



An Analysis of Indonesian Language Interference in English Writing Through Contrastive Error Analysis

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Abstract. *This study investigated Indonesian language interference in students' English writing through the use of Contrastive Error Analysis. The study aimed to identify the forms of Indonesian language interference, analyze its influence on students' writing, and describe the types of errors found in the data. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, and the data consisted of 15 English sentences collected from students' written assignments. The data were analyzed using Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis procedures to identify and explain the errors. The findings revealed four types of errors: misformation, omission, misordering, and addition. Misformation was the most dominant error type, with 8 occurrences, followed by omission (4), misordering (2), and addition (1). The analysis also showed that intralingual errors (10 occurrences) were more frequent than interlingual errors (5 occurrences). The study concludes that students' writing errors were influenced by both Indonesian language interference and incomplete mastery of English grammar, although intralingual factors were more dominant.*

Keywords: *Contrastive Error Analysis; Indonesian Language Interference; English Writing*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji interferensi bahasa Indonesia dalam tulisan bahasa Inggris siswa melalui penggunaan Analisis Kesalahan Kontrasif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk interferensi bahasa Indonesia, menganalisis pengaruhnya terhadap tulisan siswa, serta mendeskripsikan jenis-jenis kesalahan yang ditemukan dalam data. Desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, dan data terdiri dari 15 kalimat bahasa Inggris yang dikumpulkan dari tugas tertulis siswa. Data dianalisis menggunakan prosedur Analisis Kesalahan dan Analisis Kontrasif untuk mengidentifikasi dan menjelaskan kesalahan-kesalahan tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan empat jenis kesalahan: kesalahan bentuk, penghilangan, urutan yang salah, dan penambahan. Kesalahan bentuk merupakan jenis kesalahan yang paling dominan, dengan 8 kejadian, diikuti oleh penghilangan (4), urutan yang salah (2), dan penambahan (1). Analisis juga menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan intralingual (10 kejadian) lebih sering terjadi daripada kesalahan interlingual (5 kejadian). Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesalahan menulis siswa dipengaruhi oleh interferensi bahasa Indonesia dan penguasaan tata bahasa Inggris yang belum sempurna, meskipun faktor intralingual lebih dominan.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kesalahan Kontrasif; Interferensi Bahasa Indonesia; Menulis Bahasa Inggris

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, express opinions, and convey information effectively. In academic settings, writing serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of demonstrating language proficiency and critical thinking. For EFL learners, the ability to produce coherent and grammatically accurate written texts is considered an important indicator of successful language acquisition. Therefore, writing competence

has become one of the primary objectives of English language instruction in many educational contexts.

Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to master. Unlike speaking, writing requires learners to carefully organize ideas while simultaneously applying grammatical rules, vocabulary, and appropriate sentence structures. These complexities often result in various linguistic errors, particularly among learners whose exposure to English is limited. One of the major factors contributing to these difficulties is the influence of the learners' first language (L1) on the target language (L2), a phenomenon commonly referred to as language interference or language transfer (Kazazoğlu, 2020). Such interference frequently affects the accuracy and quality of learners' written production.

The issue of first-language interference has attracted considerable attention in second language acquisition research. Previous studies have reported that Indonesian learners commonly experience grammatical and syntactic difficulties due to structural differences between Indonesian and English, particularly in the use of tense, aspect, and sentence construction (Ismahani et al., 2024). Similarly, Dalimunthe et al. (2025) found that Indonesian language interference affects not only grammatical accuracy but also lexical choices and text organization in students' English writing. These findings indicate that the influence of the first language continues to play a significant role in shaping learners' writing performance.

To investigate learner errors systematically, researchers have frequently employed Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. Contrastive Analysis focuses on identifying differences between the first language and the target language, while Error Analysis examines the actual errors produced by learners. The integration of these two approaches, commonly known as Contrastive Error Analysis (CEA), provides a more comprehensive framework for identifying, classifying, and explaining learner errors. Previous studies have demonstrated that CEA is effective in revealing the relationship between linguistic differences and learner errors, particularly in EFL writing contexts (Nangle et al., 2024).

Although previous studies have discussed writing errors and language interference among Indonesian EFL learners, most research has focused primarily on error classification or general grammatical difficulties. Limited attention has been given to examining how specific Indonesian linguistic structures influence students' English

writing through a systematic Contrastive Error Analysis approach. Consequently, there remains a need for further investigation to identify the forms of Indonesian language interference and to explain how such interference contributes to the occurrence of writing errors.

Accordingly, this study employs Contrastive Error Analysis as the main analytical framework to identify the forms of Indonesian language interference found in students' English writing, analyze how Indonesian language interference affects students' written production, and describe the types of errors revealed through Contrastive Error Analysis. Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) What types of Indonesian language interference are found in students' English writing? (2) How does Indonesian language interference affect students' English writing? and (3) What errors can be identified through Contrastive Error Analysis in students' English writing?

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL learners in writing English texts. By identifying recurring interference patterns and error types, the findings may help teachers recognize areas that require greater instructional attention. Furthermore, understanding the influence of Indonesian linguistic structures on English writing can contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies, learning materials, and future research on language interference in EFL contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) is an important approach in second language acquisition that focuses on identifying, classifying, and explaining learners' errors. Developed as a response to the limitations of Contrastive Analysis, which attributed most errors solely to first-language influence, Error Analysis views errors as a natural part of the language learning process and a valuable source of information about learners' linguistic development (Faraj & Karim, 2020). This approach recognizes that errors may arise from various sources, including first-language interference, overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and developmental factors. Therefore, Error Analysis not only identifies errors but also seeks to explain their underlying causes.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Error Analysis is widely used to examine errors related to grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and discourse. By analyzing learners' error patterns, teachers and researchers can better understand the difficulties learners encounter in acquiring the target language and develop more effective instructional strategies (Faraj & Karim, 2020). Previous studies on Indonesian learners' writing have shown that grammatical errors, particularly those involving tense usage, articles, plural markers, and word choice, are among the most common problems encountered by students (Ulviani & Kemala, 2025). Therefore, Error Analysis serves as a useful framework for understanding learner difficulties and evaluating the language learning process.

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a linguistic approach that compares two languages to identify their similarities and differences in order to explain potential learning difficulties in second language acquisition. This approach assumes that many learner errors result from structural differences between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2). By comparing the linguistic systems of two languages, researchers can predict areas that are likely to cause difficulties and language errors (Ismahani et al., 2024). Therefore, Contrastive Analysis provides an important framework for understanding how first-language structures influence second-language learning.

In the context of Indonesian learners of English, Contrastive Analysis is particularly relevant because Indonesian and English differ in several grammatical aspects, such as tense systems, article usage, and inflectional forms. These differences often encourage learners to transfer Indonesian linguistic patterns into English, resulting in various errors in writing (Dalimunthe et al., 2025). Furthermore, contemporary research suggests that the greater the differences between the first and target languages, the higher the possibility of negative language transfer occurring (Berzak et al., 2016). Consequently, Contrastive Analysis remains a valuable theoretical foundation for investigating language interference and explaining learners' errors in English writing.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the assumption that Indonesian learners may transfer linguistic patterns from their first language (L1) into English as the target language (L2), resulting in various writing errors. Due to structural differences between Indonesian and

English, particularly in aspects such as word order, tense, articles, and sentence construction, learners may experience difficulties in producing grammatically accurate English texts. To examine these difficulties, the study employs Contrastive Error Analysis (CEA), which combines Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis. Error Analysis is used to identify and classify the errors found in students' writing, while Contrastive Analysis is applied to compare Indonesian and English linguistic structures in order to determine whether the errors are influenced by first-language interference or by learners' incomplete mastery of English grammar. Through this framework, the study aims to identify the types of Indonesian language interference, analyze their influence on students' English writing, and describe the error patterns that emerge in students' written production.

3. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the linguistic errors found in students' English writing and to explain the possible influence of Indonesian language structures on those errors. Qualitative research is appropriate for studies that aim to understand and describe phenomena in depth based on naturally occurring data rather than numerical measurements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, this approach was considered suitable for providing a detailed analysis of students' writing errors and their possible causes. The study focused on linguistic errors related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and word order found in students' English writing. The data consisted of approximately 15 English sentences or short texts produced by senior high school students learning English as a foreign language. These writing samples were obtained from students' existing written assignments in their exercise books, providing authentic examples of language use that reflected both learner difficulties and possible first-language influence.

Data were collected through documentation by gathering and selecting students' written assignments that contained sufficient linguistic data for analysis. Since the study used texts produced during regular classroom activities rather than a specific writing test, the data represented naturally occurring language use. Document analysis also enabled the researcher to review the data repeatedly throughout the analysis process (Bowen, 2009). The data were analyzed using the procedures of Error Analysis proposed by Ellis

(1997), including error identification, classification, explanation, and evaluation. The identified errors were classified according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982), which consists of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The researcher then distinguished between interlingual and intralingual errors based on Richards (1974) and conducted Contrastive Analysis following Lado (1957) to compare Indonesian and English linguistic structures. Through these procedures, the study identified the dominant error types, examined the influence of Indonesian language interference, and explained the relationship between learners' errors and differences between the two languages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of students' English writing using Error Analysis and Contrastive Error Analysis. The analysis was conducted to identify and classify the errors found in the students' writing and to examine the possible influence of Indonesian language structures on those errors. Based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the identified errors were categorized into four types: misformation, omission, misordering, and addition. These categories provide a framework for understanding the patterns of errors produced by the students and serve as the basis for further discussion.

The data analyzed in this study consist of twenty sentences collected from students' written work. Each sentence was examined to identify the error type, determine the correct form, and explain the possible source of the error. Furthermore, Contrastive Error Analysis was employed to compare Indonesian and English linguistic structures in order to determine whether the errors were influenced by first-language interference or by learners' developing knowledge of English. The following section presents the students' writing data and the results of the error analysis in detail.

1. Little Red Riding Hood was walking through the forest on her way to her grandmother deliver house some cake, as her grandmother was ill.
2. If the woodsman little were not there, Little Red Riding Hood might be eaten by the wolf.
3. Lolita tell me that she wanted to send a birthday gift to her friend in Papua.
4. He told me that he have many e-pals, but he is no longer in touch with them.

5. Sofia told me that you would like to has more pen pals from the Netherlands.
6. My friend and I has regular meeting with a pen pal seeker group. You can join it anytime.
7. Aliyah often tell Hannah about her rehearsal. She joins a choir club in her school.
8. Lionel Messi is an Argentine-born football player who have been named the world's best men's player of the year seven times.
9. Lionel Messi is an Argentine-born football player who has been named world best mens player of the year seven times.
10. The cause of Lionel Messi’s limited hormonal development is growth hormone deficiency (GHD), a condition in which the body does not produce enough growth hormone for normal body growth.
11. Obstacles that Lionel Messi has faced and may still face include child hood health problem.
12. Obstacle Rio Ferdinand had to overcome during his career at Manchester United included adapting to a big-money transfer.
13. The main obstacle Rio Ferdinand had to overcome during his career at Manchester United included a both and fine for failing a drugs test.
14. Rio Ferdinand’s story can inspire people through his example of professional discipline in football and a adaptation to demanding environments.
15. Rio Ferdinand’s story can inspire people through philanthropic efforts aimed at developing communities through the Roo Ferdinand Foundation.

Error Analysis

The students’ writing data were analyzed to identify the errors found in their written sentences. The analysis focuses on the forms of errors produced by the students and classifies them according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The identified errors, along with their correct forms and classifications, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Error Analysis of Students’ English Writing

No	Data	Error	Correct Form	Surface Strategy	Type of Influence
1.	to her grandmother deliver house some cake	incorrect word order	to deliver some cake to her grandmother’s house	Misordering	Interlingual

2.	if the woodsman little were not there	incorrect word order	if the little woodsman were not there	Misordering	Interlingual
3.	Lolita tell me	Tell	told	Misformation	Interlingual
4.	he have many e-pals	Have	had / has	Misformation	Intralingual
5.	you will like to has more pen pals	Has	have	Misformation	Intralingual
6.	my friend and I has	Has	have	Misformation	Intralingual
7.	Aliyah often tell Hannah	Tell	tells	Misformation	Intralingual
8.	player who have been named	have	has	Misformation	Intralingual
9.	world best mens player	omission of possessive/article	world's best men's player	Omission	Interlingual
10.	growth hormone for normal body growth	omission article	for normal body growth	Omission	Intralingual
11.	child hood health problem	problem	problems	Omission	Intralingual
12.	obstacle Rio Ferdinand had	omission article	the obstacle Rio Ferdinand had	Omission	Interlingual
13.	a both and fine	unnecessary article	both a ban and a fine	Addition	Intralingual
14.	Rio Ferdinand's story can inspire people ... a adaptation	a adaptation	an adaptation	Misformation	Intralingual
15.	through the Roo Ferdinand foundation	Roo	Rio	Misformation	Intralingual

In addition to the qualitative description of each error type presented in Table 1, the following section summarizes the frequency of each error category to provide a clearer overview of the dominant patterns of students' writing errors

Table 2. Frequency of Errors Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Error Type	Frequency
Misformation	8
Omission	4
Misordering	2
Addition	1
Total	15

The error analysis in Table 1 also demonstrates that students' writing errors originated from both interlingual and intralingual influences. To determine the dominant source of errors, the frequency of each type of influence was calculated and is presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Frequency of Error Sources

No.	Source of Error	Frequency
1.	Intralingual Errors	10
2.	Interlingual Errors	5
Total		15

The findings indicate that all four categories of errors proposed in the Surface Strategy Taxonomy were present in the students' writing. Among the 15 identified errors, misformation was the most frequent type, occurring 8 times, followed by omission (4 occurrences), misordering (2 occurrences), and addition (1 occurrence). These results suggest that students experienced the greatest difficulty in selecting and applying appropriate grammatical forms, particularly in relation to verb usage, subject-verb agreement, and word formation. Furthermore, the analysis of error sources revealed that intralingual errors (10 occurrences) were more dominant than interlingual errors (5 occurrences), indicating that most errors stemmed from the students' incomplete understanding of English grammatical rules rather than solely from the influence of Indonesian language structures. Nevertheless, the presence of interlingual errors demonstrates that first-language transfer also contributed to students' writing difficulties. Overall, the findings suggest that both grammatical competence and language interference play important roles in shaping students' English writing performance.

Contrastive Analysis

Following the error analysis, a contrastive analysis was carried out to explore the relationship between the students' errors and the structures of the Indonesian language. The analysis aims to identify possible instances of language transfer that may have contributed to the errors in the students' English writing. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 4. Contrastive Analysis of Students' Writing Errors and Their Sources of Influence

No.	Data	Linguistic Aspect	Indonesian Structure (L1)	English Structure (L2)	Type of Influence
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1.	to her grandmother deliver house some cake	Word order	Flexible word order	Fixed word order (S-V-O-M)	Interlingual
2.	if the woodsman little were not there	Word order	Adjectives may be placed more flexibly	Adjectives must precede nouns	Interlingual
3.	Lolita tell me	Tense system	Verbs do not change according to tense	Verb changes according to tense	Interlingual
4.	he have many e- pals	Subject-Verb Agreement	No subject-verb agreement system	Verbs must agree with subjects	Intralingual
5.	you will like to has more pen pals	Verb Form (Infinitive)	Verbs remain unchanged after purpose markers	The base form must follow <i>to</i>	Intralingual
6.	my friend and I has	Subject-Verb Agreement	Verbs do not change according to the number of subjects	Verbs must agree with singular or plural subjects	Intralingual
7.	Aliyah often tell Hannah	Subject-Verb Agreement	Verbs do not change for third-person singular subjects	Verbs take <i>-s/-es</i> with third-person singular subjects	Intralingual
8.	player who have been named	Subject-Verb Agreement	No agreement between subject and auxiliary verb	Auxiliary verbs must agree with subjects	Intralingual
9.	World best mens player	Possessive form	Possession is often expressed without special markers	Possession is marked by apostrophes (<i>'s</i>)	Interlingual
10.	growth hormone for normal body growth	Lexical choice	Word selection may be influenced by direct translation	Vocabulary must follow appropriate English usage and collocation	Intralingual
11.	child hood health problem	Word Formation	Simpler word formation patterns	Words must follow standard English morphological rules	Intralingual
12.	obstacle Rio Ferdinand had	Sentence structure	Simpler noun phrase structure	Noun phrases follow a more fixed structure	Interlingual
13.	a both and fine	Word Order	Sentence elements may be arranged more flexibly	Words must follow English phrase structure rules	Intralingual
14.	Rio Ferdinand's story can inspire	Article System	No article system (<i>a, an, the</i>)	Articles must be used appropriately with nouns	Intralingual

	people ... a adaptation				
15.	through the Roo Ferdinand foundation	Word Formation / Spelling	Spelling may be influenced by pronunciation	Words must follow standard English spelling conventions	Intralingual

Based on the contrastive analysis of the 15 data samples, the students' writing errors were influenced by both interlingual and intralingual factors. Several errors reflected the transfer of Indonesian language structures, particularly in word order, possessive forms, and sentence structure. However, a greater number of errors were related to English grammatical features such as subject–verb agreement, verb forms, articles, spelling, and word formation. These findings indicate that although Indonesian language interference contributed to some errors, intralingual factors were more dominant, suggesting that students' difficulties were largely caused by their incomplete mastery of English grammatical rules.

Discussion

The findings revealed that all four categories of errors proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) misformation, omission, misordering, and addition—were found in the students' writing. Among these categories, misformation was the most dominant type, accounting for 8 out of 15 errors. This finding indicates that students experienced difficulties in selecting and applying appropriate grammatical forms, particularly in verb usage, subject–verb agreement, and word formation.

The analysis also showed that intralingual errors occurred more frequently than interlingual errors. Most of the errors were related to students' incomplete understanding of English grammatical rules, such as subject–verb agreement, verb forms, article usage, and spelling. This finding supports Richards' (1974) view that intralingual errors arise from learners' developing knowledge of the target language, including overgeneralization and incomplete application of grammatical rules.

Although intralingual errors were dominant, several errors reflected the influence of Indonesian language structures. Errors involving word order, possessive forms, and sentence structure indicate that students transferred patterns from Indonesian into English. This finding is consistent with Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis theory, which

states that differences between the first language and the target language may lead learners to produce transfer-related errors.

The findings are consistent with previous studies on Indonesian EFL learners. Dalimunthe et al. (2025) and Ismahani et al. (2024) reported that Indonesian learners frequently experience difficulties related to grammar, tense usage, and language transfer due to structural differences between Indonesian and English. Similarly, grammatical errors were identified as the most common errors in students' English writing.

These findings suggest that students' writing difficulties are influenced by both Indonesian language interference and limited mastery of English grammar. Therefore, English teachers should provide greater attention to grammatical instruction while helping students understand the structural differences between Indonesian and English. Such efforts may help reduce recurring errors and improve students' writing accuracy.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that Indonesian language interference appeared primarily in aspects related to word order, noun phrase construction, possessive forms, and tense usage. The analysis also showed that students' writing difficulties were influenced not only by first-language transfer but also by their developing knowledge of English grammar. Although both interlingual and intralingual factors contributed to the occurrence of errors, intralingual factors were found to play a greater role in shaping students' writing performance. Furthermore, the study identified four categories of errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, demonstrating that learners continue to face challenges in applying English grammatical rules accurately. Despite providing insights into the relationship between Indonesian language interference and English writing errors, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis was based on a relatively small number of writing samples collected from a limited group of students, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused only on written data and did not explore other language skills that may also reflect first-language influence. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, examine a wider range of writing tasks, and incorporate additional data sources such as interviews or classroom observations. Such investigations may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of language interference in English language learning and contribute to the development of more effective instructional practices.

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