

## Grammatical Errors in Social Media Caption

Siti Yuliah<sup>1</sup>, Yessy Purnamasari<sup>2</sup>, Elsa Yunita<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

This study focuses on the analysis of grammatical errors found in social media captions of Eigerindo's products. The paper has two aims: (1) to analyze kinds of grammatical errors found in social media captions of Eigerindo's products and (2) to recognize the most grammatical errors that frequently occurred. By employing qualitative method, the steps of the analysis are the data collection and the data analysis which consists of error identification, error classification, error explanation, and error evaluation. The technique used for this study was textual analysis which was specifically applied in grammar analysis. The data was 45 captions: 17 captions from @exsportbags, 18 from @bodypack, and 10 from @eigeradventure comprising 130 expressions in total. The findings show that there are 84 grammatical errors found which consist of errors on subject-verb agreement by 36%, errors on sentence fragment by 19%, errors on spelling by 17%, errors on parallelism by 13%, errors on preposition by 9%, and errors on passive voice by 6%. Subject-verb agreement error is the most grammatical error that frequently occurred since the copywriters might be using the rule of writing caption from Printwand (2012) which sometimes ignores the grammatical aspect.

**Keywords:** grammatical error, caption, social media, Instagram

### 1. Introduction

Captions in the social media can be a good sample for doing error analysis as there is no editor in writing and publishing the captions in social media. Instagram is one of the social media which will be focused on. Instagram is now being one of the social media which is mostly used not only by public, but also by lots of companies to introduce their products. Some companies use Instagram for one of their marketing ways. Unfortunately, since there is no editor of writing captions in social media, the companies do not realize whether the captions they published have been written correctly or not. As Holtzclaw (2014) states that the written language used represents directly the company professional standards both in online and in offline communication. Some mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar will cause very bad impression on the business.

In relation to those mistakes, linguistically, there is a term named errors. According to Richards (1985), error analysis is a study of errors done by the second language learners (cited in Hasyim, 2002, p. 43). Moreover, this definition is the same as the one proposed by Khansir (2012) who defines error analysis as a type of linguistic analysis in which errors made by learners are the focus. He adds that error analysis points out the meaning of second language learners' errors. Another explanation is stated by Crystal (1987) that "error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics" (cited in Hasyim, 2002, p. 43). Errors made by the foreign language learner are mostly found in writing since writing is the most difficult skill in language. According to Nunan (1989), "writing is an extremely difficult cognitive activity which requires the learner to have control over various factors" (cited in Fareed, et al., 2016). One of the important aspects of writing is grammar. Writing with good structure and with correct grammar is very important for everyone. Grammar is the base of both spoken and written communication. Understanding the purpose and meaning of a message will be easier when the message is conveyed with the correct grammar ("Articles on Language," n.d). Unfortunately, the most common error made by the learners is the one related to grammatical structure. It could happen since there are lots of grammar aspects which should be understood. In order to decrease more mistakes and errors of the text, the analysis of them should be conducted.

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Politeknik Negeri Bandung, West Java, Indonesia E-mail: [siti.yuliah@polban.ac.id](mailto:siti.yuliah@polban.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Department of English, Politeknik Negeri Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Department of English, Politeknik Negeri Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Several studies on grammatical errors have been conducted previously. Murshidi (2014) analyzed subject verb-agreement and punctuation errors on autobiography written in English. The results showed that although some of the samples are well written in English, there are still lots of errors on subject-verb agreement and on punctuation. Meanwhile, Ratnah (2013) tried to find out types, sources and causes of grammatical errors in Indonesian-English translation made by tourism students. The results showed some varieties of errors: omission error of word, selection error of word, and addition of the words such as verbs, time signals and auxiliary verbs. Another study by Kotsyuk (2015) was intended to show the process of error analysis of the corpus of Ukrainian students' essays written in English. As the results, there were some grammatical errors such as errors on the use of articles, verb form, quantifiers, misuse of modifiers, punctuation, sentence structure, and style types (incorrect spacing with punctuation, capitalization, wordiness, and redundant words).

Based on the review of the literature above, the present study attempts to fill the gaps which are not found in the previous studies, namely grammatical errors on subject-verb agreement, sentence fragment, spelling, parallelism, preposition, and passive voice. Other gap is that the text that this present study analyzes is from captions in social media used as the media of marketing. As the caption is used to not only give information but also to persuade the prospective customers, it is interesting to acknowledge on how the grammatical errors are presented on the caption.

In marketing industry, the use of social media and proper caption with correct English grammar is one of successful keys to deliver the value of the product. PT Eigerindo Multi Produk Industri is one of the companies that uses Instagram for the marketing way to ease the promotional activities. PT Eigerindo has three popular brand named Exsport, Eiger, and Bodypack which each of them has its own account of Instagram. The three brands have various products, such as bags, shoes, watches, and hats, but the most popular products of them are the bags. So, the captions which describe about the bags will be the focus of the present study. This company has been the fashion lifestyle producer with good quality and international standard. The products have also been marketed overseas, such as China, Thailand, and Philippine. Due to the company's international distribution, the captions of the Instagram often use English language. Therefore, PT Eigerindo should use good English language in terms of the easiness in understanding the message of the product's promotion internationally. Unfortunately, there are still lots of errors done by the company in the use of their English language. Therefore, the captions are needed to be analyzed.

This study tries to analyze grammatical errors found in social media captions of Eigerindo's products and to recognize the most grammatical errors that frequently occurred. There are two research questions related to the topic. The questions are:

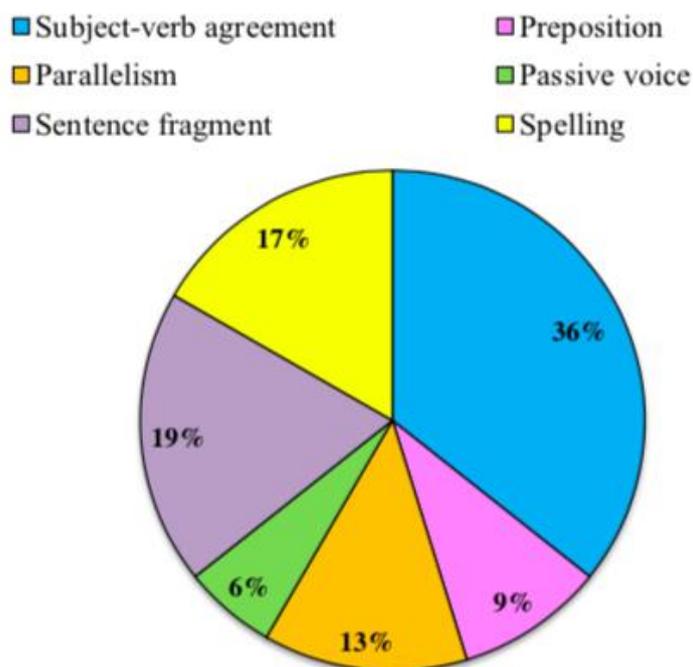
1. What kinds of grammatical errors are found in the captions?
2. Which grammatical error is frequently found in the captions?

## **2. Research Methodology**

Textual analysis which is specifically applied in grammar analysis is the research method of the study. It is a method in qualitative research. The textual analysis was used in this study since the data of analysis is in the form of text, and this study did not analyze the content of the messages in the captions. In addition, the simple calculation was used to count the frequency and the percentage of the errors. As suggested by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), the steps of the analysis are the data collection and the data analysis which consists of the identification of errors, classification of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

After analyzing 130 expressions of 45 captions of the three Eigerindo's Instagram accounts, there are 84 errors found which consist of subject-verb agreement errors by 36%, sentence fragment errors 19%, spelling errors 17%, parallelism errors 13%, preposition errors 9%, and passive voice errors 6%. The following chart shows the results of the present analysis.



Based on the chart, the most grammatical error that frequently occurred in the captions is errors on subject-verb agreement, that is by 36%.

In short, subject-verb agreement error is the most grammatical error that frequently occurred since the copywriters might be using the rule of writing caption from the marketing point of view as promotional text or advertisement by Printwand (2012) which allows the copywriters to use incomplete sentence provided that the message is clear. In writing promotional text or advertisement, the copywriters usually focus on the content which should be short and interesting. So, it makes the copywriters ignore the grammatical aspect, especially subject-verb agreement since it can eliminate the attractiveness of the content written. Writing captions with correct subject-verb agreement can also make the content longer.

The following captions are the examples showing the grammatical errors on subject-verb agreement, on sentence fragment, on spelling, on parallelism, on preposition and on passive voice.

1. *Sunday Folks - Luggage keep your stuffs when you traveling. Let's meet this cute luggage at Exsport Store !*  
The verb 'keep' in the first expression disagrees with the subject. The error found is categorized as the error on subject-verb agreement. The subject 'Sunday Folks – Luggage' is singular since 'luggage' is uncountable noun which needs singular verb. Therefore, the correct expression is '*Sunday Folks – Luggage **keeps** your stuffs when you are travelling*'.
2. *Be kind even on your bad day. Because you'll never has this day again, so make it count – unknown-*  
The error found in the caption is categorized as sentence fragment as it shows an incomplete thought. The clause '*Because you'll never has this day again*' is a dependent clause which could not stand alone as a sentence. So, it should be combined with the first sentence to be a complete sentence. Thus, the correct expression is '*Be kind even on your bad day **because** you'll never have this day again, so make it count –unknown-*'.
3. *Everything about life is a **choise**, so choose well! Have a great weekend, Eigerian!*  
The word 'choise' is misspelling since the letter 's' in it should be written 'c'. The word 'choise' is written could be because it is affected by the pronunciation of the word. Therefore, the correct expression is '*Everything about life is a **choice**, so choose well!*'.
4. *Let's take some rest and continuing tomorrow's good work.*  
The phrase 'take some rest' which contains base form of verb 'take' + *noun* has no parallel structure with the phrase 'continuing tomorrow's good work' which contains *gerund* + *noun*. So, the verb in the second phrase should be base form of verb 'continue'. The correct expression is '*Let's take some rest and **continue** tomorrow's good work*'.
5. *Meet our new series on March!! Panjanella Series now available at Ex Store and Ex Showroom Exsport*  
The preposition 'on' is not suitable for month. It is usually used for day and date. In fact, the preposition used for month is similar to year which is 'in'. So, the correct expression is '*Meet our new series **in** March!! Panjanella Series are now available at Ex Store and Ex Showroom Exsport*'.
6. *Durability is ensure with the extensive use of hypalon at al stress prone points.*

This sentence is a passive voice. The form of passive voice is *to be+ past participle*, so the base form of verb 'ensure' should be in past participle 'ensured'. Therefore, the correct expression is '*Durability is ensured with the extensive use of hypalon at all stress prone points*'.

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the results of the present analysis, there are 84 grammatical errors found out of 130 expressions. The grammatical errors comprise subject-verb agreement errors (36%), sentence fragment errors (19%), spelling errors (17%), parallelism errors (13%), preposition errors (9%), and passive voice errors (6%). It can be concluded that the most grammatical error that frequently occurred in the captions of @exsportbags, @bodypack, and @eigeradventure accounts is errors on subject-verb agreement with the percentage of 36%.

There are still many other grammatical aspects that the present study has not analyzed such as the use of gerund, the use of articles, verb form, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. Therefore, this present study suggests that the upcoming study may focus on the analysis of both the errors occurred on those aspects and the reasons why the errors are made.

#### 5. References

- Articles on language. (n.d). Retrieved from University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg Website: <http://www.witslanguageschool.com/>
- Crystal, D. (1987). Dictionary of linguistics and phonetics (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Basil Blackwell Inc.
- Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). Analysing learner language. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fareed, M., et al. (2016). ESL learners' writing skills: Problem, factors, and suggestion. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 4(2). Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311669829\\_ESL\\_Learners%27\\_Writing\\_Skills\\_Problems\\_Factors\\_and\\_Suggestions](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311669829_ESL_Learners%27_Writing_Skills_Problems_Factors_and_Suggestions)
- Hasyim, S. (2002). Error analysis in the teaching of English. *Jurnal Kata*, 4(1), 42-50. Retrieved from <http://puslit.petra.ac.id/journals/letters/>
- Holtzclaw, E. (2014). 1 word that immediately kills your credibility *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/10686/1-word-that-immediately-kills-your-credibility/>
- Khansir, A. A. (2012). Error analysis and second language acquisition. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(5), 1027-1032. doi: 10.4304/tpls.2.5.1027-1032
- Kotsyuk, L. M. (2015). English language error analysis of the written texts produced by Ukrainian learners: Data collection. *Cognitive Studies*, 16, 389-395. doi: 10.11649/cs.2015.027
- Murshidi, G. A. (2014). Subject-verb agreement grammatical errors and punctuation errors in submissions of male UAE University students. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research* 2(5), 44-4. Retrieved from [www.eajournals.org](http://www.eajournals.org)
- Nunan, D. (1989). Designing tasks for the communicative classroom. Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.
- Printwand. (2012). Sentence fragments in copywriting: Examples of good use. Retrieved from <https://www.printwand.com/sentence-fragment-in-copywriting-examples-of-good-use>
- Ratnah. (2013). Error analysis on tenses usage made by Indonesian students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(6). Retrieved from <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/4990>