

ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN WRITING ERRORS IN BILLBOARD PUBLICATIONS IN LHOKSEUMAWE CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze various Indonesian writing errors found on billboards in Lhokseumawe City, Indonesia, including errors in the use of foreign elements, and evaluate the relevance of research findings to Indonesian language learning materials in higher education. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative approach, involving the collection of samples in the form of text from billboards in Lhokseumawe. Sampling was done purposively, while data collection techniques included listening and recording. To ensure data validity, source triangulation techniques were used. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model through four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification. The results showed some important findings. First, the most common linguistic errors in outdoor media include word writing errors, especially in diction selection, preposition *di* writing, and the use of abbreviations. Second, errors were also found in the use of English and Acehnese. Third, the findings of this study are considered relevant to be used as teaching materials or references in Indonesian language courses in higher education, especially in the material of EYD, word writing, abbreviations, and elements of absorption.

Keywords: *Foreign Terms, Language Errors, Linguistic Landscape, Outdoor Media, Teaching Materials, Spelling*

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to improve the quality of the Indonesian language must be carried out on an ongoing basis, considering that the social dynamics of society always affect language patterns. Arifin (2001) states that improving the quality of language includes written and spoken aspects that are inseparable from the cognitive and reasoning abilities of individuals. The problems of dignifying the Indonesian language and literature continue to transform in line with the times and the needs of society. The main challenge in language dignity arises from changes in Indonesia's social structure due to global phenomena such as market liberalization, the information technology revolution, and the implementation of regional autonomy. Warsiman and Rosyida (2009) assert that global interaction in various fields is a necessity in the contemporary era, supported by advances in the information and transportation industries that allow communication without borders (Muslem et al., 2019). This condition also facilitates the diffusion of global values, while moral values themselves are formed through the process of social interaction and cultural internalization in the community environment (Zulkhairi & Hajar, 2023).

Recent phenomena show a decline in language awareness, especially among students and the general public, which is manifested in the inconsistent use of Indonesian and the tendency to prefer foreign languages in daily interactions. Lestari (2015:1) points out a linguistic dilemma related to the hybridization of foreign terms with Indonesian in phrase construction, as in the example of "Jatim Park," which semiotically contains language duality. Ideally, this kind of writing should follow the principle of consistent bilingualism. This kind of linguistic inconsistency has the potential to cause various linguistic deviations. Setyawati (2010) defines language errors as deviations from the prevailing norms of communication, both orally and in writing. Corder (1985) classifies language errors into three typologies: (1) lapses (slips of the pen) that are involuntary, (2) errors due to violations of grammatical rules, and (3) mistakes in the form of lexical selections that do not fit the context.

Based on these theoretical considerations, this study focuses on analyzing Indonesian language precision in outdoor media in Lhokseumawe City. By definition, outdoor media is a visual communication tool for delivering messages in public spaces (Arens, 2006). Ghifary (2014) identified nine variants of outdoor media, including billboards and banners. The selection of this research object was based on several methodological considerations: (1) accessibility aspects, (2) long duration of exposure, (3) wide audience coverage, and (4) the absence of similar research that examines the relevance of the findings to the college curriculum. This study formulates three key questions: (1) What are the characteristics of Indonesian orthographic errors on billboards in Lhokseumawe? (2) What are the patterns of foreign lexicon usage errors in the media? (3) To what extent do the research findings have pedagogical relevance to Indonesian language teaching materials in higher education?

METHOD

The study was conducted in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province, Indonesia, during the period from 16 June to 16 July 2025. The site was purposively selected on the grounds that Lhokseumawe, as one of Aceh's developing urban centers, exhibits a high intensity of outdoor media usage for promotional and public information purposes. Particular attention was given to billboard publications situated at strategic locations throughout the city, as billboards constitute one of the most prominent forms of visual communication in public spaces. A qualitative paradigm with a descriptive design was employed. As noted by Strauss (in Golafshani, 2003), qualitative research emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through the collection of non-numerical data. The descriptive design was deemed appropriate as it aligns with the study's objective of systematically capturing and documenting linguistic errors without the aim of testing specific hypotheses. In line with Kriyantono's (2008) view, this approach enables researchers to present phenomena systematically and objectively, grounded in empirical field evidence.

The primary data consisted of written texts extracted from billboards, selected through purposive sampling. Sampling decisions were based on specific criteria, particularly the presence of Indonesian-language text with potential deviations from standardized linguistic norms. Data collection involved systematic documentation, close examination, and detailed note-taking to ensure comprehensive identification of errors. The analysis focused on six linguistic aspects: letter writing, word structure, numeral usage, punctuation, abbreviations and acronyms, and the use of foreign elements. To ensure the credibility of findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing linguistic deviations identified across multiple billboard samples. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2019), which comprises four iterative stages: data collection, data reduction through selection and focus on relevant content, data presentation in analytical matrix form, and conclusion drawing with verification. This cyclical process allowed for refinement at each stage, ensuring both analytical depth and accuracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of outdoor media fundamentally has various aspects that can be analyzed, such as language errors, word choice errors (diction), misapplication of spelling rules, discourse analysis, and others. However, this study only chose one part of the analysis of writing errors in Indonesian. The aspects of errors in language writing that are analyzed include errors in writing letters, words, numbers, punctuation marks, abbreviations/acronyms, and foreign elements. The research sample of billboard publication media in Lhokseumawe City was taken by a purposive sampling technique. A total of five billboard publications were taken as samples that contained elements of writing errors and errors in the use of foreign elements in Indonesian. The types of errors will be discussed as follows.

Forms of Indonesian Writing Errors on Billboards in Lhokseumawe City

Data 1

KAMPUS
UNIVERSITAS BUMI PERSADA
(U N B P)
BERETIKA - PROFESIONAL - INOVASI

The billboard located on Banda Aceh–Medan Street, Alue Awe Village, Muara Dua District, Lhokseumawe City, complies with Regional Regulation No. 13 of 2016. The top left corner of the billboard displays the *Merdeka Belajar* logo, while the top right corner features the *Kampus Merdeka Indonesia Jaya* logo. However, the publication contains several linguistic inaccuracies, specifically in word choice, abbreviation usage, and hyphenation. One notable correction concerns the word *kampus*. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) Sixth Edition, *kampus* refers to the main area or complex of a higher education institution (such as a university or academy) and

closely resembles the meaning of *universitas*. The use of two words with overlapping meanings should be avoided to maintain lexical precision. Writers must select words accurately to achieve communicative intent and distinguish between near-synonyms with care. For conveying basic understanding, plain and straightforward vocabulary is preferable, whereas for eliciting specific emotional responses, words with appropriate connotative value should be chosen. As Azwardi (2015:91) notes, diction in communication must adhere to the principles of accuracy, correctness, precision, and conventionality. Inaccurate word choice may obscure meaning and disrupt the clarity of the intended message.

Another error lies in the abbreviation *UNBP* for *Universitas Bumi Persada*. Following the *Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (EBI) guidelines, abbreviations formed from the initial letters of each word should be written in uppercase without periods or spacing between the letters. The current form violates these conventions. A further inaccuracy involves the inappropriate use of a hyphen in the university's mission statement, describing it as "ethical, professional, innovative." In EBI (Fifth Edition), hyphens are prescribed for two main purposes: (1) linking two elements that form a single unit, as in *Soekarno-Hatta*; and (2) connecting elements in reduplicated forms, such as *kupu-kupu*. The use of a hyphen in this context is therefore inconsistent with the nine official rules governing hyphenation in EBI. Instead, the use of a comma is recommended, consistent with punctuation guidelines for separating items in a list comprising words, phrases, or numbers.

Data 2

Rektor & Sivitas Akademika
Universitas Malikussaleh
MENGUCAPKAN
SELAMAT MERAYAKAN
TAHUN BARU ISLAM
1447 HIJRIAH
"Mari gunakan waktu di tahun baru ini untuk
menambah amal dan menata hati,,

The billboard located on Jalan Banda Aceh-Medan, Uteunkot Village, Muara Dua Subdistrict, Lhokseumawe City has errors in word writing and the use of quotation marks ("..."). Alternative corrections to the writing of the word use should be written using, with a statement that the word and its formation must follow the language rules used. The dating of the prefix *meN-* in transitive active sentences does not follow language rules. In this regard, Arifin (2001:19) argues that the predicate of transitive active sentences must be prefixed with *meN-*, not base verbs or imperative/command verbs, such as *use*. Vocabulary mastery is an important foundation for individuals in conveying their ideas. However, this mastery needs to be supported by an understanding of the appropriate language structure. In addition, one's ability to choose words according to the context of a particular situation from a variety of options is also the most important thing in language. The next error is the use of quotation marks ("...") at the end of direct quotes, similar to double commas (,). This is not following the guidelines for the use of quotation marks ("..."), which are used to enclose direct quotations from speech, manuscripts, or other written materials.

Data 3

SUKSESKAN
TURNAMEN SEPAK BOLA
KAPOLRES LHOKSEUMAWE CUP 2025
DALAM RANGKA
HARI BHAYANGKARA KE - 79
DI IKUTI OLEH 16 CLUB TERBAIK
DARI LHOKSEUMAWE, ACEH UTARA, ACEH TIMUR, BIREUEN, SIGLI & BANDA ACEH

The billboard located on Banda Aceh-Medan Street, Batuphat Timur Village, Muara Satu District, Lhokseumawe City, contains several linguistic inaccuracies involving the use of the preposition *di*, hyphenation, and foreign lexical items. The preposition *di* was incorrectly separated in the phrase *di ikuti*, which should be written as a single unit *diikuti* when functioning as a prefix rather than as a preposition. In Indonesian orthography, *di-* as a prefix is always attached to the base word, typically forming a passive verb, as in *dibaca* or *dikerjakan*. Conversely, *di* as a preposition, denoting location or direction, is written separately from the following word, as in *di sekolah* or

di rumah. Moeliono (1987) identifies three features of *di-* as a prefix: (1) it is written together with the base word, (2) it precedes a verb, and (3) it forms a passive verb. In contrast, *di* as a preposition (1) is written separately, (2) indicates a spatial or locative relationship, and (3) is followed by a noun. Consistent with the Ministry of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas, 2009), prepositions such as *di*, *ke*, and *dari* are written separately, except in lexicalized forms such as *kepada* and *daripada*. Another error involves the use of a hyphen in the phrase *Hari Bhayangkara ke - 79*, in which a space is incorrectly inserted between the hyphen and adjacent elements. According to the *Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (EBI) guidelines, hyphens are used to connect different elements, including between capital letters and lowercase letters or between letters and numbers, as in *peringkat ke-2*. The observed form in the billboard does not conform to the nine prescribed rules for hyphenation in the Fifth Edition of EBI.

The billboard also displays inappropriate use of a foreign lexical item in the word *cup*, a loanword from English meaning “trophy” or “tournament.” In Indonesian, the standard equivalent is *piala*. Thus, the term *cup* should be replaced with *piala*, except in cases where the English term forms part of an official, untranslated name, such as the *FA Cup*. A correct and standardized revision would be *Piala Kapolres Lhokseumawe 2025*. Overall, the errors identified in this billboard reflect a broader pattern of nonstandard grammar and orthography in outdoor media publications in Lhokseumawe, as evidenced by deviations from the rules of the Fifth Edition of EBI. These include incorrect punctuation, word formation, abbreviation usage, and foreign word adaptation. Similar findings are reported by Yesi Arinti (2024) in a study on linguistic errors in banners in Selebar District, Bengkulu City. That research documented frequent violations of the *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia* (PUEBI) in punctuation, abbreviations, and the misuse of hyphens, periods, and slashes, which were found to hinder message comprehension. The principal distinction between the two studies lies in their temporal and geographical scope, as well as their research objects—Arinti’s focus was on banners in Bengkulu, whereas the present study examines billboards in Lhokseumawe. Nonetheless, both studies share a thematic similarity in analyzing orthographic errors in the use of Indonesian.

Errors in Writing Foreign Terms on Billboard Publications in Lhokseumawe City

Data 4

WATERBOOM
TAMAN MANGAT CERIA
Mengucapkan
SELAMAT & SUKSES
HARI BHAYANGKARA 79
“POLRI PRESISI MENGABDI UNTUK MASYARAKAT GUNA
MENDUKUNG PRIORITAS NASIONAL”
01 JULI 1946 – 01 JULI 2025

The billboard located on Merdeka Timur Street, Mon Geudong, Banda Sakti District, Lhokseumawe City, was produced by a private individual as a congratulatory message for the 79th anniversary of Bhayangkara Day. The lexical composition of the billboard includes instances of code mixing, specifically the insertion of Acehnese vocabulary without adaptation to Indonesian. As noted by Muntazar et al. (2024), habitual language use plays a significant role in influencing code mixing, with regional languages often employed in interpersonal interactions. In this case, the billboard contains the Acehnese word *mangat*, which, according to the *Kamus Aceh–Indonesia* (1985:573), the word “mangat” means such as “pleasant,” “enjoyable,” “easy,” “so that,” or “in order to.” The use of local language in public outdoor media—particularly in spaces visited by a national audience—without explanation or appropriate transliteration, is considered a form of linguistic error in the formal or public context. In official and general public communication, such local elements should either be replaced with standardized Indonesian equivalents or accompanied by explanatory notes.

A more appropriate revision of *mangat* in this context would include an explanatory gloss on the billboard or promotional medium. If the intent is to preserve *mangat* as a marker of cultural identity, it should be followed by a clarifying parenthesis or an added definition to ensure comprehension by all readers. Alternatively, if *mangat* functions as an official name or distinctive local brand, its usage remains permissible but should still be accompanied by contextual information to ensure communicative clarity at the national level and to prevent misinterpretation as a spelling error. Another instance of nonstandard lexical usage is the term *waterboom*. In Indonesian, the appropriate equivalents are *taman wisata air* or *wahana air*. The term *waterboom* is not standard English but rather a trademark originally popularized by Waterboom Bali, later generalized in Indonesia to refer to water parks. Within the

framework of standardized Indonesian, however, this term is inappropriate for use in formal writing or government publications. Recommended corrections include avoiding the term *waterboom* in official documents, academic writing, or government signage, and replacing it with the Indonesian equivalents *taman wisata air* or *wahana air*, in line with the spirit of Indonesian language preservation as stipulated in Law No. 24 of 2009.

Data 5

OPEN TURNAMEN
SEPAK BOLA
KAPOLRES LHOKSEUMAWE CUP 2025
DALAM RANGKA
HARI BHAYANGKARA KE-79

The billboard located on T. Hamzah Bendahara Street, Simpang Empat, Banda Sakti District, Lhokseumawe City, contains nonstandard usage of foreign lexical items, specifically English words such as *open* and *cup*. These terms should be replaced with their established Indonesian equivalents, as official translations are available in the national language. In this context, *open* refers to “open to the public,” indicating that participation is permitted without special requirements. For outdoor public media, it is preferable to prioritize Indonesian equivalents to ensure compliance with linguistic norms and to avoid errors in the integration of foreign elements. The insertion of *open* in an otherwise Indonesian sentence constitutes unassimilated code mixing, violating the principle of standardized language usage in formal media, public billboards, and official documents, as stipulated in Article 36(3) of Law No. 24 of 2009 on the Flag, Language, State Emblem, and National Anthem. Where the use of a foreign term is unavoidable—such as in the case of an established brand or event name—it should be accompanied by the Indonesian equivalent, presented either in quotation marks or italics, to preserve both communicative clarity and regulatory compliance. Appropriate revisions for the current case include replacing *open* with *terbuka* and substituting *cup* with *piala* unless *cup* is part of a recognized, untranslated official name.

Analysis of this case reflects a broader pattern in outdoor media across Lhokseumawe, where foreign language use—particularly English and Acehnese—appears alongside Indonesian without proper assimilation or adaptation. This indicates that many language users have yet to fully internalize the conventions governing foreign word usage following Indonesian linguistic norms. The phenomenon reveals a persistent tendency toward code mixing in public language use, which risks undermining the position of Indonesian in its sociolinguistic domain. The influence of both regional languages and English is increasingly evident in the linguistic practices of Indonesian society, especially in formal registers. Amir (2014:4) observes that English is now more frequently incorporated into daily conversations, particularly among urban populations, shaping a social paradigm that cannot be overlooked. Mahmud (2014:4) argues that such conditions underscore the importance of the *Gerakan Cinta Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Language Love Movement), especially among younger generations, to reaffirm the necessity of Indonesian in all forms of communication—spoken and written—particularly in outdoor media such as advertisements, informational boards, and billboards. The use of Indonesian in public spaces is regulated by law, and as Sugono (2008:3) affirms, correct and proper usage is grounded in legal considerations, one of which is Law No. 24 of 2009, which establishes the statutory framework for maintaining the primacy of the Indonesian language in official and public communication.

Relevance of Research Findings to Indonesian Language Learning Materials

The present study, which analyzed instances of Indonesian language errors in billboard writing in Lhokseumawe City, revealed a range of deviations involving word formation, abbreviations, punctuation, and the use of foreign elements, notably English and Acehnese. These errors were observed across nearly all outdoor media examined. While such deviations can be readily identified by individuals with a strong command of Indonesian linguistic norms, they often go unnoticed by those with limited awareness of the relevant grammatical rules. Writing for public outdoor media requires mastery of *Ejaan yang Disempurnakan* (EYD, Enhanced Spelling System) and established guidelines for the incorporation of loanwords. As emphasized by Muntazar and Hajar (2025), writing activities should cultivate critical thinking skills, foster the construction of logical arguments, and demonstrate grammatical accuracy alongside syntactic coherence. The principles of EYD have been introduced since the primary school level, with the rules on loanword usage typically taught in junior and senior high school. At the tertiary level, Indonesian language learning forms part of the *Mata Kuliah Pengembangan Kepribadian* (MPK, Personality Development Courses) as regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 on National Standards for Higher Education.

This course not only develops linguistic competence but also seeks to strengthen national identity, intellectual capacity, and critical thinking within academic and professional contexts. Its learning objectives include: (1) enhancing proficiency in spoken and written Indonesian following EYD; (2) fostering a positive attitude toward Indonesian as a marker of national identity; (3) developing the ability to use Indonesian as a tool for scientific reasoning and professional communication; and (4) reinforcing the role of Indonesian in addressing the challenges of globalization. Instructional content covers a wide scope, from the functions of Indonesian and linguistic norms to academic language skills, language varieties, and techniques for writing scientific papers.

Indonesian language instruction in higher education is not a mere repetition of school-level content, but rather an advancement toward developing academic and critical thinking abilities. The language is positioned as an intellectual tool essential for reasoning, communication, and scholarly writing. Strengthening this aspect of instruction is expected to produce graduates who possess pride, awareness, and competence in the professional use of Indonesian. Based on the study's findings and an analysis of the Indonesian language course syllabus in higher education, the results hold strong pedagogical relevance, particularly for topics involving EYD, word formation, and loanword usage. The research serves as a valuable reference source, documenting various forms of linguistic errors—spanning spelling, abbreviations, and foreign word application—supported by authentic examples. The inclusion of such real-world cases in teaching materials can enhance student engagement by enabling direct analysis and observation of authentic data. This evidence-based approach holds the potential to drive innovation in Indonesian language instruction and increase learning enthusiasm among students. In alignment with efforts to enhance learning motivation, Muslimin (2011) advocates for creating learning environments beyond the classroom by utilizing diverse contexts such as natural surroundings, cultural settings, and industrial spaces. While Muslimin's research is oriented toward pedagogical solutions and the present study focuses on error analysis, both contribute significantly to the enrichment of Indonesian language education in higher learning contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study, which examined linguistic errors in billboard publications across Lhokseumawe City, yielded several key findings. First, the most frequently observed errors in outdoor media involved aspects of word formation, including the use of inappropriate diction, incorrect application of the preposition *di*, and inconsistencies in abbreviation writing. Second, instances of improper use of foreign elements were identified, characterized by the mixing of English and Acehnese within Indonesian phrases—an infraction against Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the use of the Indonesian language in public domains. Third, the findings of this research demonstrate strong pedagogical relevance as instructional material or supplementary references for Indonesian language courses at the tertiary level, particularly in topics such as the *Ejaan yang Disempurnakan* (EYD, Enhanced Spelling System), word formation, abbreviations, and loanword usage.

To reduce linguistic errors in writing, several recommendations can be implemented by relevant stakeholders. First, the development of error-based learning modules containing authentic examples of language inaccuracies from media or academic contexts would provide a practical and relatable learning resource. Second, students should enhance their understanding of linguistic norms through literacy development, regular use of the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), and more intensive mastery of EYD principles. Third, local governments should organize targeted training for public officials, media editors, and public relations personnel to improve their competence in preparing standardized Indonesian-language documents, avoiding code-mixing, and accurately identifying errors in spelling, structure, and diction. Through a comprehensive strategy encompassing strict regulatory enforcement, sustained public education, professional development for educators, and continuous monitoring of public spaces, Indonesian can be further developed as an intellectual language, a legal medium, and a dignified national means of communication in the era of globalization. The implementation of such policies is expected to strengthen the role of Indonesian as a national language capable of competing and thriving in the face of global challenges.

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