Language Error in Public Spaces: Evidence from Palu City

Suparni Suparni

Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study examines errors in Indonesian usage in public spaces in Palu City, focusing on non-standard language, grammatical inaccuracies, spelling, and punctuation. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through observation and documentation, analyzed with Krippendorf's content analysis model. The findings reveal 69 errors, including 40 prefix, 15 suffix, 10 preposition, 3 title, and 1 word usage errors. The most frequent issue was incorrect "di" prefix usage. Errors stem from two main factors: lack of awareness of language rules and low linguistic knowledge in the community. These mistakes risk negatively influencing the younger generation by normalizing incorrect usage. The study emphasizes the need for increased education and socialization to promote proper Indonesian language use, fostering greater awareness and adherence to linguistic standards.

KEYWORDS

Language Error; Public; Space; Prefix;

Suffix.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji kesalahan penggunaan bahasa Indonesia di ruang publik di Kota Palu, dengan fokus pada penggunaan bahasa tidak baku, ketidaktepatan tata bahasa, ejaan, dan tanda baca. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis isi Krippendorf. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan 69 kesalahan, termasuk 40 kesalahan pada prefiks, 15 sufiks, 10 preposisi, 3 penggunaan gelar, dan 1 kesalahan penggunaan kata. Kesalahan berbahasa paling sering ditemukan adalah penggunaan prefiks "di" yang tidak sesuai dengan kaidah bahasa Indonesia. Kesalahan ini disebabkan oleh dua faktor utama: kurangnya kesadaran akan kaidah bahasa dan rendahnya pengetahuan linguistik di masyarakat. Kesalahan ini berisiko berdampak negatif pada generasi muda dengan menormalisasi penggunaan bahasa yang salah. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya edukasi dan sosialisasi untuk meningkatkan kesadaran dan kepatuhan terhadap standar bahasa Indonesia.

KATAKUNCI

Kesalahan Berbahasa; Publik;

Ruang; Awalan;

Akhiran.

Contact Suparni Suparni

m Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

How to cite:

Suparni, S. (2024). Language Error in Public Spaces: Evidence from Palu City. *Pulchra Lingua: A Journal of Language Study, Literature, & Linguistics*, 3(2), 110-122.

https://doi.org/10.58989/plj.v3i2.42

1. Introduction

Language is a communication tool used by humans to convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, and information. More broadly, language is a system of symbols consisting of sounds or written forms that have meaning, used by a group of people as a means of interaction in everyday life. Language not only functions for communication but also plays a crucial role in forming cultural identity, preserving knowledge, and strengthening social relationships.

Indonesian is the official language of Indonesia, serving as a unifying language amidst the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and regional languages. As the national language, Indonesian is not only used in government and education but also in everyday communication among the public. As the national language, Indonesian plays an essential role in national unity, reflecting a commitment to respect and uphold national identity. Using Indonesian correctly and appropriately not only demonstrates language proficiency but also honors the history and struggles of the nation's founders. By using the right vocabulary and clear communication methods, we contribute to building a strong national culture and identity. The central government has urged Indonesians to use good Indonesian to enhance national unity (Arka, 2013).

The use of Indonesian in public spaces is indeed crucial and involves adherence to norms and regulations set by authoritative institutions such as the Language Agency and educational institutions. This aims to ensure that communication is effective and can be understood by the wider public. Law No. 24 of 2009 on the Republic of Indonesia provides clear rules regarding the use of Indonesian in public spaces. Article 36 of this law emphasizes that Indonesian is the state language used in official and public communication. This regulation includes the use of Indonesian in various contexts, such as banners, billboards, correspondence, and other public media.

Errors in the use of Indonesian in public spaces encompass various aspects, from the use of non-standard language to inaccuracies in writing, such as errors in prefix usage, suffixes, prepositions, titles, and word spelling. For example, the use of the prefix "di" that should be written together with the following word (such as "dijual" or "dikontrakkan") is often misused. If written separately, like "di jual" or "di kontrakan," this is not only grammatically incorrect but also appears unprofessional. Corder (1982) categorized errors into three types to limit language mistakes. These errors are classified as the first (Lapses) Carelessness, second (Error) Mistakes due to lack of knowledge, and third (Mistake) Errors caused by lack of preparation. These three terms represent different types of language errors. With these efforts, it is hoped that the use of Indonesian in public spaces can be strengthened and remain relevant.

The reason the researcher conducts this study is to strengthen the use of correct and proper Indonesian in public spaces and to raise public awareness about the importance of using language according to established norms. With a better understanding of language errors, it is hoped that these mistakes can be minimized, and the use of Indonesian in public spaces will align more closely with the applicable norms. Furthermore, no research has specifically focused on language errors in public spaces in Palu City, although language errors in public spaces have been widely studied in other cities in Indonesia. This presents an opportunity for researchers to delve deeper into the patterns of language mistakes occurring in the public spaces of Palu City.

While previous studies, such as those by Harahap & Nirmawan (2023) and Sisilda et al. (2021) have examined language errors in public spaces—Harahap focusing on Indonesian in Medan and Rensi on English in Palangkaraya—there remains a significant gap in research specifically addressing language errors in public spaces within Palu City. Both studies, while valuable, either focus on different cities or languages, and they do not delve into the specific linguistic errors that occur in Indonesian language usage in public signage in Palu, particularly at the morphological and syntactic levels.

The current study is important because it addresses this gap by focusing on Indonesian language errors in public spaces in Palu City. Understanding these errors is crucial for improving public communication, ensuring clearer and more accurate messaging in public spaces, and enhancing the overall quality of language use in the city. This research will also contribute to the broader discussion on the importance of adhering to linguistic norms in a multicultural society like Indonesia, where the correct use of language in public signage is essential for national unity, accessibility, and professionalism. Furthermore, by specifically examining Palu City, this study will provide localized insights that have not yet been explored in existing literature, offering practical recommendations for both local authorities and the public in improving language use in public spaces.

Based on the background provided, this study aims to identify the types and forms of language errors occurring in public spaces in Palu City. The research seeks to understand the common language mistakes found in these environments, which will help assess the level of public awareness regarding the correct usage of language in accordance with established norms. By identifying these errors, the study also aims to provide insights into the factors influencing improper language use in public spaces and offer recommendations to improve the proper use of Indonesian in the community.

1.1. Language

Language is a communication tool used by humans to convey information, ideas, and emotions. Through language, individuals can interact and collaborate, both orally and in writing. Language also encompasses various elements, such as vocabulary, grammar, and intonation, which affect how messages are delivered and understood. Therefore,

language plays a vital role in daily life and the development of society. The regulations for language use in public spaces are outlined in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, and National Emblem, as well as the National Anthem. Article 36, paragraph 3 of Law No. 24/2009 states that the Indonesian language must be used for the names of buildings, roads, apartments or settlements, offices, shopping complexes, trademarks, business institutions, educational institutions, and organizations established or owned by Indonesian citizens or legal entities. (Law No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, Emblem, and National Anthem., 2009) In line with Zalmansyah (2021) opinion, the use of the national language in public spaces must adhere to the rules or norms of the language itself, in this case, the proper and correct use of Indonesian. In public spaces, the use of the Indonesian language is often subject to language errors, including spelling, word choice (diction), and sentence structure.

1.2. Morphology

Essentially, morphology is the study of morphemes and how they combine to form words and break words into morphemes. Thus, the smallest unit in morphology is the morpheme, while the largest unit is the word. The formation of words through free morphemes combined with bound morphemes can be found in the process of affixation, which is the formation of words by adding a bound morpheme (an affix) to a base form. The resulting words from this combination are called affixed words, which are commonly known as complex words (Simpen, 2021). In linguistics, morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or the branch of linguistics that discusses words, their internal structure, and how these words are formed (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011).

In morphology studies, affixation is a crucial process in creating new words and enriching the language. According to McCarthy (2018), affixation involves the addition of prefixes, infixes, or suffixes to base words to create different meanings. The types of affixations are:

- 1) Prefix: An affix added to the beginning of a base word. This process often changes the word from one grammatical category to another.
- 2) Infix: Although less commonly used, infixes play an important role in word formation.
- 3) Suffix: Added to the end of a word, suffixes are used to indicate grammatical relationships.

Affixation in morphology not only creates new words but also adds depth and nuance to communication. By utilizing prefixes, infixes, and suffixes, one can explore various possibilities in language, creating expressions that are rich and diverse.

1.3. Syntax

Syntax is the branch of linguistics that studies sentence structure, including the arrangement of words and larger units like phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax not only regulates how these elements are arranged but also explains how the relationships between words generate meaning that can be accepted and understood in a specific context. In the Indonesian language, syntax is important because it determines the acceptability of meaning, i.e., whether a word arrangement has a logical meaning and can be understood by speakers of the language. This acceptability is closely related to grammatical norms, which determine the accuracy and clarity of meaning in a sentence (McCarthy, 2018).

Syntax based on word classes examines how word classes, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions, are used in sentences. Prepositions function as connectors between words or phrases, making the sentence more coherent and complete. The correct use of prepositions helps clarify the relationship between parts of a sentence, making the conveyed meaning easier to understand. However, mistakes in preposition usage can lead to inaccurate meaning and disrupt the logical flow of the sentence. Misused prepositions can also cause incoherence between sentences or paragraphs, making the ideas difficult to comprehend by the reader Sugiarti & Ngaisah (2019).

1.4. Language Errors

Language errors can cause confusion, leading to misunderstandings where the message being conveyed might be interpreted differently, preventing the intended meaning from being communicated clearly (Cocjin, 2021). According to Corder (1982) language errors are violations of the language code, which occur due to a lack of mastery or knowledge of the code. According to Al-Khresheh (2016) interlanguage arises from Error Analysis and Contrastive Analysis, which fail to explain second language errors comprehensively, systematically, and absolutely. Language errors are the result of violations against the target language norms, which lead to grammatical deviations in the target language (Shaikh & Jibran, 2020). These three perspectives illustrate that language errors are not merely unintentional mistakes, but also reflect a lack of understanding of correct language norms, whether in a first or second language (Khan & Babar, 2022). Therefore, to improve communication quality, a better understanding of the correct language rules is needed, along with continuous efforts to correct these errors.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with content analysis, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of language errors in public spaces (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). A case study approach is utilized to investigate specific phenomena and contribute to existing knowledge. The data are derived from written texts in public spaces, such as banners and billboards, and analyzed narratively. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore language errors in public spaces in Palu City. This approach is suitable for identifying and interpreting language inaccuracies documented through literature reviews and field observations. The study is conducted in public spaces in Palu City, focusing on strategic areas like markets, shopping centers, and commercial hubs where banners, billboards, and advertisements are prominently displayed. Data collection involves observation and documentation methods. Photographs of written texts in public spaces are taken to capture instances of language errors, including incorrect use of prefixes, suffixes, spelling, and word choice. These documented errors form the primary data for analysis.

Data analysis techniques in the research employed content analysis. Content analysis, based on Krippendorff's (2004) framework, is used to process the data. This involves: unitizing by collecting data on language errors, focusing on prefixes, suffixes, prepositions, and titles, sampling by selecting representative samples from banners and billboards, recording by documenting observed errors systematically, reducing by filtering data to highlight significant findings, inferring by drawing conclusions aligned with linguistic theories, such as morphology and syntax, and narrating by presenting findings descriptively, supported by linguistic concepts and literature. The study integrates field data with literature reviews, adhering to standard Indonesian linguistic norms to provide a comprehensive descriptive analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are expected to provide an accurate overview of the state of language use in public spaces in Palu City, as well as serve as a reference for relevant authorities in taking corrective actions, whether through education, socialization, or language policies that support the proper use of Indonesian in accordance with the rules.

3.1. Language Errors in Public Spaces in Palu City

There are still several language errors in Palu City that do not adhere to Indonesian spelling rules. This is because the public generally does not understand the correct spelling according to the Enhanced General Indonesian Spelling System. A total of 69 language errors were found in public spaces in Palu City, as seen in the images and tables below. Examples of these errors are presented with the aim of providing a clearer

understanding of the types and forms of errors that frequently occur, as well as to raise public awareness of the importance of using correct and proper Indonesian.



Figure 1. Error in Language Usage

As seen in Figure 1 above, writing errors in public spaces, such as on billboards and advertisements, are a common phenomenon frequently encountered in various locations throughout Palu City. Language errors, particularly in the use of prefixes, suffixes, titles, and prepositions, are often found in public spaces such as billboards, signs, and other outdoor media. This phenomenon occurs not only in one place but is also found in multiple locations across Palu City. One noticeable error is the incorrect use or placement of the preposition "di" in sentences. For example, in billboards or advertisements, where the preposition "di" should indicate a place or location, it is often used incorrectly or placed in the wrong context, leading to unclear or ambiguous sentences. A common mistake is the combination of the preposition "di" with an incorrect or mismatched word, such as in the phrase "Disini." To clarify the intended location, the use of the word "di" should be more carefully considered to avoid confusion. Based on the examples in the images above, language errors can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. The Result of Post-test of Control Group

No	Error	Frequency	Aspect
1	Prefixes	40 data	Morphology
2	Suffixes	15 data	Morphology
3	Preposition	10 data	Syntax
4	Use of Academic Title	3 data	Syntax
5	Use of Words	1 data	Syntax

Total 69 data

Based on the data presented in the example images and Table 1, it is evident that there are 69 language errors in public spaces in Palu City. These errors cover various aspects that do not conform to the correct linguistic standards, particularly in the areas of morphology and syntax. In morphology, these errors may include the incorrect use of prefixes and suffixes, which affect the meaning and form of words. For example, the incorrect use of the prefix "di-" without a space in words that should be separated, or the improper application of the suffix "-kan." These errors indicate a lack of understanding regarding the correct word formation rules in accordance with the Indonesian language. Meanwhile, at the syntactic level, errors may arise in sentence structure, such as the incorrect use of prepositional phrases or the improper placement of words in a sentence, which violates the standard order of Indonesian language syntax. This results in messages or information being unclear or even misunderstood.

Based on the data and analysis, various types of language errors in public spaces in Palu City can be identified, covering aspects such as:

3.2. Errors in Morphological Aspects

First, in terms of prefixes, there are 40 errors involving the use of prefixes. These errors are the most commonly found and reflect a lack of awareness regarding the correct spelling of prefixes. Errors in the use of incorrect prefixes or improper spelling that violate Indonesian language rules include mistakes such as "di jual" (25 instances), where the correct form should be "dijual," and 14 instances of "di kontrakkan," where the correct form is "dikontrakkan," and one instance of "di sewakan," which should be written as "disewakan."

Second, errors in suffix spelling involve 15 instances, with incorrect usage such as "dikontrakan," which is inappropriate for words that do not require it or vice versa. This indicates that the rules for word formation, especially regarding suffixes, are often overlooked. The correct spelling should be "dikontrakkan." This kind of writing reflects an inaccurate understanding of the morphological structure of words in Indonesian. In standard grammar, words with the prefix "di-" and the suffix "-kan" must be written together, as they form a new word with a different meaning. This phenomenon shows a lack of understanding of the morphological structure in Indonesian. Words with prefixes and suffixes must adhere to the rules, where the prefix "di-" and the suffix "-kan" are written together because they form a new and distinct meaning.

3.3. Errors in Syntactic Aspects

Errors occur in the improper use of prepositions, which can affect the clarity of a message. The following errors were found: there are 10 instances of errors in preposition use (such as the preposition "di"), involving mistakes in their selection or placement. For example, the use of the preposition "di" in the wrong context or position in a sentence. These errors can cause confusion in understanding the information.

The preposition "di" should be written separately, following the correct rules of Indonesian grammar. In standard Indonesian usage, prepositions like "di" should not be combined with the following word when they function as prepositions. This is to maintain clarity and order in writing. Therefore, in sentences with location descriptions, it is essential to ensure that "di" is written separately from the following word. By adhering to the correct preposition writing rules, the message becomes clearer and avoids ambiguity. Awareness of this rule also plays a crucial role in cultivating the habit of using correct and standard Indonesian in various communication media, particularly in public spaces.

3.4. Errors in Aspects of Language Norms

First, in the case of errors in writing titles, there are 3 mistakes involving the use of academic titles. These errors include the spelling or format of the titles, such as using "Dr." for a medical doctor when it should be written as "dr" without the period. This shows a lack of understanding of the rules for writing titles in Indonesian. Second, there is 1 error in writing a word where it does not comply with the standard rules of Indonesian spelling. While this may seem like a simple mistake, it is still important to address because it could change the meaning or lead to misinterpretation. Based on the data and analysis, various types of language errors can be found in the public spaces of Palu City, covering aspects such as morphology, syntax, and violations of the standard Indonesian spelling system. These errors can be seen in different forms, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, prepositions, titles, and word spelling, as shown in the examples in the table below.

Example Data 1. Error in Prefix Writing

"RUKO INI DI SEWAKAN"

The error involves the prefix "di-" which should be written together with the root word and functions as a prefix, not as a preposition indicating location. The correct spelling is "disewakan" (not "di sewakan"). This incorrect writing reduces the clarity of the message and can cause misunderstandings among readers. Such errors are often found in public spaces, highlighting the importance of awareness about correct language usage. Following the correct prefix rules makes the sentence clearer and avoids ambiguity.

Correct writing also reflects professionalism and care for Indonesian as an effective communication tool in public spaces.

Example Data 2. Error in Prefix and Suffix Writing

"RUKO INI DI KONTRAKAN"

The error involves the use of the prefix "di-" and the suffix "-kan" in the word "dikontrakan," which should be written together as a single word. The error arises when these elements are mistakenly written separately, like "di kontrakan." The word "kontrak" is a base word that can take the prefix "di-" and the suffix "-kan" to form a more specific meaning. The prefix "di-" in Indonesian can function either as a preposition (indicating location) or as a prefix to form a passive voice. In this case, "di-" serves as a prefix and should be written together with "-kan" to form "dikontrakkan." Correctly spelling the word as "dikontrakkan" eliminates ambiguity and clarifies the meaning of the sentence, making the message easier to understand. This is particularly important in public spaces like billboards, where clarity is essential.

Example Data 3. Error in Preposition Writing "DISINI JUAL AYAM POTONG"

The error involves the preposition "di," which should be written separately because it indicates location. Writing "disini" as one word is incorrect. The correct spelling is "di sini." The preposition "di" in Indonesian is used to indicate location, time, or state. In this context, "di" functions as a preposition indicating place, and therefore, it must be written separately from the following word. This is a common mistake, but in formal Indonesian, prepositions like "di" must be written separately from the next word, such as "di sini," "di sana," or "di rumah."

Using the correct preposition improves clarity and ensures that the message complies with language norms, which is particularly important for public communication.

Example Data 4. Error in Writing Academic Titles

"Dr. ARISTO, M. BIOMED"

The error here involves the title "Dr." with a capital "D" and a period, which is the title for a Doctor in academic contexts (Doctoral degree). However, the correct title for a medical doctor is "dr" with a lowercase "d" and without the period. In this case, "Dr." is incorrect because it refers to an academic doctor, not a medical doctor. The correct form for a medical doctor is "dr," without the period. Writing the title correctly as "dr ARISTO, M. Biomed" makes the distinction clear between an academic doctorate and a medical profession, which helps avoid confusion.

Based on the research findings on the errors in language usage in public spaces in Palu City, it was found that most of the errors were located in shops or stores in the form of banners and billboards. A total of 69 language errors were identified in public spaces in Palu City. These 69 errors consisted of 40 errors related to prefixes, 15 errors related to suffixes, 10 errors in the use of prepositions, 3 errors in the use of titles, and 1 incorrect word usage. The most common error involved the prefix "di."

The factors contributing to these language mistakes include, first, unintentional errors caused by the writer's or producer's lack of knowledge and understanding of proper Indonesian language rules. Second, the lack of sufficient linguistic knowledge is also a primary cause. These errors in language usage in public spaces can influence younger generations who are learning the language, leading them to believe that incorrect language usage is acceptable. Therefore, to improve this situation, it is essential to raise awareness and provide education about the proper use of Indonesian, both through formal education and community outreach.

As a comparison, several findings from other studies on language errors in public spaces in other cities in Indonesia show similar patterns and causes. One such study by Harahap & Nirmawan (2023), identified errors in morphology, such as in the use of prefixes and suffixes, as well as errors in syntax, particularly in the use of prepositions, and errors in the writing of letters and titles.

Additionally, the primary cause of language errors in public spaces in Palu City is largely due to a lack of awareness or understanding of the correct use of Indonesian. This may stem from limited linguistic knowledge or a lack of access to quality language education materials. Many business owners in public spaces do not pay attention to language rules when creating banners, nameplates, or billboards. However, the correct use of language in public spaces is very important because it serves as an indirect learning tool for the public, especially for younger generations.

3. Conclusion

The study on language errors in public spaces in Palu City reveals that there are 69 instances of language errors in public spaces. These errors consist of 40 instances related to prefixes, 15 related to suffixes, 10 related to prepositions, 3 related to the use of titles, and 1 instance of an incorrect word. The main factors contributing to these errors are ignorance and the lack of understanding by the writers or advertisers regarding the correct rules of the Indonesian language. The lack of linguistic knowledge is also a major cause, highlighting the need for education and increased awareness about proper language use. The impact of these errors is not only visible in the visual aspects of public spaces but also has the potential to influence the younger generation who are learning the language. Children and teenagers may come to believe that the

language mistakes they see in public spaces are correct or acceptable. Therefore, corrective efforts are crucial to reduce language errors in public spaces, especially through adequate language education and community outreach.

In terms of morphology and syntax, which include prefixes, suffixes, prepositions, as well as errors in spelling and titles, it is clear that language mistakes in public spaces are not isolated incidents but represent a common pattern in various locations across Palu City. For future research, it is expected to provide deeper insights and more effective solutions to improve the use of proper Indonesian in public spaces. Future studies should also broaden the scope to analyze language errors across various media in public spaces, not only limited to banners and billboards but also including digital media such as social media and websites. This is important to identify language errors in the digital era and find ways to reduce such mistakes.

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