



Spelling Error Analysis in Written Texts Fourth Grade Elementary School Student Narrative

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the forms of spelling errors in narrative text writing produced by fourth-grade students of SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency, and to identify the underlying factors contributing to those errors. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research object comprised students' written narrative texts, with data collected through systematic observation, note-taking, and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that the most prevalent spelling errors were found in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks. Specifically, 12 students committed errors in the first letter of a sentence, 2 students erred in writing the names of days with capital letters, and 17 students incorrectly used capital letters in address terms and kinship salutations. With respect to punctuation, 11 students omitted full stops at the end of declarative sentences, 3 students misused commas in enumerative constructions, and 2 students misplaced commas at the beginning of sentences. These errors were attributable to two principal categories of factors: internal factors, encompassing limited vocabulary mastery, insufficient reading habits, and low writing motivation, and external factors, including inadequate teacher guidance in spelling evaluation, limited parental supervision of home study, and

students' difficulties with the complexity of spelling rules. It is concluded that students' command of the Enhanced Spelling System (Ejaan yang Disempurnakan/EYD), now superseded by the General Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia/PUEBI), requires systematic improvement through more directed, contextual, and practice-based literacy instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing proficiency constitutes one of the most essential skills in Indonesian language learning, as it provides students with a medium through which to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in written form. Writing is a purposeful and structured cognitive activity that involves more than the mere transcription of spoken language: it requires the integration of vocabulary choice, sentence construction, and paragraph organization into a coherent and meaningful text (Dalman, 2020; Santosa et al., 2023). For primary school students, the development of writing skills forms a critical foundation for academic literacy across all subject areas and for lifelong communication competence (Graham & Perin, 2016; Myhill & Jones, 2016).

Within the Indonesian primary school curriculum, narrative text writing occupies a central position, particularly at the fourth-grade level. Narrative texts aim to recount events or experiences in a logical, chronological, and engaging sequence. This genre is particularly significant for young learners because it encourages the development of imagination, sequential thinking, and linguistic fluency (Nurgiyantoro, 2018; Sudaryanto et al., 2022). Narrative writing also provides a natural context for the application of formal spelling rules, as students must attend simultaneously to content, structure, and linguistic convention.

However, empirical evidence consistently indicates that many Indonesian primary school students continue to struggle with the production of formally accurate narrative texts, particularly with respect to spelling conventions. Research conducted across multiple primary school contexts has demonstrated that spelling errors, particularly in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks, are among the most frequently occurring and most persistent linguistic difficulties encountered by young Indonesian writers (Cristina, 2021; Handayani et al., 2025; Khabibah et al., 2021; Rusanti et al., 2022). These errors are not merely surface-level inaccuracies; they can impede text comprehension and diminish the communicative effectiveness of student writing.

The spelling system governing formal written Indonesian is codified in the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (PUEBI), which superseded the earlier *Ejaan yang Disempurnakan* (EYD) in 2016 and was further revised in 2022. PUEBI establishes explicit rules for the use of capital letters, punctuation marks, word formation, and the writing of numerals and foreign terms. Despite its clear and comprehensive provisions, adherence to PUEBI among primary school students remains inconsistent (Cahya et al., 2025; Mayawati et al., 2024). This inconsistency reflects a broader challenge in the teaching and learning of orthographic conventions in Indonesian primary education.

The importance of correct spelling in student writing has been underscored by numerous researchers. Sukmana and Azmy (2024) argue that inaccurate punctuation can alter the meaning of sentences and reduce text readability, thereby undermining the communicative intent of the writer. Mulyani and Fitriani (2019) further assert that errors in capitalization reflect a fundamental gap in students' understanding of formal written register. From an error analysis perspective, Corder (cited in Parhan & Maksum, 2022) emphasizes that spelling errors should be understood not as evidence of carelessness but as systematic and diagnostically meaningful indicators of the stage of language acquisition at which a learner is operating.

Error analysis has been established as a productive theoretical and

methodological framework for the investigation of spelling difficulties in student writing. Derived from the broader tradition of applied linguistics, error analysis identifies, classifies, and interprets learner errors with a view to informing instructional practice (Brown & Lee, 2015; Ellis, 2016). In the Indonesian context, several studies have applied this framework to the analysis of spelling errors in student writing, demonstrating consistent patterns of difficulty in capital letter use, punctuation, and word formation (Andriani et al., 2023; Khabibah et al., 2021; Mayawati et al., 2024).

Narrative text writing is a particularly cognitively demanding form of writing for young learners. Arifin and Wardani (2020) note that successful narrative writing requires not only linguistic competence but also imaginative and logical thinking: the capacity to construct a coherent sequence of events, develop credible characters, and sustain narrative tension. Research by Teng and Zhang (2018) and Taylor et al. (2019) has further demonstrated that narrative writing demands a complex integration of cognitive, linguistic, and creative resources that is more challenging than most other written genres encountered at the primary level. This cognitive complexity may partly account for the frequency of spelling errors in student narratives, as attention to formal orthographic convention may be deprioritized relative to the demands of content generation.

In the Indonesian primary school context, spelling errors are attributable to a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include limited vocabulary mastery, insufficient exposure to written texts through reading, low motivation for writing, and a generalized lack of awareness of the importance of spelling accuracy (Pitaloka, cited in Khabibah et al., 2021; Solikah et al., 2023). External factors encompass inadequate instructional scaffolding for spelling within writing lessons, limited parental support and supervision of home literacy activities, and students' exposure to informal digital communication norms that deviate markedly from formal written conventions (Mulyani & Fitriani, 2019; Sukmana & Azmy, 2024; Utami et al., 2021).

In the specific context of Papua and West Papua provinces, research on spelling errors in student writing at the primary school level remains limited (Lestari & Novita, 2024; Primadona Editorial, 2023). Most existing studies have been conducted in Java-based school contexts, creating a geographical gap in the literature that this study seeks to address. SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency, provides a representative case study of an Eastern Indonesian primary school context in which students' first languages are frequently regional vernaculars rather than Indonesian, potentially compounding spelling difficulties in formal Indonesian writing (Hermawan & Yulianto, 2024).

Preliminary observations conducted at SD Inpres 12 prior to this study confirmed the presence of diverse and recurrent spelling errors in the narrative writing of fourth-grade students. These errors included systematic misapplication of capitalisation rules, frequent omission of full stops and commas, and inconsistent use of orthographic conventions across texts. Interview data gathered from the class teacher corroborated these observations, indicating that spelling errors were a pervasive feature of students' written work across the academic year. This evidence provided the primary motivation for the present investigation.

This study therefore aims to conduct a systematic analysis of the forms of spelling errors present in the narrative text writing of fourth-grade students at SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency, and to identify the internal and external factors contributing to those errors. It is anticipated that the findings will provide an empirically grounded basis for improving spelling instruction within Indonesian language learning at the primary level and will contribute to the broader literature on orthographic development in Indonesian primary education.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, selected on the grounds that the principal objective was to describe, document, and interpret spelling error phenomena as they occurred naturally within authentic student

writing. writing, rather than to quantify or establish causal relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sugiyono, 2022). A descriptive qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for error analysis research, as it enables the researcher to attend to the specific forms, patterns, and contextual features of learner errors in fine-grained detail (Miles et al., 2020; Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted at SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency, West Papua Province, Indonesia, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research subjects were 25 students enrolled in Class IV D. The selection of this class was purposive, based on the preliminary observation findings indicating a high frequency of spelling errors in students' narrative writing and the class teacher's identification of spelling as a persistent area of difficulty.

The primary research object consisted of the students' narrative text writing products, specifically, narrative texts produced under standard classroom conditions as part of the Indonesian language learning curriculum. Secondary data sources comprised semi-structured interview transcripts with the class teacher and field observation notes recorded during the writing process and during classroom instruction. The use of multiple data sources was intended to enable methodological triangulation and to provide a comprehensive account of both the spelling error phenomena and their underlying causes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, the observation method (*metode simak*) was applied, in which the researcher systematically examined all 25 student narrative texts to identify occurrences of spelling errors. Second, a note-taking technique (*teknik catat*) was employed, in which identified errors were recorded and categorized according to type, capital letter errors, and punctuation errors with their corresponding incorrect and correct forms documented. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the class teacher to elicit contextual information about the factors contributing to spelling errors, the instructional strategies previously employed, and the teacher's observations of students' spelling difficulties over time.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2020), comprising three iterative stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data condensation stage, the raw error records were reviewed, refined, and categorized systematically. In the data display stage, the categorized error data were presented in tabular form to facilitate comparative analysis. In the conclusion drawing stage, the patterns identified in the data were interpreted in relation to the relevant theoretical literature on spelling errors and Indonesian orthographic convention. Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, cross-referencing findings from student text analysis, teacher interviews, and observational field notes, consistent with established standards for qualitative research credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2016; Moleong, 2017).

As is consistent with qualitative research conventions, the researcher served as the primary research instrument. Supplementary instruments included an observation checklist, an error classification form structured around PUEBI spelling categories, and a semi-structured interview guide for the teacher. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including the securing of institutional permission from the school, informed consent from the class teacher, and the assurance of participant anonymity in the reporting of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the spelling error analysis conducted on 25 narrative text writing products of Class IV D students at SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency. The analysis identified two principal categories of spelling error—capital letter errors and punctuation errors—and further explored the internal and external factors contributing to their occurrence. The findings are organized and discussed in relation to the relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

Capital Letter Errors

Capital letter errors constituted the most frequent category of spelling

errors identified across the 25 student narrative texts. Three distinct forms of capital letter error were observed, as presented in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Forms of capital letter errors in narrative text writing of Class IV D students, SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency

No.	Form of Capital Letter Error	Incorrect Writing	Correct Writing
1.	Capital letter omitted at the beginning of a sentence	<i>Waktu itu adalah hari libur.</i>	<i>Waktu itu adalah hari libur.</i>
2.	Capital letter omitted in the names of days	<i>Hari Minggu kami ke gereja.</i>	<i>Hari Minggu kami ke gereja.</i>
3.	Capital letter omitted in address terms and kinship salutations	<i>Aku, Ayah, Ibu, Kakek, Nenek, and Kakak.</i>	<i>Aku, Ayah, Ibu, Kakek, Nenek, dan Kakak.</i>

Source: Student narrative text analysis, 2026

As Table 1 illustrates, the most numerically significant error form was the incorrect use of capital letters in address terms and kinship salutations, committed by 17 of the 25 students (68%). This was followed by capital letter omission at the beginning of sentences (12 students; 48%) and incorrect capitalization in the names of days (2 students; 8%).

The high incidence of capitalisation errors in address terms and kinship salutations reflects a specific area of PUEB That is frequently misunderstood or neglected by young learners. Under PUEBI provisions, address terms and kinship salutations, such as *Ayah* (Father), *Ibu* (Mother), *Kakek* (Grandfather), and *Nenek* (Grandmother), are capitalized when used as direct forms of address or as substitutes for proper names, but not when used as common nouns preceded by possessive pronouns. This rule requires a level of syntactic awareness and contextual sensitivity that many fourth-grade students have not yet fully developed. These findings are consistent with Rusanti et al. (2022), who identified capitalisation in kinship terms as the most common spelling error category in their study of elementary school narrative writing, and with Handayani et al. (2025), who similarly found that students at this level demonstrate limited awareness of context-dependent capitalization conventions.

The pattern of capital letter omission at the beginning of sentences, identified in 12 students (48%), suggests that a substantial proportion of students have not internalized the most fundamental capitalization rule in formal Indonesian writing. This finding corroborates Cahya et al. (2025), who argue that sentence-initial capitalization errors, while seemingly basic, are symptomatic of a broader lack of metalinguistic awareness of sentence boundaries and formal writing register among young writers. Interview data with the class teacher indicated that students frequently transfer informal writing habits, derived from digital messaging and casual written communication, into their formal writing contexts, where capitalization conventions are entirely different.

From an error analysis perspective (Corder, cited in Parhan & Maksum, 2022; Ellis, 2016), capitalization errors can be classified as intralingual errors, errors arising from the learner's incomplete or inaccurate internalization of the target language's rule system, rather than from first-language interference. This distinction is analytically significant: it suggests that targeted and explicit instruction in the specific rules of PUEBI capitalization, embedded within meaningful writing practice, is likely to be the most effective remedial approach. Andriani et al. (2023) further demonstrate that writing process instruction, incorporating explicit pre-writing attention to spelling conventions, significantly reduces the frequency of capitalization errors in student narratives.

Punctuation Mark Errors

In addition to capital letter errors, significant numbers of students demonstrated errors in the use of punctuation marks, specifically the full stop (.) and the comma (,). Three distinct forms of punctuation error were identified, as presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Forms of punctuation mark errors in narrative text writing of Class IV D students, SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency

No.	Form of Punctuation Error	Incorrect Writing	Correct Writing
1.	Full stop omitted at the end of a declarative sentence	Liburan tiba aku diajak ke Solo	Liburan tiba, aku diajak ke Solo.

2.	Comma omitted in an enumerative construction	Saya membantu orang tua menyapu mengepel dan mencuci.	Saya membantu orang tua menyapu, mengepel, dan mencuci.
3.	Comma omitted after an adverbial phrase at the beginning of a sentence	Suatu hari yang cerah saya dan orang tua berkunjung ke rumah nenek.	Suatu hari yang cerah, saya dan orang tua berkunjung ke rumah nenek.

Source: Student narrative text analysis, 2026

The high frequency of full stop omissions is particularly diagnostically significant. The full stop is the most fundamental punctuation mark in Indonesian formal writing, and its consistent omission suggests that many students have not internalized the concept of the sentence as a discrete syntactic unit with a defined beginning and end. This finding aligns with Khabibah et al. (2021), who identified full stop omission as the single most prevalent punctuation error in their survey of primary school student writing. The implications of this error extend beyond mere formal compliance: as Sukmana and Azmy (2024) demonstrate, the consistent omission of full stops reduces text readability and can substantially affect a reader's ability to parse sentence boundaries correctly.

Errors in comma use within enumerative constructions and following sentence-initial adverbial phrases, while less frequent in absolute terms, reflect a more sophisticated and context-dependent aspect of Indonesian punctuation. These constructions require students to recognize the internal structural organization of complex sentences, a skill that is still developing at the fourth-grade level. Mayawati et al. (2024) argue that punctuation errors in complex syntactic environments are best addressed through contextualized grammar instruction embedded within the writing curriculum, rather than through decontextualized rule memorization.

The pattern of punctuation errors identified in this study is broadly consistent with findings reported across the existing Indonesian primary education literature (Cristina, 2021; Handayani et al., 2025; Khabibah et al., 2021;

Rusanti et al., 2022). Collectively, these studies suggest that punctuation difficulty at the elementary level is a systemic rather than idiosyncratic phenomenon, reflecting structural gaps in how spelling and punctuation are taught and reinforced within the Indonesian language curriculum. This interpretation is supported by Myhill and Jones (2016), who argue that effective punctuation instruction requires repeated encounters with target forms in meaningful writing contexts, guided by explicit and feedback-rich instructional scaffolding.

Factors Contributing to Spelling Errors

Triangulated analysis of interview data, observational field notes, and patterns identified in the student writing confirmed that the spelling errors observed in this study were attributable to two interrelated categories of causative factors: internal factors relating to individual student characteristics and external factors relating to the instructional and social environment.

Internal factors identified in this study included: (1) limited vocabulary mastery, which restricted students' ability to attend simultaneously to word choice and orthographic form; (2) insufficient reading habits, which reduced students' incidental exposure to correctly spelled and punctuated text models; and (3) low motivation for writing and limited awareness of the importance of spelling accuracy. These internal factors are consistent with those documented by Pitaloka (cited in Khabibah et al., 2021) and Solikah et al. (2023). From a cognitive perspective, Graham and Harris (2016) argue that the automatization of spelling conventions requires substantial and sustained practice and that students who lack intrinsic motivation for writing are less likely to engage in the deliberate practice necessary for orthographic skill development.

The role of reading in supporting spelling development is particularly well-documented in the literature. Utami et al. (2021) demonstrate a significant positive correlation between reading frequency and writing accuracy in Indonesian primary school students, arguing that exposure to correctly written Texts provide essential orthographic input that supports the internalization of

spelling conventions. In the context of SD Inpres 12, teacher interview data indicated that many students engaged in little independent reading outside school, limiting their exposure to formal written models of Indonesian. This finding is consistent with broader research on literacy development in Eastern Indonesian school contexts, which has identified limited access to quality reading materials as a structural constraint on students' orthographic development (Hermawan & Yulianto, 2024; Lestari & Novita, 2024).

External factors contributing to spelling errors in this study comprised (1) insufficient teacher feedback on spelling in writing evaluation – with teacher interview data indicating that time constraints frequently prevented systematic correction of individual spelling errors in student texts; (2) limited parental supervision of home study activities, particularly reading and writing practice; and (3) the perceived complexity of PUEBI spelling rules, which students found difficult to memorize and apply consistently. These external factors mirror those identified by Mulyani and Fitriani (2019) and Sukmana and Azmy (2024) and underscore the importance of both classroom instructional quality and home literacy environment in determining students' orthographic outcomes.

A particularly noteworthy external factor identified in this study was the influence of students' exposure to informal digital communication, specifically, the widespread use of mobile messaging applications that employ informal, abbreviated, and spelling-convention-free written language. Several students, in informal interaction with the researcher, expressed that they were accustomed to writing without capitals or punctuation in their everyday digital communication. This finding resonates with the observations of Cahya et al. (2025), who note that the proliferation of digital informal writing among young learners constitutes an increasingly significant source of orthographic interference in formal school writing contexts.

The combined influence of internal and external factors documented in this study confirms the multi-causal nature of spelling error phenomena in primary education and underscores the need for interventions that address both

individual learner characteristics and the broader instructional and social environment. As Graham and Perin (2016) argue, effective writing instruction requires not only explicit teaching of spelling conventions but also sustained motivation-building, extensive writing practice with targeted feedback, and active engagement of families in supporting home literacy. In the Indonesian primary school context, Santosa et al. (2023) similarly emphasize the need for integrated, contextual literacy instruction that connects spelling conventions to authentic writing purposes, rather than treating orthography as an isolated technical skill.

CONCLUSION

This study has conducted a systematic analysis of spelling errors in the narrative text writing of 25 fourth-grade students at SD Inpres 12, Sorong Regency, West Papua Province. The findings confirm that students' command of Indonesian spelling conventions, as codified in the PUEBI, remains limited and that spelling errors are both frequent and patterned in their occurrence. Two principal categories of error were identified: capital letter errors and punctuation errors.

With respect to capital letter errors, three distinct forms were documented: omission of capital letters at the beginning of sentences (12 students; 48%), incorrect capitalization in the names of days (2 students; 8%), and incorrect use of capital letters in address terms and kinship salutations (17 students; 68%). With respect to punctuation errors, three forms were identified: omission of full stops at the end of declarative sentences (11 students; 44%), omission of commas in enumerative constructions (3 students; 12%), and misplacement of commas after sentence-initial adverbial phrases (2 students; 8%). Across both categories, errors were consistent with those documented in comparable studies in Indonesian primary school contexts, confirming that these patterns represent systemic rather than incidental difficulties.

The causative analysis identified two interrelated categories of contributing

factors. Internal factors included limited vocabulary mastery, insufficient reading habits, and low writing motivation. External factors comprised inadequate teacher feedback on spelling, limited parental supervision of home literacy, the perceived complexity of spelling rules, and students' exposure to informal digital writing conventions that deviate from formal orthographic standards.

These findings carry important implications for practice. Teachers are recommended to adopt more explicit, contextualized, and feedback-intensive approaches to spelling instruction within the writing curriculum, including the use of error analysis as a formative tool to identify and address specific areas of student difficulty. Schools are encouraged to provide professional development support for writing instruction and to establish home-school literacy partnerships that engage parents in supporting students' formal writing practice. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions, such as process writing approaches, collaborative feedback protocols, and context-rich grammar instruction, in reducing spelling error frequency among primary school students in Eastern Indonesian school contexts.

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Declarations

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