



An Error Analysis of Indonesian Language Usage in Students' Initial Academic Writing

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ABSTRACT

This research identifies Indonesian language usage errors within student research proposal manuscripts at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu. The study is driven by the observation that students' academic writing skills often lack linguistic precision, affecting the clarity and scientific quality of their work. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, data was collected via observation, documentation, reading, note-taking, and literature studies. Analysis utilized Krippendorff's content analysis involving sampling, recording, and context units, validated through source and theory triangulation. The results uncovered 416 errors across six categories. Spelling errors were most frequent with 158 instances, followed by 85 punctuation errors and 72 affixation errors. Additionally, there were 65 capitalization errors, 35 cases of improper italics, and one non-standard reduplication. These findings highlight the critical need for improved linguistic competence in the university's academic environment.

KEYWORDS

Academic Writing;
Bahasa Indonesia;
Error Analysis;
Language Usage;
Research.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berfokus pada identifikasi berbagai kekeliruan berbahasa Indonesia dalam draf proposal penelitian mahasiswa di Universitas Alkhairaat Palu. Fenomena rendahnya akurasi linguistik dalam karya ilmiah menjadi pendorong utama studi ini, mengingat dampaknya terhadap kualitas serta kejelasan tulisan akademik. Dengan menerapkan metode deskriptif kualitatif, peneliti menghimpun data melalui observasi, dokumentasi, teknik baca-catat, serta studi literatur. Proses pengolahan data mengadopsi model analisis isi dari Klaus Krippendorff yang mencakup unit sampel, pencatatan, dan konteks, yang kemudian divalidasi lewat triangulasi sumber serta teori. Temuan penelitian mengungkap total 416 data kesalahan yang mencakup enam kategori utama. Kesalahan penulisan ejaan menjadi temuan paling dominan dengan 158 data, diikuti oleh ketidaktepatan tanda baca sebanyak 85 data, dan penggunaan imbuhan 72 data. Selain itu, ditemukan pula kesalahan pada kapitalisasi sebanyak 65 data, penggunaan cetak miring 35 data, serta satu kasus reduplikasi tidak baku.

KATAKUNCI

Analisis Kesalahan;
Bahasa Indonesia;
Penggunaan Bahasa;
Penulisan Akademik;
Proposal Riset.

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1. Introduction

Language is a primary tool used by humans to convey ideas, intentions, or messages to others. By using language, individuals can communicate efficiently so that the information or intention is well understood by the listener or interlocutor. Furthermore, language has a broad scope as it is used by most people worldwide as a medium for communication and building social relationships. As explained by Achmad (in Andini, 2018, p. 130), language is a system of arbitrary sound symbols used by a community based on mutual agreement as a means of communication. Error analysis is a study focusing on errors made by learners to identify, categorize, and understand the causal factors to correct those errors. According to Crystal (in Nyaran et al., 2022, p. 98), error analysis is a structured method used to identify, classify, and understand various forms of errors arising during the learning of a foreign or second language based on relevant linguistic theories. Linguistic error analysis is a process of examining, identifying, and understanding errors made by speakers or writers in using a language. This analysis aims to identify error patterns, find their causes, and provide recommendations for improvement. Linguistic error analysis can be conducted on research proposal writing. Linguistic errors in proposals can indicate weaknesses in the Indonesian language learning process at the higher education level. This situation suggests that students still lack the ability to use Indonesian precisely regarding spelling, diction, sentence structure, and punctuation in proposals, reflecting educational weaknesses. These errors not only impact the credibility of authors and academic institutions but also potentially damage the image of the Indonesian language as a unifying language. When conducting linguistic error analysis on proposals, students require a strong foundation in linguistic theory, particularly morphology. Morphology is a field of linguistics that studies word structure, including word formation processes, word modifications, and the classification of word types. In proposals, morphological errors may include mistakes in writing, usage, or word formation. As a higher education institution committed to improving its students' academic quality, Universitas Alkhairaat Palu needs to pay attention to linguistic aspects in scientific writing. This is necessary because many student proposals still exhibit linguistic errors. Errors in spelling, word choice, sentence structure, and punctuation are still frequently found. This condition reflects a broader issue: low literacy and skills in using Indonesian among young academics, who should serve as guardians and developers of the national language. Analyzing linguistic errors in student proposal manuscripts is essential to determine the types of errors that frequently occur. The purpose of this study is to identify the types of Indonesian language usage errors in the proposal manuscripts of students at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu. This research is expected to provide not only theoretical benefits in linguistics but also practical benefits for a deeper understanding of linguistic errors in student

proposals. The uniqueness of this study lies in its specific characteristics compared to previous research, which mostly focuses on final scientific works like theses or papers. This study specifically emphasizes the early stage of academic writing—the student proposal—which plays a vital role in building correct and structured scientific writing skills. Furthermore, conducting research at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu provides novelty, as the institution has not been widely used as a subject for linguistic analysis, thus enriching the understanding of student linguistic abilities in the region. This study is relevant to research by Musdalifah et al. (2024) at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar titled "Analysis of Indonesian Language Errors in the Theses of 2019 Batch Students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar". That study describes how Indonesian language errors occur in the theses of the 2019 batch. Additionally, research by Azhari (2024) at Universitas Bumi Persada, titled "Analysis of Indonesian Language Errors in the Serambi Indonesia Newspaper Advertisements (March–June 2024 Edition)," describes linguistic errors in newspaper ads. Furthermore, Setiawan (2020) at Universitas PGRI Madiun, in "Analysis of Indonesian Language Errors in Facebook Statuses and Comments," describes spelling errors on social media. Research by Suparni (2024) at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, titled "Language Error in Public Spaces: Evidence from Palu City," describes the use of non-standard language, grammatical inaccuracies, spelling, and punctuation errors in public spaces in Palu.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. According to Chaer (in Ubaidillah, 2021), the term linguistics is derived from the Latin word *lingua*, which means "language." This root word evolved into *langue* or *langage* in French. In English, the concept is translated as *language*, while in Arabic, it is known as *lughah*. Based on the expert opinions above, it can be concluded that linguistics is the scientific study of language, encompassing the structure, function, and use of language in communication.

Linguistic studies involve an in-depth understanding of various interrelated linguistic levels, ranging from phonology, which examines speech sounds and their functions in communication (Chaer in Badar, 2023); morphology, which studies word forms and the processes of their formation from morphemes (Chaer in Hermawan, 2022); syntax, which governs the arrangement of words in sentences so that the relationships between linguistic elements can be understood (Chaer in Wulandari, 2021); to semantics, which investigates the connection between linguistic signs and the meanings they represent (Chaer in Ginting, 2019). All these aspects become the objects of an analytical process—an activity of examining phenomena in depth by breaking down their constituent elements to achieve a comprehensive understanding (Prawiro in Faizal et al., 2021). More specifically, this scientific framework is applied to language

error analysis, a systematic procedure to identify, categorize, and evaluate deviations in language use that occur when an individual interacts within their social environment (Ellis in Pujiono, 2015,).

1.2 The Architecture of Inaccuracy: A Linguistic Narrative on Language Errors

Language serves as the primary vessel for human thought, yet the vessel is often prone to structural leaks. In the field of applied linguistics, understanding these "leaks"—or language errors—is essential for improving communication and pedagogical strategies. According to the framework established by Dulay (as cited in Adijaya, 2016), language errors can be broadly categorized through a linguistic lens, with a particular focus on what is known as the Global Error.

A Global Error is not merely a minor slip of the tongue; it is a fundamental violation of linguistic rules that disrupts the coherence of an entire sentence. These errors are the "roadblocks" of communication, often caused by jumbled word orders, missing essential components, or the misuse of connectors and punctuation. To understand how these global disruptions manifest, we must dissect them across four primary linguistic levels: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

1.3 The Sound and the Script: Phonological Errors

At the most basic level of production, we encounter phonological errors. These relate to the very sounds that constitute a language. As Ghufon (in Setyowati et al., 2019) notes, these errors occur when the human articulatory system produces sounds that deviate from established norms. In spoken discourse, this manifests as "mispronunciation," which can lead to immediate listener confusion. However, the scope of phonology extends to the written word as well. In a text-based context, phonological errors are mirrored in "orthographic" or spelling mistakes. Whether spoken or written, these errors create a ripple effect, where a single misplaced sound or letter can shift the entire meaning of an utterance, obstructing the bridge between speaker and listener.

1.4 Building Blocks and Bridges: Morphological and Syntactic Errors

Moving from sounds to structure, we encounter morphological errors. Morphology is the study of word formation—the internal logic of how "morphemes" create meaning. Errors in this category involve the improper use of derivations, choosing words that clash with their intended context, or "linguistic contamination," where two distinct word forms are incorrectly merged. A common morphological pitfall is pleonasm, the use of redundant words that add no value to the sentence, effectively "cluttering" the linguistic space.

Closely related is the level of syntax, the architecture of the sentence. Syntactic errors involve the arrangement of phrases and the application of grammatical particles. When a speaker violates the rules of clause structure, the result is a sentence that may be grammatically "busy" but remains functionally "vague." Syntax ensures that the relationship between linguistic elements remains transparent; without it, the message loses its direction.

1.5 The Essence of Meaning: Semantic Errors

Finally, we reach the level of semantics, which deals with the relationship between signs and their designated meanings. A semantic error occurs when a word or phrase is technically "correct" in its form but entirely "wrong" for its context. This leads to unintended changes in meaning or total ambiguity. In the dance of communication, a semantic error is akin to a dancer performing the wrong step to the right music; the rhythm is there, but the story is lost.

In conclusion, analyzing language errors through these categories allows researchers and educators to move beyond simple "correction" and toward a deeper "understanding" of how communication breaks down. By identifying whether an error is rooted in the sound (phonology), the word (morphology), the structure (syntax), or the meaning (semantics), we can better navigate the complexities of human expression.

1.6 Error Based on The Cause

Understanding the root causes of linguistic deviations is fundamental to effective language pedagogy and research. As established by Ellis (in Musdalifah et al., 2024), language errors are not monolithic; rather, they can be categorized into four distinct types that reveal a learner's cognitive and developmental state. The first category consists of performance errors, which are essentially accidental "slips" that occur despite the learner possessing the necessary linguistic competence. These mistakes are typically temporary and inconsistent, often triggered by external factors such as physical exhaustion, stress, or a momentary lapse in concentration, rather than a lack of knowledge. In sharp contrast, systematic errors are those that occur repeatedly and reflect a genuine gap in the learner's understanding. These are not mere slips of the tongue; they indicate that the individual has not yet mastered specific rules or structures, leading them to believe that their incorrect usage is actually correct.

Beyond individual mastery, the influence of a learner's linguistic background often leads to intralinguistic errors. These arise when a second-language learner unconsciously applies the structural patterns, grammar, or logic of their native language (L1) to the target language (L2). This phenomenon usually occurs due to significant structural differences between the two languages, resulting in a "language transfer" that

interferes with the correct acquisition of the new system. Finally, the most persistent form of deviation is the fossilized error. These are mistakes that have become "set in stone" over a long period, remaining present even after the individual has achieved a high level of proficiency. Because these errors have solidified into a deep-rooted habit, they are notoriously difficult to correct through traditional instruction. Ultimately, a clear grasp of these four categories provides researchers and teachers with a vital diagnostic tool to identify which aspects of language learning require the most focused intervention and which are simply products of the human communication process.

2. Method

This research is fundamentally grounded in a qualitative descriptive method, which serves as a systematic procedure to produce descriptive data in the form of words, records, and documentation regarding the values and meanings of a specific phenomenon. In support of this approach, Sulaeman (in Goziyah, 2019) emphasizes that this method is particularly effective because it presents data through detailed citations and narratives collected from diverse sources. To facilitate a comprehensive data gathering process, the researcher utilizes a multi-faceted strategy involving observation, documentation, reading, note-taking, and literature studies.

Moving to the analytical phase, the study applies Krippendorff's content analysis to ensure that all inferences are both replicable and valid within their specific context. To achieve this level of systematic rigor, the analysis follows three progressive steps. First, the process begins with the sampling unit, where the researcher identifies the primary research objects; specifically, the data were gathered from a total of 15 research proposal manuscripts written by students of Indonesia Literature Study Program at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, selected based on criteria such as department and current status (whether under revision or approved). Second, the study transitions into the recording unit, which focuses on identifying and documenting specific Indonesian language errors within these 15 manuscripts, particularly morphological inconsistencies involving improper affixes and spelling mistakes. Finally, the analysis concludes with the context unit, where each identified error is examined not as an isolated mistake, but in relation to the overall sentence structure and the intended meaning of the proposal. Consequently, this holistic approach ensures that linguistic deviations are understood through their actual impact on the clarity and professional quality of the academic ideas presented.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research conducted at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, the analysis of 15 student proposal manuscripts revealed a high frequency of linguistic deviations across

several categories. Specifically, the findings identify six distinct types of Indonesian language errors, ranging from orthographic issues to morphological inaccuracies. The distribution of these errors is detailed in the table below:

Table 1. Frequency of Indonesian Language Errors in Student's Manuscripts

No	Type of Error	N
1	Spelling	158
2	Capitalization	65
3	Affixation	72
4	Reduplication	1
5	Italization	35
6	Punctuation	85

As indicated by the data, spelling errors represent the most dominant issue, with a total of 158 occurrences found across the manuscripts. Following this, punctuation mistakes and improper affixation also emerged as significant problems, recording 85 and 72 instances respectively. Furthermore, the analysis shows that students frequently struggle with formal mechanics, such as capitalization (65 errors) and the correct use of italics (35 errors). In contrast, errors related to reduplication were nearly non-existent, with only one recorded case. These findings suggest that the majority of linguistic deviations are rooted in orthographic and morphological levels, providing a clear map of the specific areas where academic writing intervention is most needed.

3.1 Discussion

The research highlights that language is not merely a tool for communication but a vital instrument for building social relationships and conveying structured scientific messages. Drawing on linguistic theory from Chaer (in Ubaidillah, 2021), language is a scientifically studied system encompassing both structure and function; however, in academic practice, students often face hurdles in applying these principles accurately. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method as defined by Sulaeman (in Goziyah, 2019) and Krippendorff's content analysis (in Salamanang, 2023), this study examined 15 research proposal manuscripts to identify the extent of linguistic deviations occurring at phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels. The primary findings revealed 416 errors, dominated by mechanical and structural issues that theoretically represent a failure to maintain the scientific integrity of the writing. The most prominent deviations were found in spelling, with a frequency of 158 data points, which from a phonological perspective in written language is closely related to the inaccurate representation of sounds through letters. This aligns with the theory of Ghufroon (in Setyowati et al., 2019), stating that phonological errors arise from articulatory inaccuracies that manifest in writing as letter omissions or orthographic carelessness, such as writing "meruakan" instead of "merupakan". When linked to the theory of Ellis

(in Musdalifah et al., 2024) regarding the causes of errors, the high frequency of spelling mistakes suggests the presence of systematic errors—recurring patterns reflecting a fundamental lack of mastery over the Indonesian Spelling General Guidelines (PUEBI)—rather than simple performance errors triggered by a temporary lack of concentration. Beyond spelling, the morphological aspect, which focuses on word structure, also faced significant challenges through errors in affixation (72 data points) and capitalization (65 data points). In morphological studies, as described by Chaer (in Hermawan, 2022), improper affixation—such as separating the passive prefix "di-" to become "di gunakan"—is a deviation that damages word structure and can trigger semantic ambiguity. According to Dulay (in Adijaya, 2016), such inaccuracies can potentially become Global Errors if the violation of rules affects the comprehension of the entire sentence. This inconsistency is further evident in the use of punctuation (85 data points) and italics (35 data points), where the function of punctuation to clarify intonation and clause relationships, and the function of italics to mark foreign terms, were not fully met. A critical lesson from this research is that academic writing proficiency depends not only on the research idea itself but also on the mastery of linguistic units from the smallest morphemes to complex sentence structures. The low frequency of reduplication errors (1 data point) suggests that while students are familiar with basic repetition structures, they still struggle with technical orthographic and morphological rules. Theoretically, the existence of recurring errors at the higher education level points toward the phenomenon of fossilized errors, where incorrect linguistic habits have become deeply rooted and are difficult to correct without intensive intervention. Consequently, this study concludes that strengthening literacy through Indonesian language courses and continuous scientific writing mentorship is essential to preserve the image of Indonesian as both a unifying language and a language of science.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and the discussion regarding the analysis of Indonesian language errors in student proposal manuscripts at Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, it can be concluded that various forms of linguistic deviations were identified, including: 1) spelling, 2) capitalization, 3) prefixes, 4) reduplication, 5) italics, and 6) punctuation. Following the classification process, the total number of language errors reached 416 instances, which consisted of 158 data points for spelling mistakes, 65 for capitalization errors, 72 for the use of affixes, 1 for non-standard reduplication, 35 for italics errors, and 85 for punctuation errors. From this data, the most dominant type of error is spelling, followed by the improper use of affixes, which suggests that students do not yet fully comprehend linguistic rules as prescribed by the General Guidelines for Indonesian

Spelling (PUEBI). These findings indicate that the proficiency of students in applying Indonesian language rules within the context of academic writing still requires improvement. Consequently, there is a necessity for ongoing development through Indonesian language courses, scientific writing guidance, and consistent evaluation of student manuscripts. It is expected that these efforts will enhance the quality of research proposals and other academic works within the Universitas Alkhairaat Palu community

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