

Social Media Users Perspective on English Grammatical Accuracy: A Study of Written Posts on Facebook and Instagram

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ABSTRACT

In the age of digital communication, social media platforms have become significant arenas for language use, particularly among second-language English speakers. This study investigates the types of grammatical errors present in English-language social media posts and explores Indonesian users' perceptions of grammatical accuracy in informal digital communication. Using qualitative methods, including document analysis and online interviews with ten Facebook and Instagram users, the research identifies common grammatical inaccuracies such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The findings also highlight a divided perception among users, some emphasize accuracy in professional contexts, while others prioritize fluency and spontaneity. These results offer insights into the evolving norms of digital communication and provide pedagogical implications for language instruction in the digital age.

Keywords: grammatical errors, social media, digital communication, linguistic accuracy, Indonesian social media users

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed a profound communication revolution, largely driven by the rapid expansion of digital

technologies and online platforms. Among these, social media has emerged as one of the most transformative forces, redefining how individuals interact, share knowledge, construct social identities, and engage with language across cultural and geographical boundaries. In Indonesia—where internet penetration is among the highest in Southeast Asia—over 167 million people are active on social media platforms (Nurhayati, 2024). Applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become embedded in daily life, functioning not only as tools for entertainment and social networking but also as informal arenas for language practice, especially for English as a Second Language (ESL) users.

Despite its potential as a linguistic resource, social media communication often occurs in fast-paced, unregulated environments that encourage brevity, creativity, and spontaneity. This informality, while enhancing user engagement and accessibility, frequently comes at the expense of grammatical accuracy and adherence to standard language norms (Crystal, 2005). Such a shift prompts critical questions for the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA): To what extent do users in digital spaces value correct grammar? What grammatical patterns or errors commonly emerge? And how might this spontaneous, user-generated language affect

long-term language development, identity formation, and educational outcomes?

This study seeks to explore these questions by examining grammatical errors found in English-language posts written by Indonesian users and analyzing their perceptions of grammar in digital contexts. Using qualitative methods—including surface strategy taxonomy (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982) for error analysis and thematic analysis of user interviews—the research provides a nuanced understanding of how English is used and perceived in everyday online interactions.

Theoretically, the study is grounded in three complementary frameworks. First, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current level of proficiency. Social media, with its constant flow of authentic, peer-generated content, arguably offers such input, albeit in a highly informal register. Second, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development, suggesting that digital platforms can serve as "zones of proximal development" where users co-construct language knowledge through engagement and feedback. Third, Crystal's (2005) Internet Linguistics provides a descriptive account of how digital communication is reshaping language use, blurring the boundaries between speech and writing, and fostering new norms of expression.

By synthesizing these perspectives, the present study positions social media not merely as a platform for communication, but as a dynamic linguistic landscape—one that both facilitates incidental learning and challenges traditional pedagogical approaches. The findings are intended to contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions on digital media's impact on language evolution, ESL learning, and educational practices. In doing so, the study underscores the need to reconsider how language

proficiency is defined and assessed in an increasingly digitized and globalized world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Language Use

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have redefined communication, enabling users to share content instantaneously with a global audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These platforms prioritize user-generated content, which is often informal, brief, and multimodal (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Consequently, the linguistic style of social media diverges from traditional standards, emphasizing spontaneity and creativity over formality and accuracy (Dijck, 2013).

David Crystal (2005) introduced the concept of Internet Linguistics, asserting that digital communication fosters a new linguistic register marked by relaxed grammar, non-standard syntax, and inventive spelling. This phenomenon is especially relevant on social media, where immediacy often trumps grammatical precision.

Grammatical Accuracy in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Grammatical accuracy remains a cornerstone of SLA. According to Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis (2009), learners utilize an internal "monitor" to self-correct language output, especially in formal context. However, in informal settings such as social media, this monitor tends to be less active, often resulting in higher frequency of errors. Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972) further suggests that learners develop a transitional grammar system influenced by their native language and target language exposure, which may manifest in recurring patterns of error.

Anderson's Skill Acquisition Theory (O'Malley, Chamot, & Walker, 1987) distinguishes between declarative and procedural knowledge. It posits that grammar mastery progresses from explicit rule knowledge to automatic use, a process that can be hindered in environments where rapid, informal expression is encouraged.

Sociocultural Perspectives on Language Learning

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the social nature of learning, where interaction with "more knowledgeable others" (e.g., teachers or advanced peers) facilitates language development (Ohta, 2017). On social media, this interaction can take the form of correction, feedback, or modeling through exposure to correct forms. However, as such feedback is inconsistent in informal digital spaces, language learning may be affected (Lantolf, 2015).

Michael Long's Focus on Form approach argues that grammatical learning is most effective when learners are prompted to attend to form during meaningful communication (Long, 1991). Since social media users primarily focus on meaning, the chance for form-focused input is limited.

Grammatical Errors in Digital Communication

Several studies document the prevalence of grammatical errors in informal digital contexts. Tumanggor, Aswani, and Syafitri (2021) found common mistakes among Indonesian social media users, including subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and sentence structure errors. Similarly, Wardoyo, Rais, and Yunia (2023) identified omission, addition, misformation, and misordering as recurring error types consistent with Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

Research also shows that users perceive grammar differently depending on the context. Rowe (2017) suggest that while users may notice grammatical mistakes, they do not always view them as detrimental unless clarity or professionalism is compromised.

Language Norms and Perception on Social Media

John Swales' Discourse Community Theory (1990) suggests that language norms evolve within specific communities. These communities often deprioritize grammatical

correctness on social media in favor of speed, expression, and identity performance. Grace and Kemp (2015) explain that these norms shape user expectations and influence language use. While some users adopt nonstandard forms intentionally, others make errors unknowingly due to limited proficiency. These shifting norms highlight a tension between fluency and accuracy in digital environments, especially for ESL users navigating multiple linguistic expectations.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore both the grammatical errors in English-language social media statuses and users' perspectives on grammatical accuracy. Qualitative methods were selected to gain rich, contextual insights into real-world language use and personal attitudes that are often obscured by quantitative analysis (Creswell, 1994).

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted using Facebook and Instagram, two of Indonesia's most popular social media platforms. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on Indonesian users aged 18–35 who actively posted in English. The final sample consisted of ten users from Sulawesi, comprising students, housewives, professionals, and freelancers.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place from October to November 2024 and was carried out in two main stages:

1. **Document Analysis:** Screenshots of participants' English-language posts were gathered from their Facebook and Instagram accounts. These posts served as primary texts for grammatical error analysis. Each status was anonymized to protect participant privacy.
2. **Online Interviews:** Semi-structured online interviews were conducted using

open-ended questions to explore participants' perspectives on grammatical accuracy. The interviews were conducted via direct messaging on social media. Questions focused on participants' awareness of grammar rules, motivation for writing in English, and responses to feedback. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Ethical standards were upheld to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation (Townsend & Wallace, 2017).

Data Analysis Techniques

1. Grammatical Error Analysis

The Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) was employed to categorize grammatical errors into four types:

- a. Omission: Missing necessary linguistic elements.
- b. Addition: Inclusion of unnecessary words or structures.
- c. Misformation: Use of incorrect word forms or grammar structures.
- d. Misordering: Incorrect word arrangement within a sentence.

Each collected post was reviewed, and errors were labeled, categorized, and analyzed for frequency and patterns.

2. Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis method was used to analyze interview responses, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Data familiarization, open coding, and theme development were carried out manually to ensure grounded interpretations. Recurring themes regarding users' perceptions of grammatical accuracy and its role in digital communication were identified and cross-referenced with their language use.

Validity

Triangulation between status analysis and interview data was used to strengthen validity. Member checking was also conducted, where participants were given summaries of their interview data to verify interpretations. Detailed documentation and transparency in the analysis process were maintained to ensure reliability and replicability (Noble & Smith, 2015).

RESULT

Grammatical Errors in Social Media Statuses

The analysis of over 30 English-language statuses posted by Indonesian users revealed consistent patterns of grammatical inaccuracies. Using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the errors were classified as follows:

Table 1. Classification of Grammatical Errors in English-Language Statuses by Indonesian Users Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Error Type	Frequency	Examples
Omission	High	"Take by Baba" → "It was taken by Baba"
Addition	Moderate	"Nobody listens until you say something wrong!!" → remove "!!"
Misformation	High	"Thas the beauty life" → "That's the beautiful life"
Misordering	Moderate	"We rewrite the starts ini AGBSI" → "We rewrite the stars in AGBSI"

Grammatical errors appeared across all respondents, indicating a shared pattern of informal, creative, or unmonitored English use in digital spaces. Among the various error types, omission errors were the most frequent, often involving the absence of auxiliary verbs, articles, or pronouns. For example, expressions like "My name Enzu,

I'm 2 weeks" reflect the omission of essential grammatical elements.

Misformation errors were also common, encompassing spelling mistakes, incorrect verb forms, and inappropriate word choices. An instance of this is the misspelling "surprises" used in place of the correct form *surprise*. Misordering errors tended to occur in syntactically confusing sentences,

particularly among users attempting poetic or emotionally expressive language. Addition errors, on the other hand, typically involved unnecessary punctuation marks or redundant words.

Despite the prevalence of these issues, several grammatically correct posts were identified, suggesting a degree of variability in language awareness or intentionality. Examples of accurate constructions include “I just got recognized as one of their top fans!” and “Every corner of this place inspires, making the meeting truly memorable.” These findings imply that while grammatical accuracy among users is inconsistent, the ability to produce correct English structures does exist, reflecting fluctuating engagement with language norms.

Users’ Perceptions of Grammatical Accuracy

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed six major themes related to users’ perceptions of grammatical accuracy in their social media use.

The first theme, *Informality and Speed Over Accuracy*, showed that most participants perceived social media as a space for fast and casual communication where grammatical correctness is often overlooked in favor of spontaneity. As one participant noted, “I post without worrying too much about grammar because social media prioritizes speed” (P4).

Secondly, the *Contextual Importance of Grammar* emerged as a significant factor. Around half of the participants acknowledged that grammar plays a more important role in formal or professional contexts. For instance, one respondent stated, “Grammar becomes important only when I want to make an impression” (P10), suggesting a situational approach to grammatical correctness.

The third theme, *Social Judgment and Self-Image*, revealed that some users were conscious of how their grammar affected others’ perceptions. In public or professional posts, they felt that good

grammar reflected care and consideration for the audience. As P5 explained, “Good grammar shows that I care about my words and my audience.”

Feedback and Reactions formed the fourth theme. Participants reported a range of responses to their grammatical errors—from playful teasing to constructive corrections. One user shared, “I receive some teasing comments about my grammar mistakes” (P1), highlighting the social dynamics around language use online.

The fifth theme, *Challenges in Grammar Use*, highlighted common difficulties such as tense, punctuation, and vocabulary. Many users attributed their mistakes to rushed typing or a lack of confidence in their grammatical knowledge. P4 remarked, “Spelling is hard, especially when typing fast or using slang,” emphasizing the impact of typing habits and informal vocabulary on accuracy.

Lastly, the theme of *Creativity vs. Structure* illustrated a tension between linguistic rules and expressive freedom. Some participants felt that strict adherence to grammar could hinder their creativity, especially when attempting humor or artistic expression. As P9 put it, “Strict grammar rules hinder creativity.”

In summary, out of the ten participants interviewed, five viewed grammar as contextually important, particularly in formal or public posts, while the other five were more lenient, prioritizing ease and engagement over accuracy. This 50-50 split reflects broader linguistic trends on social media, where users negotiate between functionality, self-expression, and social norms.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals a nuanced landscape of grammatical accuracy in English-language social media statuses posted by Indonesian users. The findings align with theoretical frameworks in second language acquisition (SLA), digital communication, and sociolinguistics, offering insights into how

users balance language norms, self-expression, and communicative goals.

Informal Context and Grammatical Tolerance

The frequency of omission and misinformation errors in participants' posts supports Crystal's (2005) view that digital platforms promote a relaxed linguistic register. Social media encourages immediacy, which deprioritizes grammatical monitoring, especially for non-native speakers. This reflects Krashen's (2009) Monitor Hypothesis, where internal grammar checks are less engaged in informal contexts.

Social Media as an SLA Environment

Despite the prevalence of grammatical errors, social media remains a site of language exposure and practice. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Ohta, 2017) underscores the role of interaction in language learning. Even in the absence of formal instruction, participants are exposed to peer language models and occasional feedback, which may influence their language development over time.

However, the inconsistent feedback and lack of structured correction on social media slow the refinement of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972). Anderson's Skill Acquisition Theory (O'Malley et al., 1987) suggests that procedural fluency requires consistent practice and correction, conditions that are often lacking in spontaneous digital interactions.

Attitudes Toward Grammatical Accuracy

The thematic analysis reveals a divergence in participants' attitudes toward grammatical correctness. Approximately half view grammar as essential in formal or professional contexts, aligning Rowe's (2017) findings that grammar contributes to credibility. Others emphasize content and creativity, viewing grammar as secondary in casual settings.

These perspectives reflect Swales' (1990) Discourse Community Theory, where

communicative norms vary across groups. In informal online communities, grammar may carry less social significance, while in professional or academic circles, adherence to norms signals competence.

Balancing Functionality and Identity

Participants' preference for informal language mirrors the dual pressures of functionality (clarity, speed) and identity construction. Social media posts often function as personal statements where users prioritize authenticity and tone over accuracy. This illustrates how social media communication blends performativity and pragmatism, particularly in multilingual contexts.

Pedagogical and Linguistic Implications

These findings offer valuable implications for language education:

1. For Educators: Grammatical errors on social media can serve as authentic teaching materials. Integrating real posts into lessons may bridge the gap between formal instruction and digital practice, as Wardoyo et al. (2023) suggested.
2. For Learners: Encouraging critical digital literacy, particularly awareness of how context influences grammar can help users shift between registers effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study examined grammatical errors in English-language social media posts and explored Indonesian users' perceptions of grammatical accuracy. Findings revealed frequent use of omission, mis formation, and mis ordering errors, reflecting the informal and spontaneous nature of digital communication. The thematic analysis of interviews showed a balanced division in perception that some users valued grammatical correctness in professional settings, while others prioritized speed, creativity, and connection.

These insights suggest that social media serves both as a space for linguistic experimentation and as a mirror of shifting

norms in second language use. While the informal environment fosters creativity and expression, it also poses challenges to grammatical development for ESL learners. This dual role underlines the importance of pedagogical approaches that embrace real-world digital language use while reinforcing fundamental grammar instruction.

Further research might investigate the long-term impact of digital writing habits on academic or professional English proficiency or explore how specific types of online feedback affect user language awareness. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital literacy, language learning, and the evolving dynamics of English use in the digital age.

Declaration by Authors

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