



## Analysis of Spelling Errors in Official Letters by Grade VII Students of SMP Negeri 24 Padang

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks in official letters written by students. The focus of the study is on the forms, types, and frequency of spelling errors that appear in official letters as a type of formal text requiring linguistic accuracy. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with documentation as the data collection technique. The data consisted of official letters written by students, obtained from the Indonesian language teacher. The data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques by identifying, classifying, and calculating errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation based on the rules of Indonesian Spelling (Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia). The results showed that there were 155 errors in the use of capital letters out of a total of 894 data points, accounting for 17.34%. In addition, 52 punctuation errors were found, representing 6.01% of the total data. The most dominant errors occurred in the writing of place names, the use of formal forms of address, and the formatting of letterheads. These findings indicate that students have not yet fully understood or applied the rules of Indonesian spelling in writing official letters. Therefore, continuous practice, habituation, and greater emphasis on spelling instruction in official letter writing activities are necessary to improve students' written language skills, particularly in the accurate use of capital letters and punctuation marks.

*Keywords: errors analysis, spelling, official letters, student*

## Analisis Kesalahan Penggunaan Ejaan Surat Dinas Karya Siswa Kelas VII SMP Negeri 24 Padang

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesalahan penggunaan huruf kapital dan tanda baca dalam surat dinas yang ditulis oleh siswa. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada bentuk, jenis, serta frekuensi kesalahan ejaan yang muncul dalam surat dinas sebagai salah satu teks formal yang menuntut ketepatan berbahasa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa dokumentasi. Data penelitian berupa dokumen surat dinas karya siswa yang diperoleh dari guru mata pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia. Selanjutnya, data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi dengan mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan menghitung kesalahan penggunaan huruf kapital dan tanda baca berdasarkan kaidah Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 155 kesalahan penggunaan huruf kapital dari total 894 data atau sebesar 17,34%. Selain itu, ditemukan 52 kesalahan penggunaan tanda baca atau sebesar 6,01% dari keseluruhan data. Kesalahan paling dominan terjadi pada penulisan nama tempat, penggunaan sapaan resmi, serta penulisan kop surat. Temuan tersebut mengindikasikan bahwa siswa belum sepenuhnya memahami dan menerapkan kaidah ejaan bahasa Indonesia dalam penulisan surat dinas. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pembiasaan, latihan yang berkelanjutan, serta penekanan pembelajaran ejaan dalam kegiatan menulis surat dinas agar kemampuan berbahasa tulis siswa, khususnya dalam aspek ketepatan huruf kapital dan tanda baca, dapat meningkat secara optimal.

*Kata kunci: analisis kesalahan, ejaan, surat dinas, karya siswa*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), Indonesian language learning in junior high schools aims to develop students' comprehensive language skills, encompassing six language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, presenting, and viewing. Of these six skills, writing is the most complex because it requires logical, systematic, and creative thinking. According to Semi (2007), writing is a creative process of transforming ideas into written symbols. Writing involves more than simply composing words; it also involves the ability to organize ideas and express them effectively according to language rules. In the context of formal education, writing skills play a crucial role in developing critical thinking skills and communicating ideas in writing (Nurgiyantoro, 2016; Dalman, 2018). Fanno & Afnita (2019) suggest that writing is a fundamental skill that supports student learning success, as nearly all school subjects require writing skills. Students who lack writing skills will struggle to express their ideas, and even if they possess many ideas, they will struggle to communicate them to other students. Zahara & Afnita (2020) found that diligent writing can make students more creative, while laziness makes it difficult for them to express their ideas in writing. Therefore, students must master Indonesian language learning, especially the ability to write according to rules, master vocabulary, and master Indonesian Spelling (EBI). Similarly, Anjelita et al. (2023) stated that writing skills need to be practiced so that students can express their ideas and imagination in structured writing. One form of writing skill taught in schools is writing official letters, because official letters are a means of official communication used in educational settings, institutions, and government. Through learning to write official letters, students are expected to be able to use Indonesian effectively, logically, and in accordance with linguistic rules.

Zakia et al. (2018) noted that official letters are formal because they are a means of formal com-

munication for official duties. Therefore, the content or information in the letter must be complete, concise, clear, and organized. Information in official letters can include notifications, statements, orders, and explanations. Therefore, the language of official letters must be formal. They should not use colloquial language or slang, such as "ngapain," "bagai," "gue," "loe," and so on. The language used in official letters must be clear, including spelling, diction, and effective sentences to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

However, many students still experience difficulties writing official letters, particularly with spelling. Official letters, as a formal form of writing, require accuracy in capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure in accordance with Indonesian language rules (Rahayu, 2019). Spelling errors indicate that students do not fully understand the applicable spelling rules. According to Markhamah and Atiqa (2014), language errors are systematic deviations and reflect students' imperfect abilities at a certain stage.

Kosasih (2012) explains that capital letters have an important function as markers for the beginning of sentences, names of people, places, institutions, and other official elements. Meanwhile, punctuation serves to clarify sentence structure, emphasize the writer's intent, and avoid misunderstandings (Wahidah et al., 2023). Inaccurate use of capital letters and punctuation can lead to ambiguity, reduce the formality of the letter, and reduce the clarity of the message (Muslich, 2014; Wahidah et al., 2023). This situation indicates that spelling mastery remains a fundamental problem in teaching official letters at the junior high school level (Rahayu, 2019).

Based on this situation, an analysis of spelling errors in official letters written by grade VII E students is necessary. This analysis is important to determine the most common types of errors, the factors that cause them, and the extent to which students understand Indonesian spelling rules. The results of this study are expected to contribute to improving the teaching of official letters, so that

students are able to produce official writing that adheres to good and correct Indonesian language rules.

## METHOD

This research employed a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it provides in-depth explanations through descriptive field data (Rajagukguk et al., 2024), and is appropriate for examining complex linguistic issues, particularly those related to language use (Taufiqillah & Hikmah, 2025). The research data used in this study were official letters written by students. According to Sugiyono (2016), qualitative descriptive research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions holistically in a natural context. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore and describe in depth various aspects related to errors in writing official letters by students (Indriyati & Kuntoro, 2024). In this study, researchers focused on analyzing spelling usage, including punctuation and capitalization. The data source for this study was official letters written by students obtained by researchers from Indonesian language teachers.

The data obtained were analyzed using content analysis with the following steps: (1) identifying the type of spelling error. At this stage, the researcher carefully read and reviewed each official letter text to find sections that did not comply with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). (2) classifying the types of errors. At this stage, the researcher classified the errors based on the rules contained in the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) to ensure objective and systematic analysis. (3) describing the findings as a percentage. At this stage, the researcher described the findings based on the number of classified errors (Krippendorff, 2018; Sugiyono, 2022; Language Development and Fostering Agency, 2016). The data collection technique used was documentation, namely collecting students' writing from teachers as a source of research data (Arikunto, 2013).

## RESULTS

Based on the results of the data analysis, students' ability to use capital letters and punctuation in writing official letters indicated several deviations from the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). In general, the most common punctuation errors are in the use of commas after place names and closing greetings, as well as errors in using colons (:) in official letters. This indicates that students still need a deeper understanding of punctuation rules in the context of official letters. The results of the analysis of capitalization and punctuation errors can be seen in the following table:

The use of capital letters in official letters was 17.34%. This indicates that students' skills in writing official letters are still adequate, but need improvement, especially in the use of capital letters. The 15% capitalization error rate indicates that students are still less careful in applying correct spelling rules, such as the beginning of sentences, names of people, agencies, and places. The use of punctuation in official letters, at 6.01%, indicates that some students use punctuation quite correctly, although some minor errors still occur. However, it should be noted that the use of punctuation in these official letters is relatively low because the letters are relatively short, so the overall frequency of punctuation is also low. Therefore, the low percentage of punctuation errors does not entirely reflect high mastery, but is also influenced by the minimal use of punctuation in the letter text.

Below, the researcher describes students' errors in writing official letters, including the use of capital letters and punctuation.

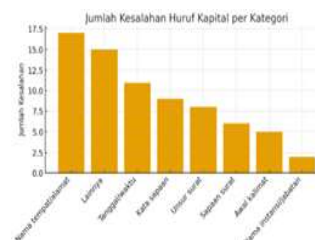


Figure 1  
Number of capitalization errors





#### **e. Capitalization error in the abbreviation**

"Jalan Taman Melati NO 10"

The error in the sentence lies in the spelling of the abbreviation "NO." Abbreviations for numbers should be written with a capital letter followed by a period, becoming "No.", not "NO." Correction: Jalan Taman Melati No. 10

#### **f. Capitalization error in place names**

"Pemerintah Kota Padang"

"Begalung Padang"

"Imam Bonjol Kota Padang"

This sentence contains an error in capitalization. According to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), a capital letter is used for the first letter of every element of the name of an agency, institution, or organization, including the name of a place after it. The word "Padang" is the name of a city and therefore must begin with a capital letter.

Correction: Padang City Government

Begalung Padang

Imam Bonjol Kota Padang

#### **g. Capitalization error at the beginning of a sentence**

"With respect,"

The writing of the word "With respect," in a letter is included in the opening salutation. According to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), a capital letter is used for the first letter of every element of the name of an agency, institution, or organization, including the opening salutation in a letter. Therefore, the word "with" should begin with a capital letter.

Correction: Dear Sirs,

#### **h. Capitalization error in the institution's name**

"UPTD SMP NEGERi 24 PADANG"

In the spelling of "UPTD SMP NEGERi 24 PADANG," there is an error in the use of capital letters. The lowercase letter in the word "NEGERi" does not comply with correct spelling rules, as all

letters should be capitalized to indicate the institution's official name. All abbreviations and official names of institutions must be capitalized to comply with applicable spelling rules.

Correction: UPTD SMP NEGERi 24 PADANG

#### **i. Capitalization error in the abbreviation of the institution's name**

"NUMBER: 43/smpn 24/V/2024"

The capitalization error in the word "NUMBER" is incorrect because in standard writing or general letter format, only the first letter is capitalized; it should be "Nomor." The word "smpn" is written in lowercase. Therefore, it is incorrect because it is an abbreviation for State Junior High School, where every letter must be capitalized; it should be "SMPN."

Correction: Number: 43/SMPN 24/V/2024

#### **j. Capitalization error in the honorific**

"...so that you allow..."

The capitalization error in the word "sir/ibu" is incorrect because both words function as honorifics addressed directly to the person being spoken to or respected. Capitalization is used on the first letter of the honorific used to refer to or replace a specific person's name. In official letters, the request is addressed to someone who is respected. Correction: ...so that you may allow... From the overall data, it can be concluded that the most common errors occurred in the spelling of place names, formal greetings, and words on letterheads that should be capitalized. This indicates that students are still not careful in applying the basic rules of capitalization.

## **2. Punctuation Errors**

### **a. Incorrect use of a period (.) in the middle of a sentence**

"With respect, we convey that

Yours faithfully."

In the text fragment "With respect, we convey that" "Yours faithfully." there are errors in the use of punctuation. The first error occurs in the spelling of "With respect." which ends with a period. In

the context of a formal letter, this phrase functions as an opening greeting, so it should end with a comma (,), not a period. The correct spelling is "With respect, we convey that...". The second error occurs in "Yours faithfully," which serves as a closing greeting. Because it is a stand-alone closing, this phrase does not require a period after it. Therefore, it is simply written "Yours faithfully." Correction: : *Dengan hormat, kami sampaikan bahwa*

#### **b. Incorrect use of the equal sign (=)**

"No =

Page =

Time =

Place ="

In the text "No = Hal = Waktu = Tempat =" there is an error in the use of punctuation, namely the use of the equal sign (=), which does not comply with the rules for writing formal letters in Indonesian. In letter format, information such as "Number," "Hal," "Waktu," and "Tempat" should be followed by a colon (:), not an equal sign. A colon is used to indicate that a statement or explanation will follow. Therefore, the correct spelling is "No.:", "Hal:", "Waktu:", and "Tempat:." The use of a colon provides a neater structure and complies with the rules of official scripts. Therefore, the main error in the text lies in the use of the equal sign, which should be replaced with a colon for a correct and professional letter format.

Correction:

No.:

Hal:

Waktu:

Tempat:

#### **c. Incorrect use of a comma (,)**

"...Minangkabau culture, at the Adityawarman Museum."

In this sentence, there is an error in the use of a comma (,) after the word "Minangkabau." In this sentence, the words "at the Adityawarman

Museum" function as a place adverb, describing the location of an activity or object related to Minangkabau culture. Therefore, the comma should be omitted to maintain its meaning. Without the comma, the sentence is more effective and adheres to correct punctuation.

Correction: ...budaya Minangkabau di Museum Adityawarman.

#### **d. Incorrect use of period (.) and comma (,) when writing academic titles**

"Hasyuni Harti M.Pd"

The sentence "Hasyuni Harti M.Pd" contains an error in the use of punctuation. Parentheses are not actually necessary if the name serves as the author, writer, or identifier at the end of a text. Furthermore, "M.Pd" should be followed by a period after each abbreviation of the title, i.e., "M.Pd." instead of "M.Pd."

Correction: Hasyuni Harti, M.Pd.

#### **e. Incorrect use of comma (,) before conjunction**

"...is pleased to grant us permission, and the existence of..."

The sentence contains an incorrect use of comma (,) before the word "and." According to PUEBI (Indonesian Dictionary of Indonesian Language), a comma is not used to separate two sentence elements connected by conjunctions and, or, or, and, unless the conjunction begins a separate clause or contains additional information. In this sentence, the word "and" only serves as a connector between two parallel parts of the sentence, so the presence of the comma actually makes the sentence structure ineffective. Therefore, the comma must be removed to make the sentence correct and in accordance with spelling rules.

Correction: ...we are pleased to grant us permission and the existence of...

#### **f. Incorrect use of comma (,) in the middle of the sentence**

"Therefore, we request your presence at:"

This sentence contains several errors in



punctuation. There should be a comma (,) after the word "that," because "Therefore," is a connecting phrase between sentences that serves to emphasize or conclude, so it needs to end with a comma to separate the subordinate clause from the main clause.

Correction: Therefore, we request your presence at the following event:

#### **g. Incorrect use of comma (,) clarifies the relationship**

"Padang

Kepala SMPN 24 Padang"

This sentence does not use a comma (,) after the word "Padang," thus creating an error in punctuation. In writing, "Padang" indicates the place where the letter is written, while "Principal of SMPN 24 Padang" is the destination or addressee. Without the comma (,), the two elements read as if they were one, unclearly meaningless. The comma here serves to provide a pause and clarify the relationship between the place and the addressee.

Correction:

Padang,

Kepala SMPN 24 Padang

#### **h. Incorrect use of comma (,)**

"Pada hari Senin 20 Februari 2024"

The sentence "Pada hari Senin 20 Februari 2024" contains errors in punctuation and capitalization. The sentence should use a comma (,) to separate the day of the week and the date. Commas are used to provide an appropriate pause between the day and the date, making the sentence clearer and easier to read. Small errors, such as not using a comma, can change the sentence structure and reduce spelling accuracy according to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI).

Correction: Pada hari Senin, 20 Februari 2024

#### **i. Incorrect use of a period (.) in the middle of a sentence**

"Jalan By. Pass Lubuk Begalung Padang"

The sentence contains errors in punctuation.

The main error lies in the use of a period (.) after the word "By." According to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), periods are not used between proper nouns or street names, unless they are at the end of a sentence. In this context, "By. Pass" is not an abbreviation, but rather a single street name that should be written without a period, namely "Bypass." Furthermore, the sentence does not use a comma (,) to separate elements of place names at different administrative levels. When writing an address correctly, each element, such as the street name, sub-district, and city, should be separated by a comma for clarity. Correction: Jalan Bypass, Lubuk Begalung, Padang

#### **j. Spelling error in the word "thank you"**

"Kami ucapkan terimakasih"

The sentence "Kami ucapkan terimakasih" contains errors in punctuation and spelling. In terms of punctuation, the sentence does not end with a period (.), even though a period is required at the end of a statement. Furthermore, the word "thank you" is also incorrectly spelled, because according to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), the correct form is "terima kasih" (two separate words).

Correction: Kami ucapkan terima kasih

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the theoretical study and the research results conducted on "Analysis of Spelling Errors in Official Letters by Grade VII Students of SMP Negeri 24 Padang," the researcher can draw several conclusions and suggestions. Based on the description and interpretation of the data, the author concludes that students' ability to write official letters is quite good, but still needs improvement, especially in capitalization, which showed 17.34% errors. This indicates that students do not fully understand correct spelling rules, such as the initial spelling of sentences, names of people, places, and institutions.

Meanwhile, the 6.01% rate of punctuation errors is considered low, but this is also influenced

by the relatively short length of the letter, resulting in minimal punctuation. Thus, these results indicate that students have grasped the basics of writing official letters, although they still need practice and practice to improve their capitalization and punctuation accuracy.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, students' ability to use capital letters and punctuation in official letters indicates several deviations from the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). These errors occurred in both capital letter usage and punctuation, which are essential elements in writing official letters. Official letters, as a form of formal written communication, require precise language to ensure clear, effective, and consistent message delivery.

In general, the most common punctuation errors were the use of commas after place names and closing greetings, as well as the incorrect use of colons (:) in certain parts of the letter. These errors indicate that students do not fully understand the function of punctuation in the structure of official letters. However, proper punctuation plays a crucial role in clarifying the meaning of sentences and demonstrating relationships between parts of a letter. Inaccurate punctuation can lead to misunderstandings and diminish the formality of the letter.

Furthermore, errors in capitalization remain quite prevalent. Based on the analysis, the percentage of errors in capitalization in official letters reached 17.34%. This figure indicates that students' skills in writing official letters are still considered adequate, but require significant improvement. These errors generally occur in capitalizing the beginning of sentences, writing names of people, institutions, and places. This indicates that students are still less careful and inconsistent in applying correct spelling rules according to PUEBI.

The capitalization error rate, which reached around 15%, reinforces the finding that students' understanding of spelling rules is suboptimal.

These errors can be caused by several factors, such as a lack of practice writing official letters, minimal familiarity with using formal written language, and students' low attention to spelling aspects when writing. During the learning process, students tend to focus more on the content of the letter than on the accuracy of linguistic rules, so spelling aspects are often neglected.

Meanwhile, the use of punctuation in official letters showed an error percentage of 6.01%. This percentage is lower than capitalization errors, indicating that some students are able to use punctuation fairly correctly. However, a low percentage of punctuation errors does not necessarily reflect a high level of mastery. This is due to the fact that the official letters written by students are relatively short, so the frequency of punctuation use is also limited. In other words, the small number of punctuation marks used in the letter text contributes to the low number of errors identified. Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution. The low percentage of punctuation errors indicates students' limited opportunity to use a variety of punctuation marks, not simply a lack of mastery.

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