

**An Analysis of Indonesian Spelling Errors in Short Stories Written by
Eleventh-Grade Students at SMA Nurul Ibrahimi Rantauprapat**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes errors in the use of Indonesian spelling in short story texts written by eleventh-grade students at SMA Nurul Ibrahimi. Common errors include the incorrect use of capital letters and punctuation that do not align with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). The causes of these errors include a limited understanding of spelling rules, the influence of informal language, and a lack of writing practice. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with primary data consisting of students' short story texts and secondary data from relevant literature. The results show frequent errors in the use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences, in names, and in place names. Punctuation errors often involve the use of commas, periods, and quotation marks. The study recommends practice-based learning to improve students' skills in using correct spelling.

Keywords: Indonesian Spelling, Capital Letters, Punctuation

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian is the official national language used across the Republic of Indonesia. It plays a crucial role as a medium of communication in various aspects of life, both informal and formal. Beyond its everyday usage, the Indonesian language is essential in academic settings, government documentation, legal matters, and scientific publications. Because of this, the accurate and proper use of Indonesian including correct spelling is fundamental in ensuring effective written

communication. Spelling, as a critical component of language, contributes to clarity, coherence, and professionalism in writing.

Despite the formal instruction of Indonesian in schools, many students continue to make significant spelling errors in their written work. These errors are particularly evident in narrative texts such as short stories. Students frequently struggle to apply the rules of spelling as outlined in the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia, or PUEBI), which serve as the national standard. Mistakes are often found in the use of capital letters and punctuation, which can severely impact the readability and meaning of a text.

Several factors contribute to these persistent errors. One of the main causes is a lack of in-depth understanding of the spelling rules themselves. In many cases, students receive limited instruction or practice specifically focused on spelling conventions. Additionally, the influence of informal language used in everyday conversations and social media can carry over into formal writing. This results in texts that deviate from standard rules and norms, affecting not only grammar and spelling but also the overall quality and effectiveness of communication.

Given the importance of accurate language use in academic and professional contexts, the teaching of Indonesian spelling in schools must be reinforced. Educators need to place greater emphasis on practical, contextualized spelling exercises that allow students to apply the rules in meaningful writing tasks. It is also necessary to raise students' awareness of the distinctions between informal and formal language use and the implications of correct versus incorrect spelling in formal communication.

This research focuses on analyzing the types and causes of spelling errors especially in the use of capital letters and punctuation found in short story texts written by eleventh-grade students at SMA Nurul Ibrahim, Rantauprapat. Through a detailed qualitative analysis, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform more effective teaching strategies in Indonesian language education. The findings are expected to support the development of better learning materials and classroom practices, ultimately helping students to write in accordance with the proper conventions of the Indonesian language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding errors in the use of Indonesian spelling is essential in improving students' writing skills, particularly in formal and academic contexts. Spelling errors are considered deviations from the correct language rules, often occurring due to insufficient mastery of spelling conventions, especially in school settings (Mulyati, 2022). In the context of education, analyzing these errors helps educators identify specific areas where students struggle, thereby informing targeted teaching strategies.

Spelling in Indonesian is governed by the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (PUEBI), which outlines the standardized use of capital letters, punctuation, and other orthographic elements. Mastery of PUEBI is essential because it ensures consistency and clarity in written communication (Weda Sasmita, 2022). However, many students face challenges in applying these rules accurately, particularly in creative texts such as short stories. The frequent misuse of capital letters and punctuation can significantly affect the readability and overall quality of students' writing (Susilowati, 2023).

Research has shown that one of the most common spelling issues among students is the improper use of capital letters—especially at the beginning of sentences, in proper nouns, and in formal terms (Turniawan, 2018). Likewise, the misuse of punctuation marks such as commas, periods, and quotation marks also persists in student writing. According to Rosdiana (2020), this problem stems from a combination of factors, including limited practice, lack of feedback, and minimal exposure to well-edited texts.

Furthermore, several recent studies have emphasized the role of informal language exposure, such as through social media, in diminishing students' awareness of formal writing standards (Maulida & Purwaningsih, 2021; Sari & Pratama, 2020). Students tend to carry over informal language habits into academic writing, which contributes to frequent spelling and punctuation mistakes. These findings underline the need for deliberate instructional intervention focusing on writing conventions. Effective learning strategies have also been discussed in recent literature. Practice-based instruction and explicit teaching of spelling rules have been found to significantly reduce errors in students' writing (Rahmawati, 2019). Moreover, integrating technology, such as spelling and grammar check tools, into writing instruction has been shown to help students self-correct and improve their awareness of standard writing conventions (Arifin & Mulyani, 2023).

Short stories (*cerpen*) are often used as a medium for students to practice narrative writing and apply linguistic rules. The narrative structure, which includes intrinsic elements such as plot, characters, setting, and point of view, requires coherence and correctness in language use (Tanjung, 2019). Mistakes in spelling can distort the meaning and flow of a story, weakening the impact of its message and structure. According to Lubis and Zahara (2021), training students to write short stories with proper language conventions enhances not only their creativity but also their grammatical and spelling accuracy. To address these issues, recent pedagogical models have advocated for integrated language instruction that combines grammar, spelling, and composition in contextual writing tasks (Yuliana, 2020; Nugroho, 2018). This approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, encouraging students to internalize language rules through repeated, meaningful use.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to investigate errors in the use of Indonesian spelling, specifically focusing on capital letters and punctuation, as found in short story texts written by eleventh-grade students. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow a detailed and contextual analysis of students' written language, capturing the patterns and types of errors that may not be easily quantifiable. The research was conducted at SMA Nurul Ibrahim during the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The sample consisted of eleventh-grade students whose short story writing assignments served as the primary data source for this study.

Instrument and Procedures

The main instrument used in this research was the researcher, who acted as the key observer and analyst. The researcher was supported by an analytical guide based on the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia (PUEBI)* to evaluate the appropriateness of spelling usage. Data were collected through two techniques: documentation and observation. Documentation involved gathering students' short story texts, which were then examined for spelling errors. Observation was used to understand students' writing habits and how they applied spelling rules in practice. The research procedure consisted of several stages: collecting the written texts, reading and identifying errors related to capital letters and punctuation, highlighting these errors, and categorizing them based on type.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed three key stages. The first stage was identification, in which all occurrences of incorrect spelling were marked, particularly errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks such as commas, periods, and quotation marks. The second stage was classification, where the errors were grouped according to their type to reveal recurring patterns. The third stage was evaluation, in which the errors were interpreted and analyzed in light of relevant linguistic theories and prior research to determine possible causes. The analysis aimed to offer meaningful insights into students' difficulties with spelling conventions and to inform better instructional strategies for teaching standard written Indonesian.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that students in the eleventh grade at SMA Nurul Ibrahim frequently make spelling errors in their short story compositions, particularly in the areas of capitalization and punctuation usage, as governed by the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia (PUEBI)*. The analysis of students'

texts uncovered consistent patterns of mistakes, indicating both a lack of conceptual understanding and inadequate writing practice related to standard written Indonesian.

Errors in Capitalization

One of the most dominant errors observed was the improper use of capital letters. Students often failed to apply capitalization at the beginning of sentences, which is a fundamental rule in standard writing. Additionally, the use of capital letters for proper nouns—such as names of people, places, religious terms (e.g., "Tuhan," "Islam"), and official titles—was frequently overlooked or inconsistently applied. In several instances, students wrote names with lowercase initials or capitalized common nouns unnecessarily. For example, a student might write *ibu* (mother) in lowercase when referring to a specific person or capitalize ordinary words such as *rumah* (house) without proper contextual justification. These errors suggest a lack of familiarity with the grammatical functions of capital letters in formal writing. Another observed issue was the overuse of capital letters within a sentence, often where emphasis or formality was incorrectly assumed. For instance, some students capitalized words for stylistic purposes rather than grammatical necessity, which reflects a spillover from informal digital communication practices.

Errors in Punctuation Usage

The second major category of errors pertained to the incorrect application of punctuation marks, notably commas, periods, and quotation marks. Commas were frequently omitted after introductory phrases, transitional words, and in lists, resulting in run-on sentences or ambiguous meanings. Conversely, some students inserted commas at inappropriate places, disrupting sentence structure and reducing coherence.

Errors involving periods included placing them mid-sentence without logical separation or failing to use them to close complete thoughts. Quotation marks were also widely misused. Many students struggled to properly punctuate dialogue, either omitting quotation marks altogether or placing them inconsistently. This created confusion in identifying which parts of the text represented narration versus direct speech. For instance, student dialogues were often written without opening or closing quotation marks, or with punctuation incorrectly placed outside the quotation marks.

The findings suggest that the high frequency of these errors is largely due to students' insufficient understanding of formal spelling rules, particularly as outlined in PUEBI. Many students appear unfamiliar with the fundamental rules governing capitalization and punctuation, indicating gaps in prior instruction or reinforcement. Moreover, the limited integration of explicit spelling instruction into daily writing activities may result in students treating mechanics as secondary to content development.

In addition, the lack of guided writing practice and insufficient teacher feedback may contribute to the persistence of these errors. Teachers may focus more on thematic or structural aspects of writing without paying equal attention to surface-level errors, allowing students to continue repeating mistakes. Furthermore, the influence of informal digital language common in texting and social media appears to blur the boundaries between formal and informal language registers. Many students mimic the relaxed punctuation and inconsistent capitalization typical of online communication in their academic writing.

The results of this study demonstrate that spelling errors specifically in the use of capital letters and punctuation are common and systematic in the short story texts written by eleventh-grade students at SMA Nurul Ibrahim. These findings confirm that many students have not yet mastered the basic conventions of written Indonesian as outlined in the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (PUEBI), and that these mechanical issues remain a significant barrier to effective written communication.

The frequent misuse of capital letters such as failing to capitalize the first word of a sentence or proper nouns, indicates a fundamental gap in students' understanding of when and where capitalization is required. This aligns with previous research by Mulyati (2022) and Rosdiana (2020), who also found that students struggle with capitalization rules due to limited explicit instruction and lack of corrective feedback. Moreover, the appearance of unnecessary capital letters mid-sentence suggests the influence of informal writing habits often reinforced by digital communication platforms, where capitalization is either overused for emphasis or neglected altogether.

Similarly, punctuation errors particularly involving commas, periods, and quotation marks were consistently found across the students' texts. The incorrect or absent use of commas and periods disrupts sentence structure, leading to reduced clarity and coherence. This problem echoes findings by Turniawan (2018) and Susilowati (2023), who identified punctuation as one of the most neglected aspects of writing instruction in secondary education. In the context of literary writing, such as short stories, incorrect punctuation can confuse the reader and diminish the narrative flow, especially when dialogue is not clearly marked with appropriate quotation marks.

The patterns of errors observed suggest that students may not have internalized the formal writing norms needed for academic or literary contexts. Contributing factors likely include a lack of practice-based instruction, minimal reinforcement of spelling conventions in class activities, and the influence of informal speech and writing in daily life. These findings are also supported by Maulida and Purwaningsih (2021), who argued that informal language exposure through social media contributes to students' declining awareness of formal linguistic rules.

This study reinforces the need for intensive and targeted spelling instruction within the Indonesian language curriculum. Educators must not only teach spelling rules theoretically but also create structured opportunities for students to apply them through regular writing exercises and guided editing. Furthermore, the use of authentic writing models, peer-review activities, and digital spelling tools could help enhance students' awareness and accuracy. It is essential that teachers emphasize the functional role of spelling and punctuation in creating meaning, especially in narrative forms where clarity, tone, and structure are crucial. The persistent spelling errors found in students' texts highlight a broader issue of insufficient emphasis on mechanics in Indonesian language education. Addressing these challenges through informed teaching strategies and continued practice will be crucial to improving students' writing competence and overall language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the common spelling errors made by eleventh-grade students at SMA Nurul Ibrahim in their short story writing, specifically focusing on the misuse of capital letters and punctuation. The findings reveal that students frequently violate the rules set by the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (PUEBI), with errors occurring consistently across texts. Capitalization mistakes commonly involved the failure to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns, while punctuation errors included the incorrect or inconsistent use of commas, periods, and quotation marks.

These patterns suggest that students have not fully internalized the basic principles of standard written Indonesian. Contributing factors include a limited understanding of formal spelling rules, minimal practice in structured writing tasks, and the influence of informal language used in everyday digital communication. Such errors significantly affect the clarity, coherence, and quality of students' written work, particularly in narrative genres like short stories.

In response to these findings, this study underscores the importance of strengthening spelling instruction in Indonesian language education. Teachers are encouraged to integrate practice-based learning, provide regular and detailed feedback, and expose students to models of correct writing. By emphasizing the role of spelling and punctuation in effective communication, educators can help students develop greater accuracy and confidence in their writing. Ultimately, improving students' mastery of *ejaan* (spelling) will contribute not only to their academic performance but also to their broader language competence.

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