

LANGUAGE ERRORS IN TIKTOK CONTENT CAPTIONS

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Abstrak

Pertumbuhan pesat TikTok sebagai platform media sosial populer telah memengaruhi praktik penggunaan bahasa tulis, khususnya dalam penulisan caption yang bersifat informal dan spontan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan menganalisis kesalahan berbahasa dalam caption TikTok yang dibuat oleh kreator konten Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan data berupa caption TikTok yang dapat diakses secara publik, yang dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan berbahasa dominan meliputi redundansi, kesalahan gramatis, kesalahan ejaan, dan ketidakkonsistenan semantik. Kesalahan tersebut merupakan pelanggaran terhadap kaidah bahasa baku, bukan bentuk alih kode atau pencampuran bahasa secara stilistik. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tingkat informalitas media sosial memengaruhi penggunaan bahasa tulis dan mendorong munculnya bentuk bahasa nonbaku dalam konteks komunikasi digital.

Kata Kunci: Kesalahan Berbahasa; Caption Tiktok; Penelitian Kualitatif Deskriptif; Bahasa Digital; Media Sosial

Abstract

The rapid growth of TikTok as a popular social media platform has significantly influenced written language practices, particularly in caption writing, which tends to be informal and spontaneous. This study aims to identify, classify, and analyze language errors found in TikTok captions created by Indonesian content creators. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, the data were collected through documentation of publicly accessible TikTok captions and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal that language errors predominantly occur in the forms of redundancy, grammatical errors, spelling errors, and semantic inconsistency. These errors are not categorized as intentional code-switching or stylistic language mixing but rather as violations of standard linguistic norms. Theoretically, this study confirms that the informal nature of social media influences written language use and encourages non-standard forms in digital communication contexts.

Keywords: Language Error; Tiktok Captions; Descriptive Qualitative Research; Digital Language; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed human communication, particularly written communication on social media platforms. Social media has become a primary space for everyday language practice, where users express ideas, opinions, and emotions through short written texts that emphasize speed, creativity, and audience engagement rather than strict linguistic accuracy. Among various platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential social media applications in Indonesia, combining short-form audiovisual content with written captions that play a crucial role in meaning-making and viewer interaction (Dewani et al., 2024). This transformation reflects broader shifts in

digital discourse, where written language increasingly adapts to multimodal, fast-paced, and audience-oriented environments (Böck & Pachler, 2013).

Although TikTok captions are widely recognized as informal and spontaneous forms of written communication, systematic studies examining language errors specifically in TikTok captions remain limited compared to broader research on social media language use (Wijaya et al, 2025). Most previous research on social media language use has primarily focused on stylistic features such as slang, code-switching, and variation in language use, rather than identifying and classifying genuine language errors as deviations from standard linguistic norms (Kusyairi et al., 2024) Dewi, 2025). For example, studies on language variation among Indonesian Generation Z TikTok users highlight the prevalence of slang and non-standard forms but do not systematically analyze them as formal errors (Kusyairi et al., 2024) . Furthermore, studies specifically addressing language errors in TikTok captions produced by Indonesian content creators are still scarce, even though related research has documented spelling, diction, and grammatical structure errors in broader TikTok content (Muhammad Surip et al., 2024) . Therefore, there is a research gap in understanding the types and characteristics of language errors occurring in TikTok captions within the Indonesian digital context, which this study seeks to address. TikTok captions demonstrate various forms of linguistic errors that reflect informal and spontaneous language use in digital communication (Gulo et al., 2024; Surip et al., 2024).

Language errors in social media captions indicate deviations from standard linguistic rules, even when produced by official or institutional accounts (Karina, 2023). TikTok captions serve multiple communicative purposes, including explaining video content, reinforcing messages, and attracting audience attention. However, the fast-paced, trend-driven, and informal nature of TikTok communication encourages users to produce captions spontaneously, often without careful consideration of standard language norms. As a result, TikTok captions frequently contain linguistic deviations such as spelling errors, inappropriate diction, non-standard vocabulary, and irregular sentence structures. Previous studies have shown that language use on TikTok and other social media platforms tends to deviate from formal linguistic conventions due to the dominance of casual and conversational writing styles (Gulo et al., 2024) Language errors in digital communication should not be viewed merely as accidental mistakes, from a digital literacy perspective, repeated exposure to non-standard forms may influence users' long-term writing competence beyond informal contexts (Gee, n.d.; Thorne et al., 2022; Van Leeuwen, 2021). but rather as indicators of broader shifts in language practices in online environments. Research on Indonesian language use in social media demonstrates that non-standard linguistic forms are increasingly normalized, especially among young users who actively consume and reproduce digital content on a daily basis (Hidayanti, N. A. T., & Sucipta, 2024) This normalization raises concerns regarding the potential influence of social media language on users' written language competence, particularly in contexts that require adherence to standard language norms such as academic and professional communication.

A growing body of research has examined language use and language errors across various social media platforms. Studies focusing on TikTok have identified recurring issues related to spelling, diction, grammatical structure, and sentence fragmentation (Dewani et al., 2024; Gulo et al., 2024). These studies confirm that linguistic deviations are a common feature of TikTok captions and are influenced by the platform's emphasis on brevity, emotional appeal, and trend participation.

Despite these findings, research that specifically and systematically investigates language errors in TikTok captions remains limited. Recent linguistic studies emphasize that language errors in digital environments are closely linked to shifts in writing conventions influenced by platform design and user interaction patterns. Social media platforms such as TikTok encourage rapid text production, emotional expressiveness, and audience engagement, which often reduce users' attention to grammatical accuracy and orthographic norms (Buson et al., 2023). In this context, language errors should be understood as systematic deviations shaped by communicative pressure rather than random mistakes. Research on digital discourse further suggests that repeated exposure to non-standard forms on social media contributes to the normalization of linguistic errors, especially among young users who frequently imitate trending expressions without critical evaluation. This phenomenon highlights the importance of examining language errors as part of broader digital literacy and sociolinguistic change. Many existing studies discuss TikTok as part of broader analyses of social media language or focus on language variation rather than detailed error classification. Considering TikTok's unique communicative characteristics, such as short video duration, high interaction intensity, and strong trend influence, focused analysis of language errors on this platform is still needed. This limitation represents a clear research gap in studies of digital language practices (Gulo et al., 2024). Empirical studies conducted in recent years confirm that TikTok captions exhibit a higher frequency of redundancy, spelling errors, and grammatical inaccuracies compared to other social media platforms due to their emphasis on brevity and virality (Jiang & Hyland, 2022; Pratiwi & Nugroho, 2024). Moreover, research focusing on Indonesian digital communication reveals that code-mixing and informal expressions often coexist with genuine language errors, which are frequently misinterpreted as stylistic choices (Rahmawati, 2024; Sari, 2025). However, several scholars argue that failing to distinguish intentional stylistic variation from actual linguistic errors may obscure the real impact of social media on language competence (Herring, 2023; Lee, 2024). Therefore, a focused descriptive qualitative analysis of language errors in TikTok captions is essential to provide clearer classification and interpretation of non-standard language use in Indonesian digital contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze language errors found in TikTok content captions produced by Indonesian content creators. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study seeks to identify and describe types of language errors, including spelling errors, diction errors, non-standard vocabulary usage, and sentence structure errors. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of Indonesian language use in digital media and to promote greater language awareness in social media contexts.

Recent studies find that errors in spelling, grammar, and word choice frequently occur across social media captions, including TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube (Hartini et al., 2025). Social media has become one of the most influential domains of contemporary language use, particularly in informal written communication. Language use on social media is characterized by immediacy, brevity, and creativity, which often result in deviations from standard linguistic norms. Research indicates that social media platforms encourage users to prioritize expressiveness and interaction over grammatical accuracy (Hidayanti & Sucipta, 2024). One prominent characteristic of social media language is the blending of spoken and written forms. Users frequently transfer features of spoken language, such as ellipsis, repetition, and informal expressions, into written texts, especially in captions and comments. This phenomenon contributes to the increasing normalization of non-standard linguistic forms in online

communication (Kusyairi, 2024). TikTok intensifies these linguistic tendencies due to its short-video format and emphasis on emotional engagement. TikTok captions are primarily designed to persuade, entertain, and attract viewers rather than to convey information accurately. Consequently, content creators often sacrifice linguistic accuracy for stylistic effect, leading to frequent language errors in captions (Dewani et al., 2024).

Language errors are systematic deviations from standard language rules that occur in language production. In written texts, such errors are particularly significant because written language is permanent and can be accessed and imitated repeatedly by other users. In digital contexts, language errors frequently appear in spelling, diction, grammar, and sentence structure (Gulo et al., 2024). Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors are frequently found in social media captions, affecting clarity and linguistic accuracy. In Indonesian social media texts, spelling and diction errors are among the most dominant forms of language error (Adingsih, 2023). These errors often result from phonetic spelling habits, excessive use of slang, abbreviations, and the influence of spoken language patterns. Such practices reduce linguistic clarity and weaken adherence to standardized writing conventions (Hidayanti & Sucipta, 2024). Moreover, language errors in digital writing are not solely caused by linguistic incompetence. Social factors such as informality, identity expression, and the desire to appear relatable or trendy encourage users to intentionally ignore standard language norms. This social motivation reinforces the persistence of language errors in online communication (Kusyairi et al., 2024).

Language errors in social media texts can be classified into several categories, including spelling errors, diction errors, grammatical errors, and sentence structure errors. This classification provides a systematic framework for analyzing written language errors in digital contexts (Gulo et al., 2024).

Spelling errors involve incorrect letter selection, omission, or addition that results in non-standard word forms. These errors frequently occur due to phonetic spelling and rapid typing practices common in social media usage. Diction errors involve the use of inappropriate, redundant, or non-standard vocabulary, often influenced by slang and unadapted foreign terms. Sentence structure errors include incomplete sentences, unclear sentence patterns, and misuse of connectors, which are commonly found in TikTok captions that prioritize emphasis over grammatical completeness (Dewani et al., 2024). Previous studies on TikTok language use have largely focused on language variation, identity expression, and communicative strategies. Research shows that TikTok users frequently employ informal language styles and non-standard expressions to engage audiences effectively (Kusyairi et al., 2024).

Spelling mistakes, incorrect capitalization, punctuation errors, and inappropriate word choices were dominant in Instagram captions and comments (Cahyani, 2024). However, studies that specifically and systematically analyze language errors in TikTok captions remain relatively limited. Existing research often treats TikTok as part of broader social media analyses without providing detailed classifications of language errors. This lack of focused investigation highlights the need for descriptive qualitative research that examines language errors in TikTok captions in greater depth (Gulo et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze language errors found in TikTok content captions. A descriptive qualitative methodology is appropriate because it enables researchers to examine language phenomena in naturally occurring texts without

imposing artificial constraints (Silverman, 2025).. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for detailed description and interpretation of linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur in digital communication contexts (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). Documentation techniques allow researchers to collect authentic written data from publicly accessible social media platforms (Sebayang et al, 2019). The data consisted of written captions collected from publicly accessible TikTok content created by Indonesian users. The captions were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research objectives, particularly captions written in Indonesian that contained potential language errors. TikTok was chosen as the data source due to its widespread use and significant influence on contemporary written language practices in Indonesia (Dewani et al., 2024).

To ensure a clear research flow, the methodology was conducted in several sequential stages. First, relevant TikTok captions were selected and documented based on predetermined criteria. Second, the collected data were carefully examined to identify instances of language errors. Third, the identified errors were classified into specific categories according to linguistic criteria. Finally, the results were interpreted descriptively to explain patterns of language errors and their relationship with the informal nature of digital communication.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and non-participant observation techniques by observing TikTok content, capturing captions through screenshots, and transcribing them into written form for analysis. Data analysis followed the stages of qualitative content analysis, including data reduction, data classification, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by (Miles, 2021). Captions containing language errors were classified into types of errors such as spelling errors, diction errors, and sentence structure errors. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing the analysis results with established linguistic theories and relevant previous studies. Ethical considerations were addressed by anonymizing content creators' identities and using only publicly available data.

RESULT AND DISSCUSIONS

Result

The analysis of TikTok captions revealed several genuine language errors that frequently occur in digital written communication. Based on descriptive qualitative analysis, the errors identified in the captions can be classified into four main categories: redundancy (pleonasm), grammatical errors, spelling errors, and semantic inconsistency. These errors were identified through careful examination of linguistic forms in the captions and were evaluated according to standard Indonesian and English language rules.

Tabel 1. Language Errors Found in TikTok Captions Along With Their Classifications and Corrected Forms.

No	Original Caption	Type of Error	Linguistic Level	Analysis	Corrected Form
1	semoga bisa lebih better	Redundancy (Pleonasm)	Lexical	The caption uses two comparative markers, lebih (Indonesian) and better (English), which convey the same meaning. The combination semoga bisa lebih baik results in unnecessary repetition and violates the principle of linguistic economy.	semoga bisa baik

No	Original Caption	Type of Error	Linguistic Level	Analysis	Corrected Form
2	Oke next selanjutnya	Redundancy	Lexical	The words next and selanjutnya are synonymous. Using both in a single phrase causes repetition of meaning without adding semantic value.	oke, selanjutnya
3	Finally akhirnya gue	Redundancy & Syntax	Lexical & Syntactic	The phrase combines English (finally) and Indonesian (akhirnya) & words with identical meanings. In addition, the sentence is syntactically incomplete and lacks a predicate.	akhirnya gue ...
4	its oke gapapa	Spelling Grammar	& Orthographic Grammatical	The word its lacks an apostrophe (it's), indicating incorrect contraction. The Indonesian word it's oke, tidak apa-apa gapapa is a non-standard spelling of tidak apa-apa.	
5	Aku ulang repost	Redundancy	Lexical	The verb repost already implies repetition. Adding ulang creates Aku repost semantic redundancy.	
6	thats mine my	Grammatical Error	Grammatical	The phrase shows double possession (my and mine) in one construction, which violates English possessive rules.	that's mine
7	thanks you	Grammatical Error	Grammatical	The caption incorrectly combines a noun (thanks) with a pronoun (you). The correct form requires a verb phrase (thank you).	thank you
8	metime teman ama	Semantic Inconsistency	Semantic	The term me time refers to spending time alone, which contradicts the phrase with friends. This creates semantic inconsistency.	quality time ama teman
9	aku im fine	Spelling Grammar	& Orthographic Grammatical	The contraction I'm is misspelled as im, and the code-mixed structure aku I'm fine lacks clarity.	
10	keep Spirit	Grammar Capitalization	& Grammatical Orthographic	The phrase lacks a definite article (the) and shows unnecessary capitalization of Spirit.	keep the spirit

The table demonstrates that language errors in TikTok captions predominantly occur at the lexical and grammatical levels. Redundancy appears frequently due to code-mixing between Indonesian and English, while grammatical and spelling errors reflect limited control over English structures and orthographic conventions. Semantic inconsistency occurs less frequently but indicates misunderstanding of borrowed lexical items rather than stylistic variation.

Disscusion

Table presents the distribution of language error types found in TikTok captions created by Indonesian content creators. The data indicate that several categories of language errors frequently occur, demonstrating patterns of non-standard language use in digital communication. As shown in Table, spelling errors constitute one of the most common error types. These errors include incorrect spelling, letter omission, and inconsistent capitalization. The high frequency of spelling errors suggests that caption writing on TikTok is often carried out rapidly and without careful editing, reflecting the informal and spontaneous nature of the platform. In addition, diction errors were identified in captions that used inappropriate or imprecise word choices. Such errors may lead to ambiguity or reduced clarity of meaning. This finding indicates that content creators tend to prioritize expressiveness over lexical accuracy, resulting in deviations from standard word usage.

Furthermore, sentence structure errors were observed in the form of incomplete sentences, unclear sentence construction, and improper word order. These errors suggest that TikTok captions frequently resemble spoken language rather than formal written discourse. The dominance of oral-style expression contributes to grammatical inconsistencies in written captions. Overall, the data presented in Table demonstrate that language errors in TikTok captions are not employed intentionally as stylistic devices or forms of code-switching. Instead, they represent genuine violations of standard linguistic norms influenced by the informal communication environment of social media. Semantic deviations observed in TikTok captions reflect a shift in lexical meaning influenced by Generation Z language patterns (Dewi, 2025). These findings confirm that the characteristics of TikTok as a digital platform play a significant role in shaping patterns of written language use.

The findings of this study indicate that language errors in TikTok captions are strongly influenced by the informal, fast-paced, and trend-oriented nature of social media communication. One of the most prominent error types identified is redundancy, particularly in captions that mix Indonesian and English expressions with overlapping meanings. This pattern suggests that users tend to prioritize emphasis and stylistic impact over linguistic efficiency. Similar findings were reported by Gulo et al. (2024), who observed that redundancy is a common feature in TikTok captions due to users' tendency to reinforce messages through repetition.

Grammatical errors, especially in English expressions, were also frequently identified. Errors such as thanks you and that's my mine indicate limited mastery of basic English grammatical structures. These findings support Dewani et al. (2024), who argue that English usage on TikTok is often based on imitation of popular expressions rather than on grammatical competence. As a result, foreign language elements are frequently used inaccurately in captions. Spelling errors were another recurring issue in the analyzed captions. The omission of apostrophes in forms such as its and im, as well as the use of non-standard Indonesian spellings, reflects users' low attention to orthographic conventions in digital writing. According to Hidayanti and Sucipta (2024), such orthographic deviations are common in social media texts, where speed and convenience are prioritized over adherence to standard writing norms.

The presence of semantic inconsistency, as seen in captions like metime ama teman, indicates misunderstanding of lexical meaning rather than intentional stylistic choice. This type of error occurs when borrowed terms are used without full comprehension of their semantic scope. Kusyairi et al. (2024) note that partial understanding of foreign terms is a common

phenomenon in social media language use, particularly among young users who frequently adopt popular expressions.

Overall, the language errors identified in this study represent genuine linguistic errors rather than deliberate code-switching or stylistic language mixing. The dominance of redundancy, grammatical errors, spelling errors, and semantic inconsistency confirms that TikTok captions reflect relaxed language practices shaped by social media conventions. Consistent with previous studies, these findings highlight how digital platforms contribute to reduced adherence to standard language norms in online written communication (Gulo et al., 2024; Dewani et al., 2024). This study therefore reinforces the importance of raising language awareness in digital literacy contexts, particularly for platforms with high user engagement such as TikTok.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of language in TikTok content captions created by Indonesian users still demonstrates various genuine and systematic language errors. These errors include redundancy (pleonasm), grammatical errors, spelling errors, and semantic inconsistency. Among these categories, redundancy and grammatical errors are the most dominant, particularly in captions that combine Indonesian and English elements within a single linguistic construction. The findings indicate that the language errors identified in TikTok captions cannot be categorized as intentional code-switching or stylistic language mixing, but rather as violations of standard linguistic norms. This phenomenon is strongly influenced by the informal, fast-paced, and trend-oriented nature of TikTok as a social media platform, which encourages expressive communication while often neglecting linguistic accuracy. Therefore, this study confirms that social media platforms, especially TikTok, play a significant role in shaping contemporary written language practices in digital spaces. The results of this study are expected to raise users' awareness of the importance of accurate language use in digital communication and to contribute to the development of language education and digital literacy in the context of social media.

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