, and draws conclusions. The alternative approach is widely recognized as a pre-theoretical research strategy. In this methodology, the investigator elects to formulate the research after ideation for research. Subsequently, the investigator procures the data, scrutinizes the hypothesis, scrutinizes the

data, and formulates a conclusion. For this study, the researcher opted for a theory-driven approach, namely, theory prior to research.

3.2 Research Participant and Data Collection

This investigation involved 20 narrative essays composed by eight-semester students who had taken academic writing in the 2021/2022 academic year. These essays were between 1000-1800 word counts. The participants in this study were those who had officially enrolled in the Academic Writing course. A purposeful approach characterizes by following Cresswell et al. (2003) sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling involves a researcher deliberately selecting individuals and situations to gain insight into the primary phenomenon under study. The criterion for selecting participants and locations was whether they had a wealth of information. Once the data has been gathered through three methods, the subsequent step is to conduct a qualitative analysis. In this study, an initial analysis of Indonesian grammatical interference in student writing was conducted. Subsequently, the data can be subjected to analysis. According to Cresswell et al. (2003), the process of data analysis involves three concurrent stages, namely, data reduction, data presentation, and confirmation and verification.

3.3 Data Analysis

This research sought to determine if Indonesian grammar affects EFL students' narrative essay writing, the factors of that effect, and the varieties of grammatical interference that may occur. The researcher endeavoured to detect, categorize, and elucidate the syntactic and morphological interferences in EFL students' writing. This study analyzed the interference in students' writing according to Schmitt (2019) classification of interference into syntactical and morphological components. Shaumiwaty & Munandar (2022) pointed out that the primary contributor to interference was the divergence between the source and target languages. The disparity usually manifests itself in lexicon and syntax. He asserted that syntactical interference could manifest in phrases, clauses, and sentences. This research categorizes syntax interference into word order, preposition insertion, superfluous, and absent words. Meanwhile, morphological interferences can replicate in terms of omission and faulty determiner, be form, tenses, subject-verb agreement, and singular-plural form.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Syntactical Interferences

Schmitt (2019) said that syntactical interference could manifest in phrases, clauses, and sentences. This research categorizes syntax interference into word order, preposition insertion, superfluous, and absent words. The study showed that there was a total of 76 instances of syntactical interferences. Table 1 below shows the distribution of syntactical interferences.

Table 1. Distribution of syntactical interferences

Types of Interferences	Number	Percentage
Preposition	26	19,76
Missing word	18	13,68
Superfluous word	10	7,6

Word order	22	16,72
Total	76	100%

The results of the data analysis carried out in the context of syntactical interference indicate that 22 cases of disruption to the word order were observed, 26 examples of misused prepositions, 10 instances of extraneous words, and 18 instances of omitted words. Interference and word order are most pronounced in the part of prepositions which consecutively counted as 19,76 and 16,72 percent.

4.1.1. Preposition

Twenty-six (19,76%) interference concerning prepositions in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 2. Examples of preposition interferences

Interferences	Correction
“ Most of people like fresh water fish better than sea fish.”	“ Most people like fresh water fish better than sea fish.”
“I think most students in my class hate Mathematics.”	“I think most of the students in my class hate Mathematics.”

4.1.2. Missing word

Eighteen (13,68%) interference about the absence of a word in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 3. Examples of missing word interferences

Interferences	Correction
“I like reading not only history books but fictional stories,”	“I like reading not only history books but also fictional stories,”
“Regarding your assignment, you should have asked an extension.”	“Regarding your assignment, you should have asked for an extension.”

4.1.3. Extra word

Teen (7,6%) interferences concerning the superfluous words in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 4. Distribution of extra word interferences

Interferences	Correction
“I think the government should to regulate the use of social media among children under 15”.	“I think the government should regulate the use of social media among children under 15”.
“My parents wanted me to get married to a man after graduation, but I determined to choose a different path”.	“My parents wanted me to get married after graduation, but I determined to choose a different path.”

4.1.4. Word order

Twenty-two (16,72%) interferences concerning the word arrangement in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 5. Distribution of word order interferences

Interferences	Correction
“At first, I planned to finish my degree in 2018, but I could not make it happen. That made my parents upset a little bit ”.	“At first, I planned to finish my degree in 2018, but I could not make it happen. That made my parents a little bit upset ”.
“My teacher had inspired me a lot because he could speak in 5 language foreign ”.	“My teacher had inspired me a lot because he could speak in 5 foreign languages ”.

4.2. Morphological Interference

Morphological interference is how another language's affixation patterns influence a language's morphological structure. (Suwito,1983). This research categorizes morphological interference as omissions of determiners, incorrect determiners, subject-verb concordance, verb conjugation, tenses use, and singular or plural forms. The research found that there were 93 types of morphological interferences. Table 2 below illustrates the distribution of morphological interferences.

Table 6. Distribution of morphological interferences

Types of Interferences	Number	Percentage
Absence of Determiner	12	11,16
Be Form	19	17,67
Singularity-Plurality	15	13,95
Subject-Verb Agreement	12	11,16
Tenses	25	23,25
Faulty Determiner	10	9,3
Total	93	100%

The table above shows that 93 instances of interference were observed in the student's essays. A total of 25 interferences were identified regarding tenses, which made this part the most dominant interference. Other interferences were identified in 10 wrong determiner usage, 12 subject-verb agreement, 19 forms, 12 determiner omission, and 15 singular-plural forms.

4.2.1. Absence of Determiner

Twelve (11,16 %) interferences about the absence of determiner in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 7. Distribution of omission of determiner interferences

Interferences	Correction
“I am fortunate to live in that town because most of people I know are friendly,”	“I am fortunate to live in that town because most of the people I know are friendly.”
“Field of studies I chose was English language department, to which many people were keen to be part.”	“Field of studies I chose was the English language department, to which many people were keen to be part.”

4.2.2. Be Form Interference

Nineteen (17,67 %) interferences concerning the be form in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 8. Distribution of be form interferences

Interferences	Correction
“ There three subjects that we can choose when we graduated from senior high school,”	“ There were three subjects that we could choose when we graduated from senior high school,”
“ I thinking that I will not succeed in my future teaching career due to my lack of interest in it”.	“ I was thinking I would not succeed in my future teaching career due to my lack of interest in the subject.”

4.2.3. Singular-Plural Forms

Fifteen (13,95 %) interferences concerning the singular-plural forms in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 9. Distribution of singular-plural form interferences

Interferences	Correction
“ I got a news from my classmate that she had passed the final examination.”	“ I got news from my classmate that she had passed the final examination.”
“By the end of the sixth semester, I began doing some researches for my future thesis writing.”	“By the end of the sixth semester, I began doing some research for my future thesis writing.”

4.2.4. Subject-Verb Agreement

Twelve (12 %) interferences concerning the subject-verb agreement in all essays studied. Below are a few illustrations:

Table 10. Distribution of subject-verb agreement interferences

Interferences	Correction
“I thought that Mathematics are difficult to learn,”	“I thought that Mathematics is difficult to learn,”
“ Most people enjoys their spare time at the beach.”	“ Most people enjoy their spare time at the beach.”

4.2.5. Tenses Interference

Twenty-five (23,25 %) interferences concerning the tenses in all essays studied. Below is the illustration

Table 11. Distribution of tenses interferences

Interferences	Correction
"After Tsunami happened, my parents and I decide to move to Takengon,"	"After Tsunami happened, my parents and I decided to move to Takengon."
" I see plenty of people rushing to Banks to get cash."	" I saw plenty of people rushing to Banks to get cash."

4.2.6. Wrong Determiner

Ten (9,3 %) interferences concerning the wrong determiner in all essays studied. Below is the illustration

Table 12. Distribution of wrong determiner interferences

Interferences	Correction
" I bought an beautiful umbrella,"	" I bought a beautiful umbrella, "
" The mathematics was the subject I liked the least while at school."	" Mathematics was the subject I liked the least while at school."

5. DISCUSSION

The most common syntactical interference errors students make are the initial topic of discussion. According to data from the students' English writing assignments, the highest percentage of Indonesian syntactical interference was found in the students' word order and preposition usage, which accounted for 19.76% and 16.72% of all interferences. In contrast, incorrect use of a superfluous term accounted for the smallest percentage of errors (7.6%) in the students' English writing. The most prevalent error in morphological interference is the incorrect use of tenses, which accounts for 23.25 percent of all interferences identified. Be-form interference is rated as the second-largest interference at 17.67%. These morphological interferences contain a defective determiner the least frequently. These findings are consistent with most previous research on grammatical interference, which identified prepositions and tenses as the most common types of grammatical interference in student writing. For instance, Irmalia's research in Indonesia (Irmalia, 2016) revealed that tense verb errors were the most common grammatical interference in students' spoken and written English. Similar results were discovered in additional studies. For example, Septiana (Septiana, 2020) and Zulfikar (Zulfikar, 2020) found that subject-verb agreement was the most common grammatical error in the essays of Indonesian students. A condition may cause these errors to recur over time among Indonesian EFL learners. The first is related to the theory of Language transfer, which was introduced by Thornbury in 2006 (Samingan, 2020). The theory refers to the impact a specific language, particularly the primary language, has on another language. The transfer phenomenon can manifest itself across various linguistic domains, including but not limited to phonology, lexicon, syntax, and discourse. The phenomenon of interference has traditionally been viewed in a negative light. At the same time, the transfer can potentially

yield positive outcomes, particularly in cases where the first language (L1) and second language (L2) exhibit significant overlap in their linguistic features (Sharwood Smith, 2021).

Furthermore, several other plausible explanations can address this phenomenon. First, students frequently encountered interference from their L1 because English is not the language of communication between students and English instructors during English classes. It was due to the students' limited exposure to, knowledge of, and experience speaking English. Due to unfamiliarity, they were unable to produce English sentences rapidly. In addition, the student's failure to use English outside of school became an additional factor. Most students did not use their free time to enroll in English classes or organizations, nor were they interested in reading English-language books, watching English-language television or internet programming, or listening to English-language podcasts. It became a significant issue because the frequency with which a person reads or hears English influences his or her writing skills. In addition, the students demonstrated no interest in recording the daily English words they encountered. However, some individuals prefer viewing and listening to films and recordings in English. The students did not have many opportunities to practice their English. According to Burhansyah (Burhansyah, 2019), who conducted a similar study in an Indonesian context, the student's lack of practice hindered their ability to assimilate the English linguistic information they had acquired, which is one of the causes of intralingual errors in their English production.

Second, dictionaries are another factor that contributes to interruption problems. This finding is confirmed by some previous research in Chinese, Malay, and Arabic contexts, namely studies by Yuan (2021) and Sabbah (2016), as well as Al-Saggaf et al. (2022). According to this research, most students lacked the vocabulary to articulate their thoughts explicitly. In this case, most students rely heavily on semantic meaning and are often unaware of the contextual meaning of words (Yuan, 2021). Consequently, students are frequently mistaken in making grammatically and structurally correct utterances and writing. In reality, a dictionary can help students find appropriate English composition words. However, students tend to use dictionaries to produce English with L1 interference. It occurs when individuals copy words into their writing without determining if the word's form is appropriate for the English context.

The third explanation is that because the pupils cannot think in English, they tend to translate their thoughts from Indonesian to English. Being unable to think in English is common among English learners in the EFL context because English is not their mother tongue (Kidd & Donnelly, 2020). Consequently, the intended meaning may not be suitable or permissible in English. As Budiharto (Budiharto, 2019) and other researchers found, these behaviors are typical among English language learners in Indonesia and other nations. According to Marlyna (Marlyna et al., 2007) and (Mehat & Ismail 2021), ESL pupils in Malaysia planned their sentences in Malay before writing them in English. Even worse, they chose to formulate them in Malay word by word before translating them into English rather than as complete statements.

6. CONCLUSION

This current research conforms to the findings of some previous studies findings in the area of intralingual interferences in EFL students' writing. The most dominant type of grammatical interference is prepositions and Tenses. There are some possible explanations for this phenomenon. The first is that the students are limited exposure to English. The language is only utilized, learned, and practiced in the classroom and is not used in communication in various settings. Second, because the students could not think in English, they tended to translate them from Indonesian to English. It led to grammatical interference and pervasiveness in their writings. This condition is also found not only in Indonesian students' context but also in the context of EFL students in Malaysia. Third, grammatical interferences happen when the students heavily rely on the semantic meaning they obtain from the bilingual dictionary, making them not realize the contextual meaning in the target language. The findings of this research hopefully contribute to widening the existing literature on account of first language interference, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context and generally in the global EFL context. Still, it is hoped to raise educators' awareness in EFL teaching to consider first language interference in their teachings. However, the finding of this research is limitedly applied in the context of EFL learners in IAIN Takengon. Thus, the author invited other researchers to pursue the same study in other contexts of English language teachings.

The critical implication of this study is that writing teachers must increase awareness of grammatical errors in their student's written work. They should consider the widespread types of Indonesian grammatical interference observed in their students' written English compositions. It will aid educators in determining the most effective strategies and techniques to employ in the classroom to reduce grammatical interference errors among students. In addition, it would benefit educators to create an English-only environment within the educational setting. Using English to communicate with students, especially in English classes, is a viable strategy for attaining this goal. In addition, it is suggested that teachers consistently remind their students to be conscious of the influence of Indonesian grammatical structures on their English writings and offer corrective feedback in cases of interference.

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