


Analysis of Phrase Writing Errors in Students of SMA Negeri 5 Baubau

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A B S T R A C T

In Indonesian language learning at school, syntactic errors are still frequently found, both in narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative texts. One of the most frequent forms of syntactic errors in students' writing is errors at the phrase level. This study aims to describe the forms of phrase writing errors made by students of SMA Negeri 5 Baubau. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach supported by simple quantitative data. The subjects of this study were 30 eleventh-grade students of SMA Negeri 5 Baubau. The research data consisted of phrase writing errors obtained from students' essay writing assignments. Data collection techniques were carried out through writing tests and documentation. Data were analyzed through the steps of data collection, error identification, error classification, error explanation, frequency calculation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that there were 21 phrase writing errors classified into three categories: prepositional phrase errors with 7 errors (33.33%), incorrect word order with 6 errors (28.57%), and excessive use of phrases with 8 errors (38.10%). The most dominant error was excessive use of phrases. Factors contributing to these errors include a lack of understanding of Indonesian grammar rules, regional language interference, spoken language habits, low literacy, and a lack of writing practice. This research is expected to serve as evaluation material for improving Indonesian language learning, particularly in syntax and correct phrase usage.

Keywords: *Error Analysis, Phrases, Writing, Syntax, High School Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary means of communication and plays a strategic role in education, scientific development, and social interaction. In the context of formal learning, language skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four skills, writing is a productive skill that requires logical and systematic thinking and a mastery of language rules correctly and precisely (Nurgiyantoro, 2016; H. G. Tarigan, 2008). Good writing skills will facilitate students' effective communication, while weaknesses in writing can lead to information ambiguity and misunderstandings. Various studies have shown that students' writing skills in Indonesia still face challenges in terms of grammar, sentence structure, and the appropriate use of language elements (Waruwu, 2023).

Writing skills are a crucial language skill in Indonesian language learning because they provide a means of conveying ideas logically, systematically, and communicatively. In the writing process, mastery of syntax plays a crucial role, determining the accuracy of phrase and sentence construction, ensuring a well-understood message. Good syntactic skills also support students' critical thinking, academic, and literacy skills in various learning contexts.

Syntax is an important linguistic aspect of writing. Syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies the relationships between words in forming phrases, clauses, and sentences. Mastery of syntax is crucial for understanding a piece of writing, as errors in language structure can lead to ambiguity, word wasting, and even changes in meaning (Chaer, 2015; Kridalaksana, 2017). In Indonesian language learning practices in schools, syntactic errors are still frequently encountered, both in narrative, expository, descriptive, and argumentative texts. This indicates that students'

grammar mastery is not yet optimal (Jumadi et al., 2023)

One of the most common forms of syntactic errors in student writing is errors at the phrase level. A phrase is a grammatical unit consisting of two or more unpredictable words that fulfills a syntactic function in a sentence (D. Tarigan & Sulistyarningsih, 1996). Accurate use of phrases is crucial because phrases are the main building blocks of a sentence. Phrase errors can include inappropriate prepositional use, incorrect word order, excessive or redundant elements, the use of double superlatives, and the influence of regional languages on Indonesian language structure. These errors have the potential to reduce the effectiveness and clarity of student writing (Jumadi et al., 2023; Kismawati et al., 2018).

At the high school level, students are required to develop critical thinking skills and express their ideas systematically through academic and non-academic writing. Therefore, writing skills that pay attention to syntactic rules are an essential competency to master. However, various studies show that high school students still frequently make grammatical errors in phrases and sentences. These errors are influenced by several factors, including a lack of understanding of standard grammar, a low literacy culture, limited writing practice, and interference with their first language or regional language used in everyday communication (Jumadi et al., 2023; Kamalia & Al-Fahad, 2022).

Sentence construction errors are not only seen as ordinary mistakes, but also as indicators of students' language development. From the perspective of language error analysis, errors can be used as a basis for evaluating learning and improving teaching strategies. By analyzing the types of errors made by students, teachers can identify weak language aspects and thus design more targeted learning (Kismawati et al., 2018; D. Tarigan & Sulistyarningsih, 1996). Therefore, research on sentence construction errors has practical value in improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in schools.

Several previous studies have examined language errors at the syntactic level across various regions and educational levels. The results indicate that errors in the phrase structure tend to dominate compared to errors at other levels, particularly in the use of prepositions, word order, and redundant elements. Other studies have also found that a weak understanding of phrase structure makes it difficult for students to construct effective and communicative sentences (Kamalia & Al-Fahad, 2022). These findings indicate that syntax learning still requires serious attention. Furthermore, research by Jumadi et al. (2023) analyzed language errors in students' descriptive essays. The results showed that students' language errors were still dominated by syntax and spelling errors, particularly in the use of prepositions, phrase structure, and punctuation. This study emphasizes that students' writing skills still require guidance on aspects of grammar and sentence structure. These findings are relevant to this study because both studies examined language errors in student writing, but this study specifically focused on phrase writing errors in students at SMA Negeri 5 Baubau.

However, research on phrasal errors among high school students in Baubau City, particularly at SMA Negeri 5 Baubau, is relatively limited. This multilingual society, however, allows for the influence of regional languages on written Indonesian. This sociolinguistic environment is interesting to study because it can provide a concrete picture of the types of syntactic errors students make in local contexts (Waruwu, 2023). Therefore, this research has both academic and practical relevance.

Based on this description, this study aims to describe the types of phrase writing errors among students at SMA Negeri 5 Baubau, identify the most dominant types of errors, and explain the factors causing these errors. The results are expected to serve as evaluation material for Indonesian language teachers in developing more effective, contextual, and student-centered grammar learning strategies.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach supported by simple quantitative data. This approach was chosen because the study aims to systematically describe the types of sentence writing errors made by students without providing any specific treatment to the subjects.



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Quantitative data is used to indicate the frequency of occurrence of each type of error, thus determining the most dominant error type (Sugiyono, 2022; Waruwu, 2023).

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 5 Baubau, Baubau City, Southeast Sulawesi, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research subjects were 30 grade XI class A students. Subject selection was carried out using a purposive sampling method, which was based on the consideration that grade XI students had acquired writing materials and Indonesian language rules, so they were considered relevant as a source of research data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The object of this research is phrasing errors in students' essays. The research data consists of language units containing phrasing errors, including inappropriate phrase usage, incorrect arrangement of phrase elements, excessive use of elements, prepositional errors, and other phrase forms that do not conform to standard Indonesian language rules. The data source was obtained from the results of students' argumentative/descriptive essays, which were written individually.

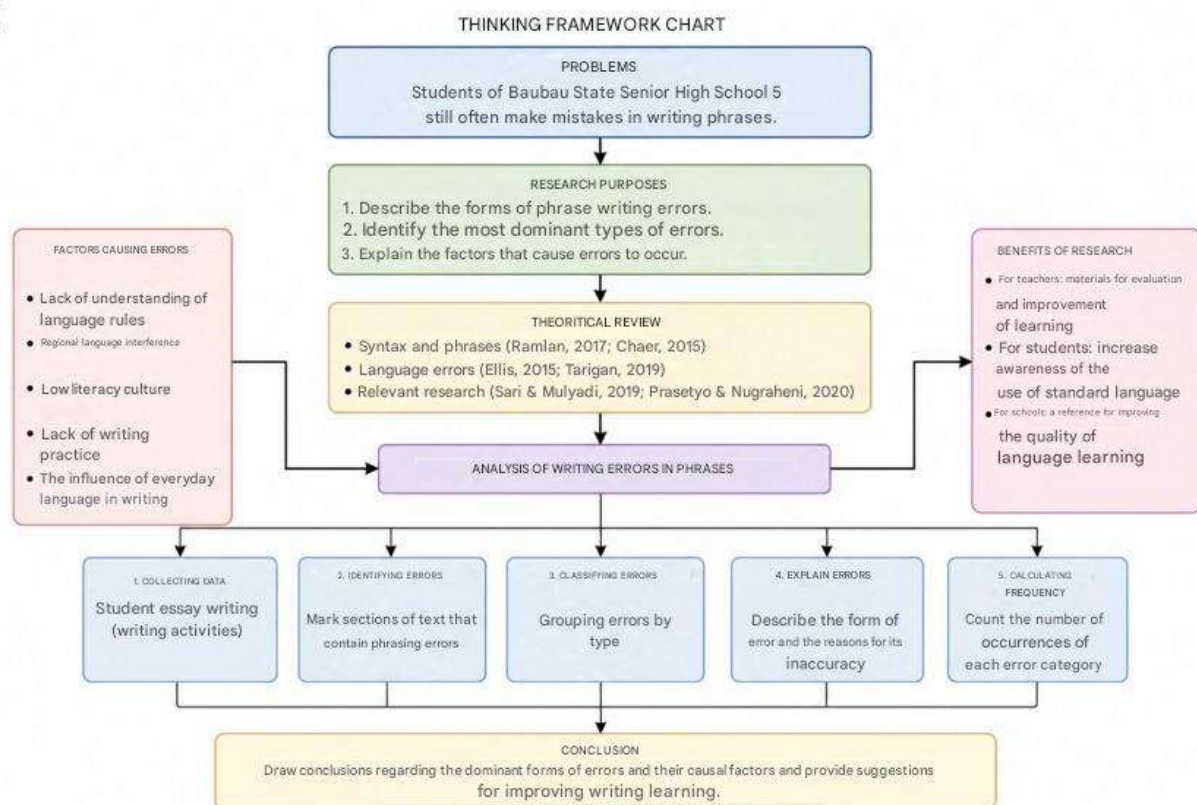


Figure 1. Framework of the Research

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of students' essays at SMA Negeri 5 Baubau identified a total of 21 phrase-writing errors. These errors were classified into three categories based on Indonesian syntactic principles: preposition-related phrase errors, incorrect phrase order, and redundancy errors. The findings indicate that students continue to experience difficulties in constructing phrases that conform to the grammatical conventions of standard Indonesian.

Table 1. Data on Phrase Writing Errors in Students of SMA Negeri 5 Baubau

Yes	Error Group	Quantity	Percentage
1	The phrase says in front	7	33.33%
2	Irregular	6	28.57%
3	Wrong because it is excessive	8	38.10%
Quantity		21	100%

As presented in Table 1, the largest proportion of errors consisted of redundancy errors, accounting for 8 instances (38.10%). These errors occurred when students used unnecessary words or repeated meanings within a phrase, resulting in expressions that were verbose and grammatically inefficient. Such errors suggest that many students have not yet mastered the principle of linguistic economy in phrase construction.

The second most frequent category was preposition-related phrase errors, with 7 instances (33.33%). These errors generally involved the incorrect use of prepositions, particularly the addition of unnecessary prepositions at the beginning of phrases. This pattern indicates that students often misapply syntactic rules governing the use of prepositions, leading to phrases that deviate from standard Indonesian grammar.

Incorrect phrase order represented the third category, with 6 instances (28.57%). These errors resulted from the inappropriate arrangement of phrase elements, causing the intended meaning to become less clear or grammatically unacceptable. Although less frequent than the other categories, these findings demonstrate that students still encounter challenges in organizing phrase components according to accepted syntactic structures.

Overall, the findings reveal that redundancy errors were the most dominant type of phrase-writing error, followed by preposition-related errors and incorrect phrase order. The distribution of these errors suggests that students require greater emphasis on phrase construction, syntactic accuracy, and effective language use. Therefore, Indonesian language instruction should incorporate more focused practice and explicit feedback on phrase formation to improve students' writing accuracy and their mastery of standard Indonesian syntax.

Discussion

Phrase Mistakes When Saying "Ahead"

Prepositional phrase errors are errors that occur due to the incorrect use of prepositions in a phrase. Examples of errors found are *in the morning*, *in the colonial era*, *in me*, *in them*, *in teachers*, *fathers*, and *mothers*. These forms are considered inappropriate because the preposition "in" indicates place, whereas in the context of time or relationship to people, other prepositions such as "on" or "to" should be used. Corrections of these forms are "*in the morning*", "*during the colonial era*", "*to me*", "*to the teacher*", "*to the father*", and "*to the mother*".

This error indicates that students do not yet understand the semantic function of prepositions in Indonesian. According to Chaer (2015), choosing the right preposition is crucial because it directly impacts the meaning of the relationship between elements in a sentence.

Improper Arrangement Errors

Structural errors occur because the placement of phrase elements does not conform to the general pattern of Indonesian. The data found includes *today*, *this is a book*, *next time*, *it's finished*, *I have it*, and *later this afternoon*. In standard Indonesian, the core elements and attributes must be arranged correctly so that the correct forms are *today*, *that book*, *another time*, *finished*, *mine*, and *later*.

This error is thought to be influenced by everyday spoken language patterns and interference with regional languages, which can result in word order differing from standard Indonesian. According to Kridalaksana (2017), word order in a phrase determines the clarity of meaning and grammatical function.

Errors Due to Excess

Excessive errors were the most common type of error in this study. These errors occur because the use of similar meaningful elements simultaneously leads to word wastage. Examples found were *very happy*, *very many*, *immediately want to go*, *the smartest*, *move forward*, *move backward*, *the principal of SMAN 5 Baubau*, and *so they are rich*. The improvements to the shape are: *very happy / very happy*, *Many / many*, *want to go / go immediately*, *the smartest / the most intelligent*, *Forward / Forward*, *back / back*, *Principal of SMAN 5 Baubau*, *to be rich*.

This error indicates that students do not yet understand the principle of linguistic economy

in effective sentences. According to Keraf (2016), effective sentences should avoid excessive word use, as this can obscure the message and reduce the accuracy of the information.

Factors Causing Errors

Based on the analysis results, students' sentence writing errors are influenced by several factors, namely: (1) Lack of understanding of grammar rules, especially the use of standard phrases. (2) The influence of regional languages on written Indonesian. (3) The influence of everyday spoken language continues into writing. (4) Lack of writing practice with attention to linguistic rules. (5) There is a lack of literacy culture, so students are less accustomed to reading standard writing.

Fault Dominance

The most common errors found fall into the incorrect category due to their excessive number. This indicates that students tend to use spoken and expressive forms of language in formal writing. If left uncorrected, this habit can affect the quality of students' academic writing (Audina et al., 2023; Kochkorova, 2025; Tuan & Mai, 2015)

Learning Implications

The findings of this study suggest that Indonesian language teachers need to improve their syntax instruction, particularly on effective phrases and sentences. Teachers can provide practice in identifying phrasing errors, revising sentences, and familiarizing themselves with reading standard texts to help students better understand correct Indonesian usage (Darus & Ho Wai Luin, 2008; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Uum et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students at Baubau State Senior High School 5 still make errors in writing phrases, particularly in the use of excessive phrases, prepositions, and word order. These errors are influenced by a lack of syntactic understanding, regional language interference, and the habit of using spoken language in everyday communication. These findings indicate the need for strengthened syntax learning and more intensive writing practice so that students can use Indonesian effectively and according to rules.

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