Writing Language in the Public Space of Universitas Andalas

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ABSTRACT

This study examines written language errors in public spaces at Universitas Andalas as a response to a linguistic paradox: the international recognition of Indonesian—marked by its designation as an official language of UNESCO—and persistently disordered domestic practices, particularly within higher education contexts. The objectives of the study are to identify the forms and degrees of dominance of linguistic errors and to interpret their implications for language practices and institutional image. Employing a descriptive–analytical approach, the study applies error analysis to 30 data sources containing 151 linguistic errors. The results reveal that orthographic errors are the most dominant, accounting for 73.51% of all cases, followed by lexical choice errors (9.93%), sentence-level errors (5.30%), logical errors (4.64%), and phrase- and clause-level errors, each comprising 3.31%. These findings suggest that linguistic issues in public spaces are predominantly microstructural and technical in nature, reflecting a low adherence to the norms of written Indonesian. This phenomenon suggests a lack of normative awareness among educated communities. The study recommends strengthening the role of academic institutions in monitoring language use in public spaces and utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in conjunction with human linguistic expertise to enhance the quality of public texts, thereby contributing to the elevation of Indonesian as a national language.

INTRODUCTION

The designation of Indonesian as an official language of the UNESCO General Conference constitutes a significant achievement that strengthens the international standing of the national language both diplomatically and symbolically. Through the adoption of Resolution 42 C/28 at the 42nd General Conference held in Paris on 20 November 2023, Indonesian was formally established as one of the ten official languages of the UNESCO General Conference—alongside the six official languages of the United Nations (English, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, and Russian), as well as Hindi, Italian, and Portuguese (Sekretariat Kabinet, 2023; Nasrullah, 2024). This policy highlights the growing global recognition of the Indonesian language's influence, a development that recent scholarship has also interpreted as an indication of Indonesia's increasing linguistic soft power (Fathun et al., 2025).

Beyond its symbolic significance, this international recognition aligns with the growing global interest in learning Indonesian as a foreign language, known as Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA). According to data from the Center for Data and Information of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research,

and Technology (2021), the number of BIPA learners in Europe increased markedly from 29 individuals in 2015 to 1,690 in 2018, before declining due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparable programs have also been developed at a number of prestigious universities, including Leiden University, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) London, the University of Passau, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Taras Shevchenko University, as well as more than twenty-five higher education institutions in the United States, among them Yale University, Harvard University, Stanford University, Indiana University, and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (Ma'rufah & Arsanti, 2021; Audrey, Sari, & Mubarak, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the potential of Indonesian as an international language is supported by two interrelated factors: intralingual and extralingual. Intralingual factors include the sustainability and stability of the linguistic system—such as orthographic conventions and terminological guidelines—which ensure the normative legitimacy of Indonesian as an official language (Simanjuntak, 2018; Handoko et al., 2019). Extralingual factors, by contrast, are commonly associated with positive language attitudes among speakers and global enthusiasm for Indonesian (Handoko et al., 2019; Lopez, 2019). However, the validity of these extralingual factors warrants a critical reassessment, as empirical realities indicate that language attitudes among Indonesians tend to be problematic within the domestic context. These issues are reflected in low levels of linguistic pride, frequent code-mixing with foreign languages in everyday communication, and widespread noncompliance with linguistic norms in written language used in public spaces.

Developments in the global presence of Indonesians demonstrate that language functions as a strategic instrument in the domains of culture, the arts, and education—three core pillars of a nation's soft power, as articulated by Nye (2008). Strengthening the global position of Indonesian must therefore be accompanied by improvements in language attitudes and linguistic discipline at the national level, so that the language's influence is firmly rooted in the actual linguistic practices of its speakers. Indonesian society bears responsibility for using the national language properly and correctly across contexts, including in written form within formal and official public spaces. This responsibility is not merely administrative in nature; it carries cultural, social, and ideological implications for the sustainability of Indonesian as a dignified language within its own country. Orderly language use in the public domain is essential and requires adherence to linguistic norms encompassing orthography and punctuation, lexical choice, sentence structure and effectiveness, as well as cohesion and coherence at the paragraph and discourse levels.

As a national language that is exceptionally strong within the developing world (Errington, 1986), Indonesian has been formally taught since primary education and has consistently remained part of the national curriculum at all levels, from primary to tertiary. Consequently, all Indonesian citizens should, in principle, possess adequate linguistic competence and performance in Indonesian. As an official language, Indonesian must be used in accordance with established norms, particularly in written forms displayed in public spaces. Proper and correct use of Indonesian reflects disciplined thinking, compliance with linguistic norms, and a positive societal attitude toward national identity.

Universitas Andalas, as one of Indonesia's leading public universities and an autonomous legal entity public university (Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Badan Hukum, PTN-BH) since 31 August 2021, bears a heightened responsibility to realize norm-compliant linguistic practices. Moreover, Universitas Andalas offers an undergraduate (S-1) Indonesian Literature program that serves as a hub for education and the advancement of linguistic and literary studies within the Indonesian context. The existence of this program should constitute a substantial asset in supporting efforts to elevate the status of the national language within the university, including through its involvement in drafting and editing public texts displayed across the campus. Effective language use is crucial in outdoor and public media writing, as it directly impacts reader comprehension and the institution's image (Adisaputra & Ridwan, 2017). Unfortunately, empirical evidence

often indicates that such ideals have not been fully realized. In public spaces within higher education institutions—which should function as the vanguard of proper and correct Indonesian usage—various linguistic errors remain prevalent. As institutions responsible for the reproduction of scientific knowledge and intellectual culture, universities should serve as exemplars in upholding the quality of the national language.

When Indonesian is used carelessly—whether in terms of orthography, lexical choice, sentence structure, or discourse coherence—within institutions that ought to serve as models for society at large, the phenomenon must be taken seriously. Such practices risk diminishing public awareness of correct national language use and, ultimately, eroding the strategic value of Indonesian as a symbol of national identity and sovereignty. Linguistic quality in higher education thus serves as an indicator of the extent to which educational institutions contribute to safeguarding and elevating the national language as an integral component of national identity and sovereignty.

Careless language practices not only reflect weak mastery of linguistic norms but also signal a lack of awareness regarding the importance of elevating the national language. In academic contexts, particularly within higher education, effective writing ability constitutes a fundamental aspect of students' academic achievement (Basher, Elmenfi, & Gaibani, 2019; Mukattash, 1981). Academic writing requires precise, clear, effective, and norm-compliant written language skills. Furthermore, language functions as a means of accurately conveying messages from one individual to another (Rifkind, 1996; Taylor & Patankar, 2000; Kanki & Smith, 2001; Ma, Drury, & Marin, 2009). When Indonesian is not used appropriately in public outdoor media, the primary communicative function of language is disrupted, thereby undermining the effectiveness of information transmission.

Theoretically, this study is situated within the field of linguistic landscape research, which examines the visibility and presence of language in public spaces. Linguistic landscape studies encompass analyses of language in public signage, billboards, street names, commercial signs, and other forms of publicly accessible information. Errors in language use in public spaces indicate a failure to fulfill the informational function described by Landry and Bourhis (1997), as such texts do not convey information clearly, accurately, and effectively. In the context of this study, although bilingualism or multilingualism is not the primary focus, violations of linguistic norms nonetheless signify serious problems in public information management and the elevation of the national language. Taking all these considerations into account, this study aims to describe written language errors occurring in public spaces at Universitas Andalas, Limaumanih Campus, identify the factors influencing these errors, and propose recommendations as solutions for policy-makers at the relevant higher education institution. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for language management policies in public spaces, thereby strengthening the position of Indonesian as a dignified national language at Universitas Andalas.

METHODS

This study adheres to the linguistic norms and standards issued by the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, the institution responsible for developing the Indonesian language and fostering its use within the community. These standards include the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia 6th Edition* (*KBBI VI*), *Ejaan yang Disempurnakan 5th Edition* (*EYD V*), *Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia*, and *Pedoman Umum Pembentukan Istilah*. Collectively, these reference works serve as the normative basis for evaluating the accuracy of written Indonesian as used in public spaces at Universitas Andalas. Theoretically, this study draws upon established frameworks of error analysis proposed by several scholars. Corder (1973) conceptualizes error analysis as

comprising three stages: (1) data collection, which involves corpus selection, error identification, classification, and frequency counting; (2) data description, namely grammatical analysis of errors and their sources; and (3) data explanation, which accounts for the types and characteristics of the errors. Hubbard (1996) proposes a comparable classification encompassing corpus selection, error identification, categorization, and explanation. Ellis (1985) further elaborates this framework by outlining five steps: collecting samples of errors, identifying errors, explaining their causes, classifying them into categories, and evaluating errors in terms of severity and their impact on communication.

The object of this study consists of errors in written language forms found in public spaces. The research instruments include documentation in the form of photographs capturing linguistic errors, classification and analysis sheets, linguistic guidelines published by the badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa. Data were collected at Universitas Andalas, Limaumanih Campus, from February to August 2025. Each photograph containing one or more linguistic errors constitutes a data source, while the research data consist of the erroneous forms identified in the photographs. Error analysis was conducted based on classifications of orthography, lexical choice, phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, discourse, logic, and placement errors. This classification scheme adapts the framework proposed by Kotsyuk (2015) and is adjusted to the specific objectives of the present study.

Data collection was carried out by documenting written texts displayed in public spaces at Universitas Andalas, Limaumanih Campus, through photography. A single photograph may contain multiple errors; therefore, each photograph was treated as a data source. After data collection, each error was examined, classified according to its error type, and quantified to determine its percentage relative to the total number of errors identified. The classified data were then analyzed descriptively with reference to theories of linguistic error analysis. Given the substantial number of errors identified, this article presents only data that are relevant and representative of each error category. The findings are organized by error types rather than data sources to ensure a more systematic, focused, and accessible discussion.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study collected data from 30 sources distributed across various public spaces at Universitas Andalas and identified a total of 151 instances of written language errors. Each instance was classified into one of nine error categories. The quantitative distribution of these errors is presented in Table 1.

Type of Error	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Orthographic errors	111	73.51
Logical errors	7	4.64
Placement errors	0	0.00
Lexical choice errors	15	9.93
Phrase-level errors	5	3.31
Clause-level errors	5	3.31
Sentence-level errors	8	5.30
Paragraph-level errors	0	0.00
Discourse-level errors	0	0.00
Total	**151**	**100.00**

Table 1. Distribution of Linguistic Errors Identified in Public Written Texts at Andalas University

The distribution pattern indicates that orthographic errors constitute the most dominant category, with 111 cases accounting for 73.51% of the total data, thereby representing the largest contribution to the overall number of identified errors. In addition to orthographic errors, two other categories exhibit relatively

notable frequencies: lexical choice errors, with 15 cases (9.93%), and sentence-level errors, with 8 cases (5.30%). These two categories occupy the subsequent positions in the frequency distribution after orthographic errors, although the disparity between them and the dominant category remains substantial.

Categories with lower frequencies include logical errors (7 cases, 4.64%), phrase-level errors (5 cases, 3.31%), and clause-level errors (5 cases, 3.31%). These three categories indicate that errors involving internal semantic relations and mid-level syntactic structures occur only to a limited extent within the overall dataset. By contrast, no instances were found in the remaining three categories—namely, placement errors, paragraph-level errors, and discourse-level errors. The absence of findings in these categories suggests that, based on empirical data from the 30 sources examined, all identified errors are confined to the microstructural level of language rather than to the organization of information, paragraph coherence, or discourse continuity.
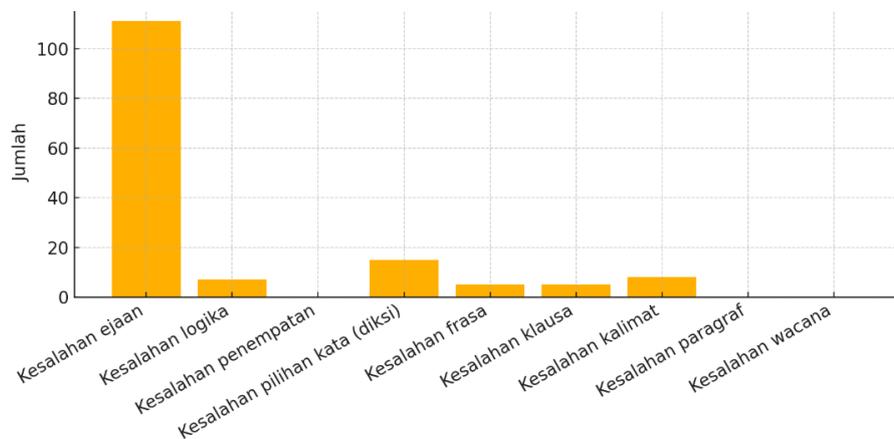

Figure 1. Distribution of Linguistic Errors by Type in Public Written Texts at Universitas Andalas

The distribution pattern is further visualized in Figure 1, which presents a bar chart to facilitate a more explicit comparison across error categories. This visualization highlights the markedly wide quantitative gap between the most dominant category and the remaining categories, particularly the striking disparity between orthographic errors and the category occupying the next highest frequency rank. This distributional imbalance further indicates that most of the identified errors pertain to surface-level aspects of written language, while issues related to macro-structural organization do not emerge in the examined data. Overall, the mean number of errors per source is 5.03, calculated by dividing the total of 151 cases by the 30 data sources. This mean value functions as a descriptive indicator of error density at each observation point, without implying evaluative judgment or further interpretation.

Beyond this general distribution, one of the most salient findings within the category of orthographic errors is the exceptionally high frequency of errors in the spelling of abbreviated academic titles in personal names. Of the 73 instances of academic title abbreviations identified across all data sources, 68 were misspelled. Consequently, the error rate within this subcategory reaches 93.15% of all instances of academic title abbreviation usage. When viewed within the broader orthographic category, these 68 cases account for 61.26% of the total 111 orthographic errors identified. Moreover, this subcategory alone contributes 45.03% of the entire set of 151 errors across all classifications examined in this study. These figures indicate that the most dominant orthographic errors in the corpus do not stem from general variation in spelling forms but are instead concentrated in a highly specific pattern, namely the spelling of abbreviated academic titles in proper names. In the following section, we present sample analyses based on error type classifications and their corresponding linguistic levels.

1.   Orthographic Errors

Examples of orthographic errors are evident in Figure 2. The photograph was taken on the ring road of Universitas Andalas, in front of the Faculty of Economics and Business. The sign reads *Kecepatan Maksimum Dalam Kampus 25Km / Jam*. This text contains at least two orthographic errors. First, the capitalization of the word *Dalam* is incorrect, as function words do not require capitalization unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence. Second, there is an error in spacing: the sequence *25Km* should be written as *25 Km*, while the slash (/) should not be preceded or followed by a space. When corrected in accordance with the rules stipulated in *EYD V*, the proper form of the text is *25 Km/Jam*.
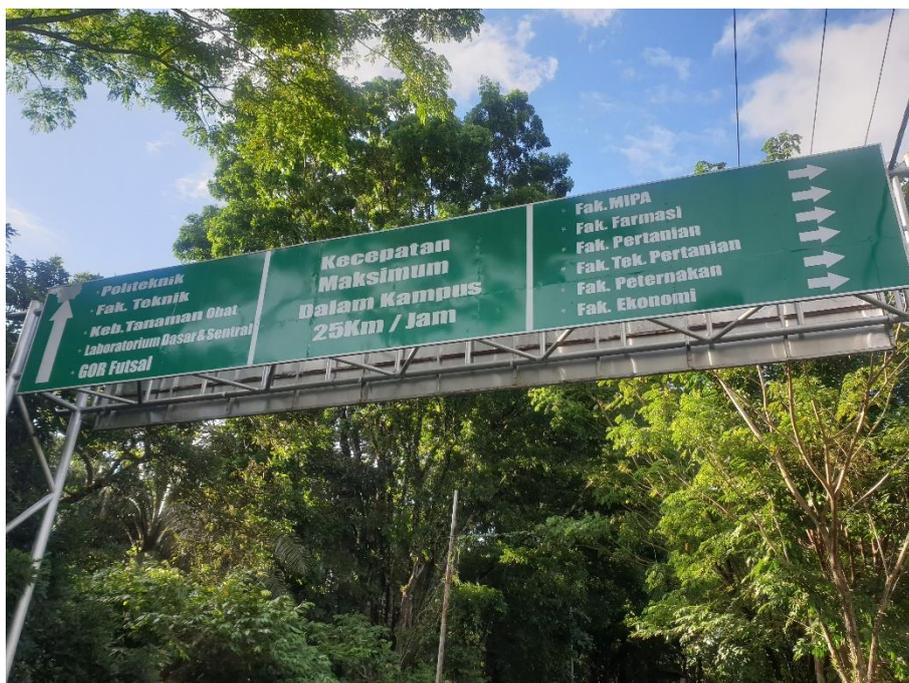

Figure 2. Directional Road Sign on the Ring Road in Front of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Andalas

Another example of an orthographic error is present in data collected from a banner located in the corridor between the Dean's Building and the Faculty of Humanities building at Universitas Andalas. The banner was intended to provide information and promotion regarding academic programs at various levels offered by the Faculty of Humanities. Although the substantive message remains comprehensible to the public, the linguistic errors present in the text indicate negligence toward officially established language norms as codified in *EYD V*. This is particularly problematic because the banner represents a higher education institution—specifically, a faculty devoted to language and humanities studies—which is ethically and academically obligated to demonstrate norm-compliant linguistic practices.

Two orthographic errors were identified in this banner, both of which occurred repeatedly. First, there is incorrect spacing before the colon (:). According to orthographic rules, a space is permitted only after punctuation marks, not before them. This error recurs up to ten times. Referring to Corder (1973), such recurring errors can be classified as systematic errors resulting from lack of knowledge (errors), rather than momentary lapses (mistakes). Second, the omission of the hyphen (-) in abbreviations denoting higher education levels, such as *S1* and *S2*, constitutes another orthographic error. Under *EYD V*, a hyphen is mandatory when combining letters and numerals; therefore, the correct forms are *S-1* and *S-2*. Errors of this kind are commonly found in Indonesian academic contexts and are frequently reproduced without correction due to a lack of awareness of the applicable rules. Although such errors do not impede message

comprehension, they nevertheless diminish the institutional credibility of the issuing body. These errors are elementary in nature but carry significant ideological implications, as they reflect a lack of attentiveness on the part of educational institutions in implementing the official norms of the national language.

Figure 3. Academic Program Promotion Board at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas

Data collected from various banners and plaques across the Universitas Andalas indicate that errors in the writing of academic titles accompanying personal names constitute the most dominant error type. Of the 73 instances of names and academic titles identified, 68 cases—approximately 93.15%—exhibit incorrect application of orthographic rules governing title abbreviations. The writing of names and academic titles is explicitly regulated in *EYD V*, particularly in the chapter "Penggunaan Huruf", subsection "Huruf Kapital", point 22, which states that capital letters are used as the initial letters of abbreviated academic and professional titles, and in the chapter "Penggunaan Kata", subsection "Singkatan", point 1, which stipulates that abbreviations of personal names, titles, forms of address, or ranks must be followed by a period for each abbreviated element. Regardless of their position, names and titles must always end with a period (.). In this context, the period is an inherent component of the abbreviation itself, rather than a function of syntactic placement.

The prevalence of data related to names and academic titles arises from the fact that university banners and announcements almost invariably display the names of lecturers along with their titles, whether as moderators, speakers, panelists, committee chairs, or honorary guests. Within this context, the range of errors is highly varied, including omission of periods in abbreviations, inconsistent comma placement, and incorrect capitalization. For instance, one of the most frequently occurring cases involves the Rector of Universitas Andalas, whose name and titles appear in multiple incorrect variants, such as *H. Efa Yonnedi, SE., MPPM., Akt., CA., CRGP., Ph.D*; *H. Efa Yonnedi SE, MPPM, AKT, CA, CRGP, Ph.D*; *H. Efa Yonnedi, S.E., MPPM, AKT., CA., CRGP., Ph.D*; *H. Efa Yonnedi, SE., MPPM., Akt., CA., CRGP., Ph.D.*; and others. All of these forms violate the established rules. The correct form, according to *EYD V*, is *H. Efa Yonnedi, S.E., M.P.P.M., Akt., C.A., C.R.G.P., Ph.D*.

EYD V clearly regulates the writing of academic title abbreviations. First, each abbreviated element must be followed by a period without an intervening space. Second, only the initial letter of each abbreviated element is capitalized, while subsequent letters are written in lowercase. Third, each academic title element is separated by a comma followed by a space. For example, *S.Pd.* stands for *sarjana pendidikan*. The element *S.* represents *sarjana* and therefore uses only an initial capital letter, while *Pd.* represents *pendidikan* and follows the same capitalization rule. Frequently occurring errors appear to stem not only from carelessness but also from lack of knowledge regarding the full forms of the abbreviations used. The same principle applies to other degree abbreviations, such as *S.E.* (*sarjana ekonomi*), *S.T.* (*sarjana teknik*), *S.H.* (*sarjana hukum*), as well as *S.Ked.* (*sarjana kedokteran*), *S.Tr.* (*sarjana terapan*), and *S.Hum.* (*sarjana humaniora*).

Figure 4. Event Billboard Displayed on the Universitas Andalas Campus

Figure 4 displays the name and title *Dr. Malse Yulivestra, M.AP.* While the abbreviation *Dr.* is correctly written, the correctness of *M.AP* cannot be determined without identifying its full form. Identifying the full

form of an abbreviation is a prerequisite for accurate orthographic representation. Once it is established that the degree refers to *magister administrasi publik* (master of public administration), it becomes clear that *M.AP* is incorrect. The correct form is *M.A.P.*, as the abbreviation consists of three elements: *magister*, *administrasi*, and *publik*. Writing academic title abbreviations is indeed more complex than other orthographic issues, as it requires both attentiveness and knowledge of the underlying terminology. Without such knowledge, determining the correct form is difficult.

Additional orthographic errors are also identified in Figure 4. First, there is an incorrect use of the hyphen (-) to indicate a time range, as seen in *09.00 – 12.00 WIB*. According to *EYD V*, the correct punctuation for indicating a range is the em dash (—), written without spaces between the numerals and the punctuation mark. The correct form is *09.00—12.00 WIB*. This rule is specified in *EYD V*, chapter "Penggunaan Tanda Baca", subsection "Tanda Pisah", point 3. Second, errors also occur in the use of spacing before colons, as seen in *Moderator :* and *Lokasi :*. According to the rules, a colon should not be preceded by a space; thus, the correct forms are *Moderator:* and *Lokasi:*.

Figure 5. COVID-19 Health Protocol Banner

Figure 5 shows a banner installed in the corridor of the Faculty of Humanities building at Universitas Andalas. Based on its content, the banner is a remnant of the COVID-19 pandemic period. Although the pandemic has subsided, the banner remains displayed because its message is still considered relevant. The information structure of the banner consists of three main components: the authority issuing the appeal (*Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Andalas*), the contextual frame (*PROTOKOL KESEHATAN 3M*), and the core message (*DEKAN FIB UNAND MENGINGATKAN DISINI ADALAH AREA WAJIB MEMAKAI MASKER, WAJIB MENCUCI TANGAN, WAJIB MENJAGA JARAK*), followed by the appeal *MOHON SEMUA MEMATUHINYA*. From a typographic perspective, all text is written in capital letters. This choice is primarily stylistic and emphatic, and therefore does not constitute a violation of language norms. In general, the message conveyed by the banner is clear and communicative. However, from a prescriptive standpoint, there is a deviation in the writing of *DISINI* in the clause *DISINI ADALAH AREA*. This error pertains to the writing of prepositions in Indonesian. In this construction, *di* functions as a preposition indicating location and must therefore be written separately from the following word. The correct form is *DI SINI*.

The compounded form *DISINI* results in a structural error, as it incorrectly resembles the passive prefix *di-* attached to a verb, even though the corresponding active form *menyini* does not exist in Indonesian. *DI SINI* is a prepositional phrase. Errors of this kind are frequently encountered in public written texts and reflect a systematic confusion between the prepositional *di* and the passive prefix *di-*. In this context, the inability to distinguish between their morphological and syntactic functions indicates weak linguistic competence rather than a mere performance slip.
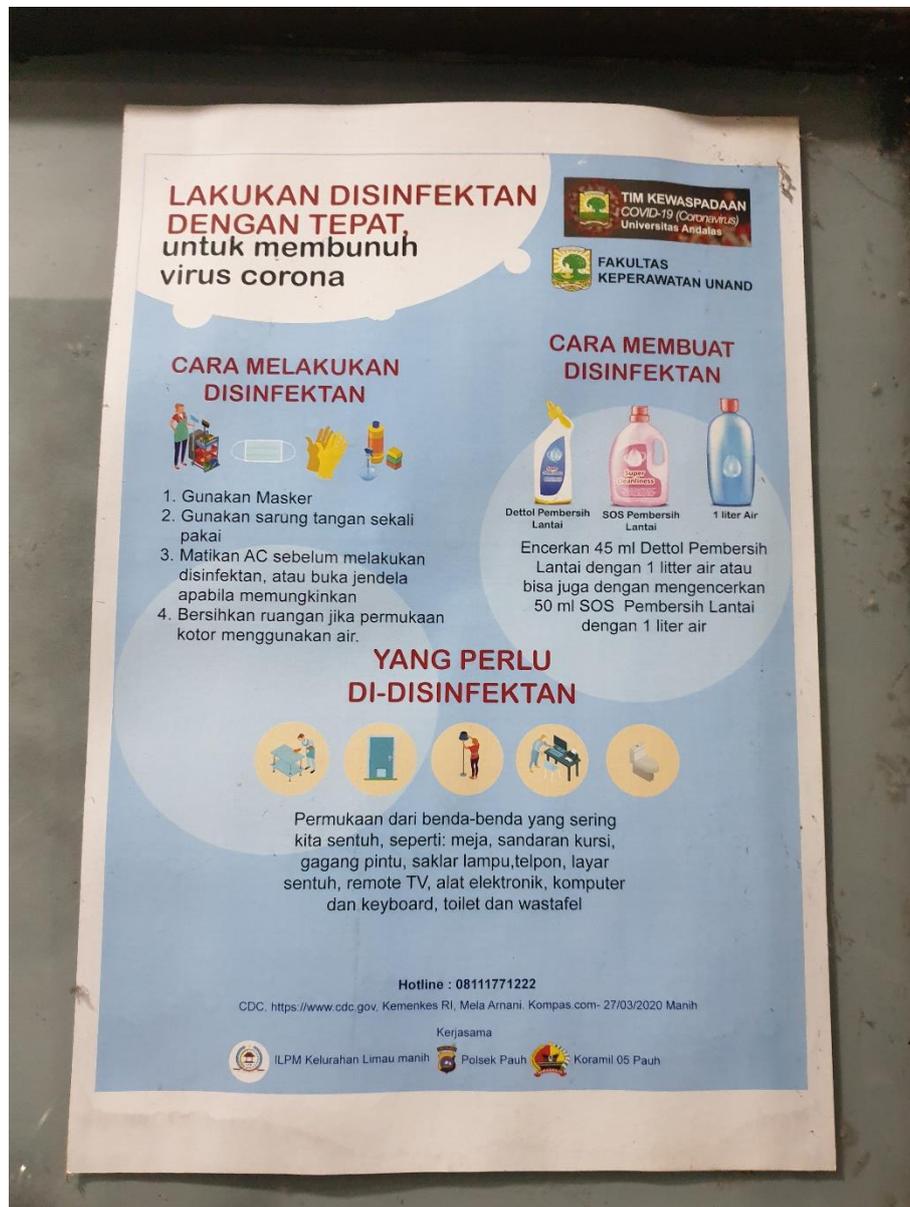

Figure 6. COVID-19 Disinfection Advisory Poster

Figure 6 also relates to COVID-19. The orthographic errors in this figure vary widely, encompassing capitalization, punctuation, and the use of standard lexical forms. In the sentence *LAKUKAN DISINFEKTAN DENGAN TEPAT, untuk membunuh virus corona*, stylistic inconsistency is evident. The first four words are written in capital letters, while the subsequent phrase is written in lowercase. This inconsistency reflects the absence of a clear writing standard. Although public-space texts are not bound by rigid capitalization rules, consistency remains a fundamental aspect of linguistic discipline. A similar pattern appears in the section *CARA MELAKUKAN DISINFEKTAN*, which consists of four bullet points. The first point uses capitalization for each word, whereas points two through four capitalize only the initial word. This variation further demonstrates inconsistency and a lack of attention to linguistic detail.

In addition to capitalization issues, punctuation errors are also prominent. In the list of instructions, only the final item ends with a period, while the preceding items do not. Given that each item begins with a capital letter, the presence of a period at the end of each sentence is mandatory to complete the construction. There is also incorrect comma usage after the word *disinfektan* in the sentence *Matikan AC sebelum melakukan disinfektan, atau buka jendela apabila memungkinkan*. The comma is unnecessary, as the two clauses are coordinated and do not require additional separation.

Another error appears in the instruction concerning the dilution of cleaning liquid: *Encerkan 45 ml Dettol Pembersih Lantai dengan 1 litter air...*. The word *litter* is clearly misspelled; the correct form is *liter*. Moreover, the sentence is not terminated with a period, violating the rules of complete sentence construction. Elsewhere, the phrase *YANG PERLU DI-DISINFEKTAN* incorrectly employs a hyphen. In Indonesian, a hyphen is not used with the prefix *di-* unless the form originates from a foreign language that has not been fully assimilated. Since *disinfektan* is already listed in *KBBI VI*, the use of a hyphen lacks normative justification. Another elementary error is the absence of a period at the end of a long sentence, such as *Permukaan dari benda-benda yang sering kita sentuh, seperti: meja, sandaran kursi, gagang pintu, saklar lampu,telpon, layar sentuh...*. Multiple errors are seen in this example: the sentence lacks a final period; there is no space after the comma in *lampu,telpon*; and the use of a colon after *seperti* is incorrect, as the word already functions as a relational marker and does not require additional punctuation. At the bottom of the leaflet, the form *Kerjasama* also appears, which is nonstandard. As specified in *KBBI VI*, the correct standard form is *kerja sama*, written as two separate words.

2.   Logical Errors

Figure 7 shows a banner installed at the Faculty of Law, adjacent to KOPIDNT. The banner displays the phrase *KHUSUS PARKIR RODA EMPAT* (Four-Wheel Parking Only). At first glance, the message appears straightforward, namely that the parking area is intended exclusively for specific vehicles. However, upon closer examination, the phrasal construction contains a logical error that prevents the intended meaning from being conveyed accurately. The banner is, in fact, meant to indicate that the area is reserved for users operating four-wheeled vehicles, such as cars, and that other vehicles, including motorcycles or three-wheeled vehicles, are not permitted to use the parking space. Yet, because the text refers only to *roda empat* (four wheels), it logically suggests that the parking area is designated for four individual wheels rather than for vehicles. This wording invites an unintended interpretation, as if the space were meant for placing four separate wheels within each marked parking line. Such phrasing results in referential ambiguity, namely, the lack of clarity regarding the object being referred to. The phrase *roda empat* in this construction fails to fulfill the informational function that public-space language is expected to perform, because the core referent of the message is not stated explicitly. To correct this error, the appropriate formulation should be *KHUSUS PARKIR KENDARAAN RODA EMPAT* (Parking for Four-Wheeled Vehicles Only). The addition of the word *kendaraan* (vehicles) clarifies the referent and eliminates the potential for ambiguity. In doing so, the informational function of language in public space is restored, and the text no longer risks misleading reasoning or erroneous interpretation.

Figure 7. Parking Area Banner

Figure 8. Banner about Keeping Personal Belongings Safe

A similar logical error is also evident in Figure 8. The warning sign in Figure 8 is installed in the rear parking area of the Central Library of Universitas Andalas, an area that, at the time of documentation, was predominantly used by two-wheeled vehicles. The text printed on the sign reads *DILARANG MENINGGALKAN BARANG BARANG BERHARGA DI AREA PARKIR* (Do not leave valuable items in the parking area). In addition to the orthographic error in the reduplicated form *barang barang*, which should be written as *barang-barang*, the logical flaw in the text may lead to the interpretation that the prohibition concerns the act of placing valuable items physically on the surface of the parking area, such as on the ground or asphalt. In fact, the intended message is that users should not leave valuable belongings inside or on their parked vehicles. This type of ambiguity constitutes a logical error in language use that undermines message clarity, particularly in public-space texts that are expected to be direct and concise. From the perspective of public-

space communication, warning signs should be brief, explicit, and free from potential double interpretation. The original sentence is relatively long, inefficient, and fails to specify the inside of the vehicle as the intended referent. A more concise and communicative alternative would therefore be preferable, such as *jangan tinggalkan barang berharga di dalam kendaraan* or *pastikan tidak ada barang berharga yang ditinggalkan di kendaraan*.

3.   Lexical Choice Errors

Figure 6 contains the clause *LAKUKAN DISINFEKTAN DENGAN TEPAT*, which warrants critical examination. The problem in this clause lies in the lexical choice of *disinfektan*. According to *KBBI VI*, *disinfektan* is a noun referring to '*bahan kimia (seperti lisol, kreolin) yang digunakan untuk mencegah terjadinya infeksi atau pencemaran oleh jasad renik; obat untuk membasmi kuman penyakit*'. This definition makes it clear that *disinfektan* denotes a substance or object, not a process or action. However, in the clause under discussion, *disinfektan* is treated as though it were a noun representing an activity or action. Grammatically, the predicate *lakukan* (perform/do) requires an object denoting an activity or process, rather than a concrete entity. In other words, a transitive imperative construction of this type necessitates an object in the form of a nominalized verb that represents a process, not a noun that refers to a material object.

The more appropriate term in this construction is *disinfeksi* (disinfection), which *KBBI VI* defines as '*pemusnahan bakteri patogen, biasanya dengan bahan kimia antiseptik* (the destruction of pathogenic bacteria, usually by means of antiseptic chemical substances'. Accordingly, the grammatically correct form is *Lakukan disinfeksi dengan tepat* (Perform disinfection properly). If the term *disinfektan* is retained, the grammatically acceptable construction would be *Lakukan penyemprotan disinfektan dengan tepat* (Perform disinfectant spraying properly). In this formulation, the noun *disinfektan* is preserved but is accompanied by the verbal noun *penyemprotan* (spraying), thereby rendering the construction both logical and grammatically well-formed.

In addition to this issue of lexical choice, other errors are also identified, namely the use of nonstandard lexical forms such as *telpon, remote,* and *keyboard*. In standard Indonesian, these words should be written as *telepon, remot,* and *kibor* (or *papan tik*), respectively.

4.   Phrase-Level Errors

Figure 9 displays a sign mounted on the third floor of the Faculty of Humanities at Universitas Andalas. Structurally, the phrase *RUANG SMART CLASSROOM* combines elements of Indonesian and English in an ineffective manner. The first error arises from the combination of the Indonesian word *ruang* (room) with the English phrase *smart classroom*. Such a combination results in a phrase that violates the principle of structural consistency within a single language. The second error follows logically from the first, namely redundancy or pleonasm. The phrase ruang *smart classroom* contains two lexical items—*ruang* and *room*—that refer to the same entity. Semantically, the two words share identical meanings, differing only in their language of origin. This type of repetition is superfluous, rendering the phrase inefficient and lacking in communicative strength. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) refer to this type of error as double marking, that is, the redundant marking of a single meaning that should be sufficiently expressed by a single linguistic element.

Figure 9. Room Name Plaque

The third error pertains to sociolinguistic context and language policy. The use of a hybrid English–Indonesian structure in public signage within Indonesian higher education institutions reflects a lack of respect for Indonesian as the national and official language. In accordance with Law No. 24 of 2009, Indonesian must be prioritized in public-space texts. The practice exemplified by the wording *RUANG SMART CLASSROOM* is therefore inconsistent with this mandate.

The term *smart classroom* can, in fact, be appropriately rendered in Indonesian as *ruang kelas pintar*, analogous to the established translation of *smartphone* as *telepon pintar*. This equivalence not only ensures linguistic consistency but also enriches the Indonesian lexicon with terms that are more contextual and communicative. The error in *RUANG SMART CLASSROOM* can thus be situated within three principal dimensions: a phrase-level error resulting from code mixing, a semantic error in the form of pleonasm, and a sociolinguistic error reflecting the marginalization of Indonesian in public space. The wording on the sign should therefore be revised to *Ruang Kelas Pintar* in Indonesian. If bilingual presentation is indeed required, the signage should adopt a parallel format, with *Ruang Kelas Pintar* followed by *Smart Classroom*, positioning Indonesian above English to reflect the appropriate linguistic hierarchy.

5.   Sentence-Level Errors

Figure 5 illustrates a problem related to linguistic construction or sentence structure. This issue is evident in the sentence *DISINI ADALAH AREA WAJIB MEMAKAI MASKER, WAJIB MENCUCI TANGAN, WAJIB MENJAGA JARAK*. Although the message is visually presented in bullet points to enhance clarity, the text constitutes a complete sentence. From a structural perspective, however, the construction contains errors that merit attention.

The sentence *DISINI ADALAH AREA WAJIB MEMAKAI MASKER, WAJIB MENCUCI TANGAN, WAJIB MENJAGA JARAK* is problematic in terms of grammar and effectiveness. First, the use of the copula *adalah* is inappropriate. In Indonesian, *adalah* is conventionally used to link a subject with a nominal predicate, as in *Bahasa Indonesia adalah bahasa persatuan* (Indonesian is the language of unity). In this case, *adalah* is redundant because the predicate is already sufficiently expressed by the nominal phrase *area wajib memakai masker, wajib mencuci tangan, dan wajib menjaga jarak* without the need for a linking element.

Second, in terms of efficiency, the sentence can be made more concise without loss of meaning. For instance, it may be reformulated as *Di sini wajib memakai masker, mencuci tangan, dan menjaga jarak*. This version is substantially more effective and economical. In the context of public-space texts such as banners or plaques, concise, clear, and direct sentences are more communicative for readers.

When analyzed in terms of syntactic functions, the sentence *DISINI ADALAH AREA WAJIB MEMAKAI MASKER, WAJIB MENCUCI TANGAN, WAJIB MENJAGA JARAK* can be described as follows. *Di sini* functions as a locative adverbial, *adalah* serves as a copular predicate, while *area wajib memakai masker, wajib mencuci tangan, wajib menjaga jarak* constitutes a nominal phrase functioning as the subject. The sentence contains neither an object nor a complement. The resulting structure is Adv–P–S. However, this configuration appears awkward because the subject occurs at the end of the sentence after the copula, whereas standard Indonesian more commonly employs an S–P–Adv structure.

By contrast, in the alternative sentence *Di sini wajib memakai masker, mencuci tangan,* dan *menjaga jarak*, *di sini* functions as a locative adverbial, *wajib memakai, mencuci,* dan *menjaga* operate as verbal predicates, and *masker, tangan,* and *jarak* function as objects. The subject is implicit, namely the readers or users of the area. The resulting structure is Adv–P–O. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that although the original sentence remains comprehensible, it is neither effective, economical, nor optimally communicative. The use of the copula *adalah* in this context constitutes a case of misselection (Corder, 1973; James, 1998), as the item selected does not correspond to the required syntactic function, while the formation of the phrase *area wajib memakai masker* reflects misformation, as it does not conform to the standard patterns of phrase construction in Indonesian.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that written language errors in the public spaces of Universitas Andalas predominantly occur at the micro level, particularly in orthography. The dominance of orthographic errors suggests that the principal issue in the use of Indonesian in public spaces does not lie in syntactic complexity, semantic relations, or logical accuracy, but rather in the most elementary technical aspects that should be readily "visible to the naked eye" in *EYD V*. In this context, orthography should constitute the most easily controlled linguistic level, as it is visual, explicit, and verifiable against official guidelines. The fact that errors are instead concentrated at this level indicates the presence of a more fundamental problem than merely individual limitations in linguistic competence.

The low level of compliance with orthographic norms in written public media reflects weak awareness of the national language standards. From a linguistic landscape perspective, language in public spaces functions not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of authority, order, and institutional legitimacy (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy, 2006). Consequently, language errors on nameplates, directional signs, institutional banners, and similar media serve as indicators of deficient linguistic responsibility in spaces that symbolize the state, institutions, and formal values.

The absence of errors at the paragraph and discourse levels in the data should not be interpreted as evidence of well-maintained macrostructural coherence. Rather, this phenomenon is more appropriately understood as a consequence of the characteristics of public-space texts, which are generally brief, fragmentary, and do not allow for extended message development. The lack of macro-level errors, therefore, is not an indicator of high linguistic quality, but rather reflects the inherent structural limitations of the texts themselves. Precisely in such contexts, micro-level accuracy—especially in orthography—becomes crucial, as every linguistic element displayed directly carries semantic weight and institutional image.

These findings reveal a striking linguistic paradox. On the one hand, Indonesian has attained global recognition through its designation as one of the official languages in UNESCO forums. On the other hand, in the domestic sphere, even within higher education institutions, its use remains careless. This paradox underscores that symbolic recognition at the global level does not automatically translate into language elevation at the local level. The national language may be celebrated in policy rhetoric yet remain degraded in everyday practice due to the absence of concrete mechanisms for supervision and guidance.

Another significant phenomenon is the tendency to mix Indonesian and English within a single construction, as exemplified by *RUANG SMART CLASSROOM*. Such hybrid usage produces awkward phrasal structures that violate the syntactic and semantic principles of both languages. The logical boundaries of the construction become blurred: it is unclear whether *smart* functions as an adjective modifying *classroom*, or whether the entire phrase is intended as an Indonesian equivalent. This ambiguity ultimately obscures the message and reduces communicative effectiveness. This phenomenon can be understood as a manifestation of symbolic language use, in which language is employed not for semantic clarity but to project images of modernity, prestige, and cosmopolitanism (Bourdieu, 1991; Pennycook, 2007; Kramsch, 2013).

Figure 10. Tempat Uji Kompetensi Signage

Rather than strengthening the message, such practices have detrimental effects on linguistic coherence and structural integrity. If the use of English is indeed intended to emphasize an international outlook, bilingual principles should be applied fully and consistently. An example of good practice can be seen in the signage *TEMPAT UJI KOMPETENSI (TUK)*, accompanied by its English equivalent *COMPETENCY TEST PLACE*. The placement of Indonesian at the top in a larger font size, with English positioned below in a smaller font, conveys a clear semiotic message that prioritizes, honors, and elevates the national language without negating the functional role of a foreign language. From the perspective of visual semiotics, layout and typography function as markers of value hierarchy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). However, this symbolic consistency becomes problematic when, within the same space, other plaques appear in English only, thereby producing ideologically contradictory messages.

Considering the data, several factors contributing to written language errors in the public spaces of Universitas Andalas can be identified. The first is a lack of understanding of written Indonesian norms, as

evidenced by the prevalence of orthographic errors. This lack of understanding cannot be reduced solely to individual failure, but must be examined within the broader framework of language policy. To what extent are the products of the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa effectively disseminated to the public? Have the digital platforms developed by the agency reached educated segments of Indonesian society? Do universities have operational policies to control language use in their public spaces? In this regard, institutional authority possesses substantial power to shape an orderly and dignified linguistic landscape. The second factor is indifference toward the Indonesian language. Given that Indonesian has been taught since primary education, careless written usage in public spaces cannot be separated from an apathetic attitude toward the national language. The government and higher education institutions must therefore make greater efforts to restore awareness that proper and correct language use in public spaces constitutes a responsibility toward national identity.

The elevation of Indonesian in the public spaces of higher education institutions can be pursued through several strategic measures. First, Indonesian Literature programs should be empowered as linguistic partners in the production of all public-space texts. Second, the use of artificial intelligence–based technologies can assist in editing orthography and grammar. However, technology must not be positioned as a substitute for human competence. Artificial intelligence operates algorithmically and lacks intuition, linguistic sensibility, and contextual sensitivity. Accordingly, collaboration between human intelligence and artificial intelligence represents the ideal model for language elevation in the digital era: technology ensures technical precision, while humans safeguard semantic appropriateness and the human dimension of language.

Linguistic issues in public spaces ultimately reflect collective awareness of national identity. Indonesian will not truly attain dignity in the eyes of the world if, within its own homeland, it continues to be treated carelessly. Global recognition of Indonesian loses substantive meaning when the community of its own speakers has not yet positioned it with due respect in the most visible public spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that written language errors in public spaces at Universitas Andalas do not fundamentally obstruct the substance of the intended messages, yet they nonetheless signal weak institutional awareness of linguistic accuracy and correctness. Most of of the errors identified occur in the domains of spelling and orthography, which constitute the largest proportion of the overall dataset. This condition suggests that fundamental aspects of the Indonesian written language—elements that should already be ingrained in the academic habitus within higher education—continue to be neglected. In addition, several logical errors were also identified, posing a considerable disturbance for readers who possess heightened sensitivity to linguistic structure and meaning.

Such shortcomings are particularly ironic given that Universitas Andalas is an autonomous public university (PTN-BH) that hosts an Indonesian Literature program, which should bear moral and intellectual responsibility for the preservation and elevation of the Indonesian language. As a site for the production and reproduction of scientific knowledge, higher education institutions ought to serve as exemplars of proper and correct written language practices. Inattention in the management of public texts risks diminishing the institutional image as a representation of intellectual rigor and academic excellence. When written language practices within universities appear careless and detached from normative order, institutional credibility in the public eye is correspondingly undermined.

Accuracy and correctness in written language should no longer constitute a challenge for higher education institutions, particularly in an era of advanced technology that provides a wide range of tools to support the production of norm-compliant and reader-friendly public texts. Accordingly, negligence in managing written language in public spaces reflects a lack of institutional commitment to elevating the national language—the state language and a unifying symbol of the nation—within spaces that themselves symbolize intellectual identity. Moreover, the various errors identified in this study exhibit repetitive patterns that appear to have persisted over time without reflective or systematic efforts at correction.

In this context, a concrete step that can be undertaken is the involvement of human resources from the Indonesian Literature program in every stage of public-text production, including planning, editing, and linguistic evaluation. Such collaboration would not only enhance the linguistic quality of the university's public spaces but also strengthen the social and intellectual functions of Indonesian within the academic sphere.

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