

## ISSUES OF WRITING SKILLS: CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN ERRORS BY FOREIGN SPEAKERS FROM TIMOR LESTE

<sup>1</sup>\*Hastari Mayrita, <sup>2</sup>Muchlas Abror

<sup>1</sup>Indonesian Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Social Humanities, Universitas Bina Darma, Palembang City, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Indonesian Language Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Kebumen, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author Email: [hastari\\_mayrita@binadarma.ac.id](mailto:hastari_mayrita@binadarma.ac.id)

Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: March 2024 Revised: May 2024 Published: July 2024	<i>There is a pressing need for professional Indonesian language teachers to enhance the learning experience for foreign speakers. This study focuses on examining language errors in BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learners' essay writing, particularly in terms of punctuation placement, sentence structure, word choice, and the factors contributing to these errors. A qualitative method with a case study approach was employed, utilizing data collection techniques such as document analysis and Voice Note (VN) recordings via WhatsApp. The primary data sources included essays from BIPA students in Timor Leste and voice recordings of BIPA teachers in Timor Leste. The study identified several language errors in the students' essays, including improper use of punctuation, incorrect word choice, and ineffective sentence structure. The researchers also uncovered several factors causing these errors: language and cultural gaps, insufficient learning resources and teaching staff, and inadequacies in the curriculum and foreign language learning policies. The implications of the research findings for BIPA learning are significant. To improve learning outcomes, it is essential to make learning resources more engaging and accessible. Additionally, addressing the gap between the targeted curriculum and student needs can be achieved by regularly evaluating and adjusting the language learning curriculum. Providing training to teachers and facilitating educators with a strong background in Indonesian language education are crucial steps to help BIPA students overcome their learning difficulties. These measures will contribute to a more effective and supportive learning environment for BIPA students.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Language errors; Writing skills; Essay; Punctuation usage; Foreign speakers;	
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### INTRODUCTION

There is a need for professional Indonesian language teachers to help foreign speakers learn Indonesian better. The focus of this study is to examine how language errors in BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learners' essay writing are related to the placement of punctuation marks, sentence structure, word choice, and factors that cause these errors. Teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers requires professional teaching staff. Based on preliminary information obtained by the researchers from one of the Indonesian language teachers for foreign speakers at the Indonesia Language Cultural Center in Timor-Leste, there is a need for Indonesian teachers who have experience in teaching the Indonesian language. The goal is to be able to teach Indonesian effectively to students in Timor-Leste. Gonvales (2018) explains the importance of professional Indonesian language teachers in teaching Indonesians to foreign speakers. This is to help support the foreign language teaching policy.

Cultural diversity, tourism, international relations, and business opportunities in Indonesia are some of the reasons why foreigners are drawn to learn the language. However, the cultural diversity of Indonesia is one of the main reasons that foreigners are learning Indonesian (Siagian & Boeriswati, 2023). Numerous non-native speakers of English pursue studies in Indonesia, both locally and globally. Furthermore, the UNESCO General Conference has officially designated Indonesian as its official language. At the 42nd UNESCO General Conference Plenary Session on November 20, 2023, at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, this decision was marked by the unanimous adoption of Resolution 42 C/28 (Kemenlu, 2023).

The Language Agency of the Republic of Indonesia's BIPA program, independent BIPA educators and activists, and universities in Indonesia and overseas are all resources for non-native speakers of Indonesian who wish to learn the language. With the help of this program, non-native speakers of Indonesian can overcome the difficulties of comprehending the grammatical structure that differs from that of their home language and become proficient in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Kalee&Muliana, 2018)

Students enrolled in the BIPA program at the Cultural Center of the Indonesian Embassy in Timor-Leste are the subject of the study. There is a need for Indonesian language educators with experience teaching Indonesian in Timor-Leste, according to information shared with us by one of the BIPA instructors there. In order to effectively teach Indonesian to students in Timor-Leste, Gonvaes (2018) describe highlights the significance of professional Indonesian language educators. This helps shape the country's foreign language education policies. Bloom & Kurvers (2020) describe a study on literacy instruction and different values of language practice that can help Timor-Leste decide on language policy for language learning.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by BIPA students, especially those from Timor-Leste, when writing essays in Indonesian. Examining linguistic errors in learners' essays with regard to punctuation placement, sentence structure, and word choice, as well as the reasons behind these errors, is one of the research indicators used to answer the research questions.

In order to comprehend and identify a particular case among the participants, this research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, which is in line with the research questions (Linclon&Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2021; Mayrita, etc., 2024). Five essays from BIPA students in Timor-Leste are among the data sources. The research subjects were BIPA students located at Av. Bpo. de Medeiros, Dili, Timor-Leste, Indonesian Cultural Center. The names of the students who turned in the essays were made anonymous by the researcher, who treated the names as research data. P1 (Participant 1), K1 (Sentence 1), Pg1 (Paragraph 1), and so on are some examples of the pseudonyms that are used.

Document analysis is the method used in this study to collect data. According to Bell (2010), documents are tangible items that can be kept in storage and can contain a variety of analytical materials, including images, movies, slides, films, and other unwritten sources. Films and records are examples of documents, Ghoni (2012). In line with Bell and Ghony, the researcher used virtual platforms to hold Zoom meetings in order to arrange with a Timor-Leste instructor and the BIPA students. Following the Zoom session, the researcher sent the students a link to a Google Form so they could submit their essays and have their language errors checked. Every word and sentence in the essays was carefully studied and reviewed by the researcher multiple times. In order to recognize and comprehend the linguistic mistakes made by Indonesian language learners in Timor-Leste, the researcher also performed Voice Notes (VN) with one of the BIPA instructors in the region.

In order to comprehend and identify a particular case among the participants, this research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, which is in line with the research questions (Linclon&Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2021; Mayrita, etc., 2024). Five essays from BIPA

students in Timor-Leste are among the data sources. The study was conducted at the Av. Bpo. de Medeiros, Dili, Timor-Leste location of the Indonesian Cultural Center. The names of the students who turned in the essays were made anonymous by the researcher, who treated the names as research data. P1 (Participant 1), K1 (Sentence 1), Pg1 (Paragraph 1), and so on are some examples of the pseudonyms that are used. It is anticipated that this novel research will yield information regarding the difficulties associated with BIPA learning when writing essays in Indonesian, which will be useful in developing policies for putting BIPA learning programs into action, particularly for BIPA learners in Timor-Leste.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA)**

BIPA learning is the first phase of language acquisition, according to Utami&Rahmawati (2020), with the goal of encouraging and motivating non-native Indonesian speakers. Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) refers to programs created specifically to teach Indonesian to learners from other countries. Students' proficiency levels range from basic to advanced, and BIPA materials are adapted to meet their needs. The goal of these materials is to help learners become fluent in Indonesian through the contributions of a variety of writers, both foreign and Indonesian.

International students for whom Indonesian is not their first language make up the majority of the target audience for Learning Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) (B1). Utami&Rahmawati (2020) define foreign language learners as people who are nationals of other nations. When speaking in Indonesian, BIPA Learning should take into account contextual factors and linguistic conventions. Instructional strategies and resources are tailored to the goals and requirements of global learners, incorporating the language and culture of Indonesia.

### **Analysis of Language Errors**

Errors in language are an essential part of learning a language and are not separate from the process of learning anything new, Siagian&Boeristiwa (2023). Language mistakes are common in the phonetic system because, as (Chaer, 2014) points out, language is used by social groups for communication and collaboration. Depending on how closely we examine linguistic errors, we can classify them. Disturbances from social norms, communication determinants, and Indonesian grammar rules are involved, Setyawati (2010). Whether pertaining to instruction in a first language (B1) or second language (B2), language errors and teaching are closely related (Supriyadi, 1986). Whether pertaining to instruction in a first language (B1) or second language (B2), language errors and teaching are closely related (Supriyadi, 1986). Second language learners (B2) commit language errors more often than first language learners (B1), which is consistent with Corder's theory (Yulianto&Mintowati, 2010), (Johan, 2018) that anyone learning a language is prone to making mistakes.

### **Writing Skills**

Writing is one of the key language skills that students need to acquire. According to Pratiwi&Mayrita (2023), writing skills are the ability to communicate ideas, thoughts, opinions, reactions, and feelings through written language. Writing is an expressive and productive language skill that can be applied to both direct and indirect interpersonal communication, Tarigan (2008). Writing proficiency requires adherence to relevant guidelines and standards.

### **Punctuation Usage**

Structural language errors are frequently linked to language norm errors. Language norms, such as punctuation, diction, and sentence structure, are employed to distinguish words and sentences in different types of texts. There are several symbols used in punctuation, such as commas and periods. There are fifteen punctuation marks required by Indonesian spelling

rules, which include colons, semicolons, commas, and more (Enre, 1988). Diction, or word choice, is the process of selecting acceptable and harmonic words to effectively communicate ideas.

To make sure that written sentences are correctly understood, punctuation is essential. In both spoken and non-spoken communication, a sentence is the smallest unit that expresses a complete idea. Correct and precise comprehension of sentence meaning is made easier for readers by punctuation. The Enhanced Spelling (EyD) in the Indonesian language explains punctuation usage and outlines the various kinds of language norms in Indonesia (Kemdikbud, 2022).

### **Diction Usage**

Diction, also known as word choice, is the deliberate use of language. Every word has a distinct meaning that sets it apart from other words. Keraf (2008) claims that phraseology, language style, and expressions are all included in diction, in addition to word relationships in the expression of an idea. Diction, or word choice, is defined by Widyamartaya (1990) as the capacity to precisely discern subtleties in meaning in accordance with the intended idea. The diction should be modified in accordance with the circumstances and the cultural norms of a listener or reader group. Based on meaning, diction is separated into two categories: denotative and connotative. The difference between connotative and denotative diction, according to Chaer (2014), is based on whether a word has emotional significance or not. In conclusion, connotative meanings are particular, whereas denotative meanings are broad.

### **Sentence**

Language learning is the creation of meaning through student interpersonal negotiations (Mayrita, etc., 2024). Language competence is divided into two categories: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational categories relate to structures in a language. Therefore, it is necessary to use a good and easy-to-understand sentence in using a language. A sentence is made up of several expressions that express thoughts and emotions. With its own range of intonations and the potential to contain clauses, it is a comparatively autonomous linguistic unit. An effective sentence, according to Widjono (2012), is succinct, clear, complete, and able to accurately convey information for readers to easily understand. Sentences that are effective are organized according to relevant criteria, such as precision, lucidity, comprehensiveness, succinctness, incorporation of necessary components in every sentence, attention to improved spelling, and selection of suitable vocabulary (Widjono, 2012; Akhadiyah, 1992).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

In this study, a qualitative method was employed, utilizing a case study approach and thematic analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the data. Thematic analysis involves the identification, categorization, and development of key themes that emerge from the data, aiding in the recognition of patterns and insights. The analytical process undertaken by the researchers can be broken down into several systematic steps. Initially, researchers engaged in a comprehensive understanding of the data, which involved reading and re-reading the documents in their possession. During this phase, preliminary notes or annotations were made regarding significant elements within the data, including keywords, noteworthy statements, and emerging patterns. Following this initial exploration, researchers identified the units of analysis, which are the specific parts of the data that are to be examined. The next step was descriptive coding, where the data were systematically coded by associating the identified units of analysis with initial categories. This stage marks the beginning of organizing the research data. Subsequently, researchers moved on to the development of initial themes. This involved

identifying themes that emerged from the coding process, along with the identification of sub-themes or variations within these themes. The validation of these themes was an important step to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Once validated, the researchers developed the main themes by organizing them into more abstract and overarching categories. The final step in the analysis was the interpretation of the findings. This involved explaining the meaning and implications of the identified themes and connecting them with relevant literature in the field. Through this systematic process, the researchers were able to derive meaningful insights and patterns from the qualitative data, contributing to a better understanding of the studied phenomenon.

### **Research Participants**

To comprehend and identify a particular case among the participants, this research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach, aligning with the research questions posed by Mayrita et al. (2024). This method allows for an in-depth examination of specific instances within their real-life context, providing a rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. The data sources for this study include five essays written by BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) students in Timor-Leste. These essays were collected from the Indonesian Cultural Center located on Av. Bpo. de Medeiros, Dili, Timor-Leste. The cultural center serves as a focal point for Indonesian language and cultural education, making it an ideal setting for this research. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to the students who submitted the essays. These pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the students while still allowing for a detailed analysis of their work. For instance, pseudonyms such as P1 (Participant 1), K1 (Sentence 1), and Pg1 (Paragraph 1) were used to refer to specific participants, sentences, and paragraphs respectively. This approach ensured that the data could be systematically analyzed without compromising the privacy of the individuals involved. Overall, this research design, with its qualitative case study approach, data collection from a culturally relevant setting, and careful handling of participant anonymity, provides a robust framework for exploring the research questions and gaining insights into the experiences of BIPA students in Timor-Leste.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The method of data collection used in this study is the document technique. Prior to conducting research, the researchers conducted a virtual (daring) Zoom Meeting to coordinate with the researchers' remaining participants in the Leste region and the BIPA research team members there. The researchers provide more details about this study. Subsequently, after providing clarification, there was a question and answer session regarding the issues raised. Following the Zoom meeting, the researcher provided a link to a Google Form so that participants could record their learning outcomes and analyze their own problems. According to Robert C., a document's technical technique is information derived from critical sources, whether they are external or internal to a company or organization. Documentation techniques are one of the most common ways to gather research data quickly and efficiently. Specifically, research data is obtained through database-based research documents that are connected to the subject data that will be studied.

Documents are objects that can be stored and can be analyzed which can include unwritten sources such as photographs, films, videos, slides, and others, according to Bell (2010). Ghony (2012) uses two types of documents: records and movies. The movie he refers to is a video tape that can record the actual situation. As stated by Ghony (2012), during the data collection process, the researchers listened to the recorded conversation in its entirety before transcribing it. After that, the researcher concentrated on listening to the voice recordings

repeatedly to notice and learn every word and sentence spoken. This was done to find out why students in Timor Leste who speak a foreign language make language errors. The information was sourced from one of the BIPA teachers at the Cultural Center in Timor Leste in 2022.

Document data collection involves analyzing and interpreting essay data. To collect data through documents, the researcher took the following steps: 1. Finding data sources relevant to the researcher's research topic; 2. Establishing standards for selecting the documents used; 3. Collecting the documents that have been identified; 4. Organizing and compiling the documents systematically; 5. Studying information about language errors found in the documents; and 6. Searching for additional information about the sources, contestation, and analysis were conducted to find themes and patterns of the results. In addition, the next step was to record the main findings, differences, similarities, or trends that emerged from the document analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, thematic analysis was used. In thematic analysis, the researcher identifies, categorizes, and develops the main themes that emerge from the data. This technique helps in better understanding of the patterns in the data. The steps of analysis carried out by researchers: initial data understanding; reading documents owned; making preliminary notes or annotations about important elements in the data, keywords, interesting statements, or emerging patterns; identifying the units of analysis, the parts in the data analyzed; descriptive coding; coding the data by relating the units of analysis to the initial categories you have identified. This is the initial stage in organizing the research data. Then, initial theme development; identifying initial themes that emerge from the coding; identification of sub-themes or variations within these themes; validating the themes that have been found; developing the main theme; organizing the themes into more abstract and overarching main themes. Finish, Interpreting the findings by explaining their meaning and implications in the field and connecting between themes and relevant literature.

### **Trustworthiness**

To fulfill the level of trustworthiness, researchers do the following. (1) Checking the results of data analysis that has been found and rechecked repeatedly. (2) Analyzing more diligently independently by paying attention to every aspect of the research in more depth. (3) Maintain the credibility of the results by ensuring that the interpretation is carried out in accordance with the real conditions and agreed upon by the participants. (4) Use data triangulation to compare research results. (5) Hold discussions between colleagues. This activity is carried out to avoid various uncertainties that can interfere with research. Peers and experts receive joint debriefing.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

#### ***Analysis of Language Errors in Writing***

Language errors fall into a number of categories, according to Tarigan (2011). Firstly, "Interference-Like Goofs" are errors resulting from interference that mirrors the native language's structure and is not encountered during the initial language learning process from the target language. Second, "LI Developmental Goofs" refers to mistakes that occur during the initial language learning process from the target language but do not reflect the structure of the native language. Third, taxonomic errors classified as "Ambiguous Goofs" can also be classified as "Interference-Like Goofs" or "LI Developmental Goofs." Fourth, "Unique Goofs" refer to singular mistakes that do not appear in B1 acquisition data from the target language and do not reflect the first language (B1). Apart from the diverse types of language errors, there exists a taxonomy or classification system for language errors.

Simply put, language errors are defined as any spoken or written language use that deviates from language norms [Supriani&Siregar, 2016; Gio &Yusrawati, 2017; Kalee, 2018]. These viewpoints lead to the conclusion that spoken or written language in Indonesian includes words, sentences, and paragraphs that do not adhere to accepted linguistic conventions.

### *Analysis of Punctuation Erros in BIPA Students' Essays*

Punctuation errors in student essays generally vary, but here are some common errors that occur frequently. The analysis of punctuation errors was adjusted to the Indonesian Spelling guide, namely *Ejaan yang Disempurnakan (EyD)* (Kemdikbud, 2022). The functuation errors made by foreign students can be seen in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1  
Functuation Errors in BIPA Students' Essay

Found punctuation errors		
Punctuation	Found	Not Found
Period (.) and Comma (,)	V	-
Quotation Marks ("...")	V	-
Exclamation (!) and Question (?) Marks	V	-
Hyphen (-) and Gedash (-)	-	V
Lack of Punctuation	V	-
Inappropriate Spacing	V	-
Incorrect Capitalization	V	-
Use of Apostrophe (') and Double Quotation Marks (" ")	V	-
Use of Brackets {}()	-	V

### *Period (.) and Comma (,)*

Incorrect use of commas. Students often use commas in the wrong places or do not use commas where they should be. Not using commas to separate elements in a series. As found in the following sentence below.

*Keluarga saya ada ibu ayah, dan adik.* (P2/K1/Pg1)

My family includes my mother, father, and sister

*Saya empat saudara. Pertama saya kedua adik saya ada tiga orang.* (P1/K3/Pg2)

I have four siblings. First, my two younger siblings are three people

*Hobi adik saya ada main sepeda.* (P3/K2/Pg2)

My brother's hobby is playing bicycle

*Ini cerita saya. Saya, dan teman saya berteman.* (P5/K4/Pg2)

This is my story. My friend and I are friends

### *Quotation Marks ("...")*

There is no use of quotation marks in the BIPA students' essays in Timor Leste that the researcher studied.

### *Exclamation (!) and Question (?) Marks*

Overuse or underuse. Some students overused or underused exclamation marks or question marks in expressing emotions or questions. Such as the sentences in the essay below:

*Saya dan adik suka makan tapai. Apa tahu tapai???. Tapai itu enak.* (P4/K2/P3)

My brother and I like to eat tapai. Do you know tapai? Tapai is delicious

*Siapa yang duduk. Tidak ada duduk. (P3/K2/Pg3)*  
Who's sitting. No one is sitting.

#### *Hyphen (-) and Gedash (-)*

There is no use of hyphen and gedash in the essays of the BIPA students in Timor Leste that the researcher studied.

#### *Lack of Punctuation*

It was found that all students did not pay attention to the placement of punctuation marks, so that the sentences became difficult to understand. Students just write, but punctuation marks are not used or not in the appropriate location. This makes students' writing difficult to read and understand.

*Hobi saya membaca adik saya suka menggambar. (P2/K2/Pg3)*

My hobby is reading, my sister likes to draw

*Cita-cita saya dokter. (P3/K2/Pg3)*

My dream is to be a doctor

*Pertama saya kedua adik saya ada tiga orang. (P1/K3/Pg2)*

My first two siblings are three people.

*Hobi kami berbeda (P2/K3/Pg3)*

Our hobbies are different

*Makan tapai enak. Tapai makanan tradisional Timor Leste, saya suku tapai. (P4/K4/Pg3)*

Eating tapai is delicious. Tapai is a traditional food of Timor Leste, I am a tapai tribe

#### *Inappropriate Spacing*

Inappropriate spacing between words or punctuation marks can make writing difficult to read. As found in the following sentence in the essay.

*Hobi kami berbeda.Kami walau berbeda saling damai. (P2/K4/Pg3).*

Our hobbies are different,but we are at peace with each other.

#### *Incorrect Capitalization*

The error of over- or under-using capital letters in words or phrases. In general, there is an error in writing letters at the beginning of the word "conjunction" found in the title. Students in their writing use many capital letters at the beginning of words in every title they make. For example, in the following sentence. In the title of the essay:

*“Saya Dan Keluarga Saya”. (P3/Judul)*

#### *Use of Apostrophe (') and Double Quotation Marks (" ")*

Common errors involve the use of an apostrophe to indicate possession or the use of double quotation marks to indicate quotation. Such as the following sentence.

*“Makan Tapai” adalah makanan di Timor Leste. (P4/K1/P3).*

"Makan Tapai" is a food in Timor Leste.

The error is due to the use of no double quotation marks in "makan tapai". The correct version should be *Makan 'tapai'* is a food in Timor Leste.

#### *Use of Brackets {}()*



Inappropriate use. Students may use parentheses incorrectly, or put them in the wrong place. There is no use of parentheses in the essays of the BIPA students in Timor Leste that the researcher studied.

### ***Analysis of Diction Usage Analysis in BIPA Students' Essays***

The results of a related study by Wijayanti&Siroj (2020) showed that the most frequent linguistic errors in written discourse in BIPA learning were diction choice errors. Tiawati (2018) conducted a second study on the needs of BIPA students and the application of BIPA learning, describing the needs and application of BIPA learning with the wisdom of the local multicultural community. Using the Tip of the Tongue (ToT) technique, language errors in the speech of foreign learners of Indonesian were analyzed, and the ToT process was examined in their speech. Furthermore, studies have been conducted that highlight the significance of Timor-Leste's Indonesian Language Education Study Program. In order to effectively teach Indonesian to students in Timor-Leste who desire to study the language, Gonvales (2018), investigated the importance of professional teachers in the field of Indonesian language education. Timor-Leste's language policies for language learning may benefit from research on literacy classes and different language practice values, Boon (2020).

Errors in diction, especially in the essays of foreign students learning Indonesian, can vary depending on their level of language proficiency. The following are some of the common errors in diction that occur among BIPA students in Timor Leste in writing Indonesian essays.

Table 1  
Diction Usage in BIPA Students' Essay

Found diction usage errors		
Diction	Found	Not Found
Inappropriate Word Selection	V	-
Awkward or Rigid Word Choice	V	-
Errors in Idioms or Language Phrases	V	-
Language Level Mismatch	V	-
Redundancy or Repetition of Words	V	-
Lack of knowledge of Indonesian vocabulary	V	-
Errors in Pronoun Selection	V	-
Inconsistent in the Use of Language Style	V	-
Errors in Using Regional or Home-specific Words	V	-

### ***Inappropriate Word Selection***

Students use words that do not fit the context or do not have the right meaning in the sentence. As in the sentences found below.

*Saya empat saudara. Pertama saya kedua adik saya ada tiga orang.* (P1/K3/Pg2)  
I have four siblings. First, my two younger siblings are three.

### ***Awkward or Rigid Word Choice***

Students use vocabulary that is too formal or stiff, making the sentences sound unnatural. Like the following sentence.

*Ibu saya seorang guru. Bagaimana dengan cita-cita saya? Saya cita-cita ingin sebagai guru juga.* (P1/K4/P3)

My mom is a teacher. What about my dreams? I aspire to be a teacher too.

#### *Errors in Idioms or Language Phrases*

Students misuse Indonesian idioms or phrases, resulting in confusion or incongruity in the sentence.

*Saya empat saudara. Pertama saya kedua adik saya ada tiga orang.* (P1/K3/Pg2)  
I have four siblings. First, my two younger siblings are three people.

In the sentence above, apart from the word choice being incorrect, the phrase used is also wrong.

#### *Language Level Mismatch*

Mistakes in adjusting the language level to the situation or audience often occur, for example using language that is too formal in an informal context or vice versa.

#### *Redundancy or Repetition of Words*

Students often use similar words over and over again, leading to word overload and lack of variety in writing.

#### *Lack of knowledge of Indonesian vocabulary*

Errors can occur, because students lack knowledge of Indonesian vocabulary. It can also be due to not paying attention to variations in nouns, verbs, and adjectives, making the writing feel monotonous. Foreign-speaking students do not really understand word classes in Indonesian.

#### *Errors in Pronoun Selection*

It was also found that there were students who used pronouns that did not match the proper noun.

#### *Inconsistent in the Use of Language Style*

Language errors were also found where students were inconsistent in the use of language styles, for example switching between formal and informal language without clear reasons.

#### *Errors in Using Regional or Home-specific Words*

Foreign-speaking students may misunderstand or misuse regionally specific words or slang that may not be familiar or appropriate in certain contexts.

To correct these errors, BIPA foreign language students can read more in Indonesian, take language courses, and ask for feedback from native speakers or Indonesian teachers. Understanding the context in which words and phrases are used, as well as attention to variety and flexibility in word choice, will help improve students' diction proficiency.

#### ***Sentence Usage Analysis of BIPA Students' Essays***

The sentences used in the writing of BIPA students in Timor Leste should be effective sentences, that is, sentences that are in accordance with language rules. Sentences that are in

accordance with the Indonesian language are sentences that do not deviate from the applicable rules. The sentence has at least a subject (s) and predicate (p). In addition, the sentences used are sentences that are not wordy or convoluted. There are 40 sentence errors in the writing of BIPA students in Timor Leste.

Errors in sentences in the essays of foreign-speaking students learning Indonesian in Timor Leste vary depending on their level of language proficiency. Here are some of the researcher's findings on the common errors present in these students' writing in Indonesian.

Table 1  
Sentence Errors in BIPA Students' Essay

Found sentence errors		
Sentence Errors	Found	Not Found
Grammar Errors	V	-
Verb Timing Mismatch	V	-
Subject-Verb Agreement Error	V	-
Incorrect Use of Connecting Words	V	-
Incongruity of Clauses and Phrases	V	-
Improper Use of Pronomina	V	-
Errors in the Use of Adjectives and Nouns	V	-
Limited Use of Vocabulary	V	-
Errors in the Use of Compound Sentences	V	-
Language Style Inappropriateness	V	-
Errors in the Use of Expressions and Idioms	V	-
Errors in Writing Passive and Active Sentences	V	-

Grammar errors often occur due to incorrect use of subjects, predicates, and objects that do not align with Indonesian language rules. Additionally, verb timing mismatches, such as mixing past, present, or future tenses within a single sentence, can lead to confusion. Subject-verb agreement errors, where verbs do not match the subject in number, also contribute to grammatical inaccuracies. Another common issue is the incorrect use of connecting words, where conjunctions do not appropriately reflect the logical relationship between clauses or phrases. Moreover, incongruity of clauses and phrases can result in ambiguous or unclear sentences. Improper use of pronouns, such as using pronouns that do not match their antecedents, further complicates the sentence structure. Errors in the use of adjectives and nouns, where the chosen words do not fit the context or cause confusion, also affect the clarity of the writing. Limited vocabulary use can make sentences feel monotonous and difficult to understand, hindering effective communication.

The construction of compound sentences often presents challenges, with improper use of conjunctions or punctuation leading to errors. Language style inappropriateness, where formal language is used in informal situations or vice versa, can also disrupt the flow and context of the writing. Additionally, the use of expressions and idioms that are unfamiliar or inappropriate to native Indonesian speakers can result in awkward or confusing sentences. Mistakes in writing passive and active sentences, where the choice between the two is incorrect, further complicate sentence structure. To correct these errors, foreign speakers can engage in

grammar-focused exercises, read more Indonesian literature, and seek feedback from native speakers or Indonesian teachers. Understanding grammar rules, appropriate word usage, and good sentence structure will significantly improve sentence writing proficiency.

## Discussion

The study identified several linguistic errors in sentence structure, diction, and punctuation in essays written by BIPA students in Timor-Leste. Punctuation errors included improper use of commas, incorrect placement of quotation marks, misuse of exclamation marks and question marks, lack of punctuation marks, absence of spacing, incorrect capitalization, misuse of apostrophes, and inconsistent use of double quotation marks. In terms of diction, the errors involved inappropriate word selection, rigid word choice, incorrect use of language phrases, mismatched levels of language proficiency, frequent word repetition, limited Indonesian vocabulary, incorrect pronoun selection, inconsistent use of language styles, and improper use of words from local dialects. Additionally, ineffective sentences were characterized by verbosity, repetition, rigidity, and neglect of proper subject structure. The following is a more detailed description of the Indonesian language errors found in the essays of BIPA students in Timor-Leste and their underlying causes.

### *Indonesian Errors in BIPA Learners' Essays*

Punctuation errors in students' essays vary significantly, aligning with the findings of Fitriani et al. (2020) in their research on language errors among BIPA students. The study identified common punctuation errors, including incorrect use of commas, improper use of quotation marks, misuse of exclamation and question marks, lack of punctuation marks, incorrect spacing, wrong capitalization, and improper use of apostrophes and double quotation marks. These errors reflect a broader challenge in mastering the rules of Indonesian essay writing. Errors in diction, especially in essays by foreign students learning Indonesian, also vary based on their language proficiency. Wijayanti and Siroj (2020) highlighted that these errors often stem from difficulties in mastering spelling and vocabulary in Indonesian. Common diction errors include inappropriate word selection, rigid word choice, incorrect use of language phrases, mismatch in language levels, redundancy or repetition of words, lack of vocabulary knowledge, errors in pronoun selection, inconsistent use of language styles, and incorrect use of words of regional origin (Fitriani et al., 2020; Nurwicaksono & Amelia, 2018). To address these issues, BIPA students can benefit from extensive reading in Indonesian, enrolling in language courses, and seeking feedback from native speakers or Indonesian teachers. Understanding the context in which words and phrases are used and developing a varied and flexible vocabulary will improve students' diction proficiency.

The sentences used in BIPA students' writing in Timor Leste should be effective and adhere to Indonesian language rules, meaning they must have a clear subject and predicate and avoid convoluted or wordy structures. To correct errors in sentence construction, foreign speakers can engage in grammar-focused exercises, read more in Indonesian, and ask for feedback from native speakers or Indonesian teachers (Wijayanti & Siroj, 2020; Fitriani et al., 2020; Arifin & Rois, 2017). A solid understanding of grammar rules, appropriate word usage, and good sentence structure will significantly enhance sentence writing proficiency.

The difficulties faced by BIPA students in Timor Leste in learning Indonesian can be attributed to several factors. Based on information obtained from a BIPA teacher in Timor Leste, these challenges stem from issues related to language, culture, learning resources, teaching quality, and educational policies. Language and cultural gaps present significant barriers, as differences between Indonesian and native languages in Timor Leste complicate students' understanding of new linguistic concepts (Pujo, 2020; Maharani & Astuti, 2018).

Cultural differences further hinder contextual comprehension, as students may struggle with cultural references in learning materials. The lack of adequate learning resources exacerbates these challenges, with a noticeable shortage of textbooks and teaching materials specifically designed for BIPA students, complicating the learning process and making it difficult for students to practice and internalize the language effectively.

Another critical factor is the lack of qualified teachers. According to Wijayanti and Siroj (2020) and Fitriani et al. (2020), there is a shortage of adequately trained teachers capable of delivering high-quality instruction tailored to BIPA students' needs. This deficiency in qualified educators negatively impacts the teaching process's effectiveness. Policy and curriculum issues also play a role in the difficulties faced by BIPA students. Often, there is a lack of active practice opportunities, crucial for language acquisition, and a mismatch between the curriculum and the specific needs of BIPA students, further hindering their learning progress. These factors—language and cultural gaps, inadequate learning resources, lack of qualified teachers, and policy and curriculum issues—collectively contribute to the difficulties BIPA students in Timor Leste encounter in learning Indonesian. Addressing these issues through targeted interventions and improvements in teaching resources and policies could help mitigate these challenges and enhance the learning experience for BIPA students.

In addition to these findings, Tiawati (2018) also noted that social factors such as the learning environment, family support, and community habits significantly influence BIPA students' ability to learn Indonesian. The lack of Indonesian language teachers with a background in Indonesian Language Education is a major issue. Most teachers lack formal knowledge of Indonesian and rely solely on experience or basic language skills, with some not being native speakers. Solutions to overcome these difficulties include improving the curriculum, training teachers, bringing in native Indonesian teachers (Wijayanti & Siroj, 2020), increasing resources, and creating a learning environment that supports the use of Indonesian in everyday situations. Research by Boon and Kurvers (2020) can help shape policies for language teaching in Timor Leste, offering valuable insights for developing effective language education strategies.

### ***Factors Causing Language Errors in Writing by BIPA Students in Timor Leste***

The difficulties of BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) students in Timor Leste in learning Indonesian can be caused by several factors. Based on information obtained by researchers from one of the BIPA teachers in Timor Leste are as follows. From the factors of Language, culture, and Learning Resources, namely 1) Gaps in language and culture. Indonesian has significant differences in structure and vocabulary compared to Tetum or local languages in Timor Leste. In addition, cultural differences can also affect the understanding and use of language. 2) Lack of available learning resources. The lack of appropriate resources, textbooks, or teaching materials for BIPA students in Timor Leste is a factor of difficulty. Inadequate learning resources can complicate the learning process. 3) Lack of qualified teachers. If there are no BIPA teachers who are qualified or have experience in teaching Indonesian as a second language, students may struggle to understand the subject matter well.

From policy and learning factors, namely, 4) Lack of active practice. Language learning requires active practice, including speaking, listening, reading and writing. If students do not have the opportunity to actively practice Indonesian, they may find it difficult to master language skills. 5) Curriculum mismatch. A curriculum that doesn't match students' needs or doesn't reflect their communicative needs can make language learning difficult. 6) Students' Inability to Actively Engage. Some students do not feel comfortable to actively participate in class or do not have the confidence to speak in Indonesian. This can be a barrier in the development of their language skills.

In addition to the above findings, the most dominant influence is from social factors such as the learning environment, family support, and community habits towards the use of

Indonesian can also affect the ability of BIPA students in Timor Leste. Lack of Indonesian language teachers with a background in Indonesian Language Education. Most teachers who teach are those who have no knowledge of Indonesian, only experience, or can only speak Indonesian, or are not native speakers of Indonesian.

To address the difficulties faced by BIPA students in Timor-Leste, several solutions can be implemented, such as improving the curriculum, training teachers, bringing in native Indonesian instructors, increasing resources, and fostering a learning environment that supports the use of Indonesian in everyday situations. Enhancing the curriculum, as suggested by Goncalves (2018), would ensure that it meets the specific needs of BIPA students. Additionally, targeted teacher training programs can equip instructors with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach Indonesian as a foreign language. One proposed solution is to bring in native Indonesian language instructors to assist BIPA students in Timor-Leste with their language errors. Pujo (2020) and Maharani and Astuti (2018) support this approach, emphasizing that native speakers can provide invaluable insights and corrections that non-native teachers may overlook. Furthermore, increasing the availability of resources, such as textbooks and teaching materials tailored to BIPA students, can address the root causes of language errors and enhance students' proficiency in writing.

The study acknowledges limitations in its focus on analyzing punctuation, diction, and sentence structure errors. However, it falls short in detailing strategies for correcting these errors. One of the primary causes of language errors is the mismatch between the materials provided and the students' language needs. Therefore, a thorough analysis and development of customized learning materials are necessary to align with the specific requirements of BIPA students in Timor-Leste. According to Pujo (2020), offering comprehensive training and assistance can improve the proficiency of BIPA instructors. This training should not only focus on effective teaching methods but also foster a better understanding of cultural diversity and the Indonesian language. Bringing in experienced educators in Indonesian language education is another recommended remedy, as highlighted by Maharani and Astuti (2018) and Pujo (2020). These educators can provide expert guidance and support, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of Indonesian language education for BIPA students in Timor-Leste. By improving the curriculum, training teachers, bringing in native instructors, increasing resources, and creating a supportive learning environment, the challenges faced by BIPA students in Timor-Leste can be effectively addressed. These interventions will help students become more proficient in Indonesian, thereby reducing language errors and enhancing their overall learning experience.

More practical learning activities, such as writing assignments, dialogues, and authentic communication scenarios, can improve language application abilities even more, claims (Pujo, 2020; Maharani & Astuti, 2018) according to data gathered from BIPA instructors and practitioners (Pujo, 2020; Maharani & Astuti, 2018), correcting language errors in BIPA learners might entail offering one-on-one mentoring or tutoring services to those who need extra help. Tutors are able to give direct feedback and focus on specific language errors made by students. Maharani and Astuti (2108) found that BIPA teachers give writing assignments on a regular basis and offer helpful criticism for each one. Students can better comprehend their mistakes and improve their language usage through this process.

Learning can be made more interesting and accessible by incorporating technology, such as interactive learning platforms, online resources, and apps for learning languages. It is in line with Amalia and Arifin (2021) who argue that the gap between targeted curricula and student requirements can be filled in part by regularly evaluating language learning curricula and making necessary adjustments. Language development can be further supported by encouraging students to actively use the Indonesian language outside of the classroom through language clubs, thematic discussions, or cooperative projects with Indonesian-speaking

communities. By following the steps listed below, BIPA students in Timor-Leste can gradually improve their language skills and become more fluent in Indonesian

## CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by BIPA students, particularly those from Timor-Leste, in writing essays in Indonesian. The study focused on examining linguistic errors in learners' essays, specifically related to punctuation placement, sentence structure, and word choice, as well as exploring the reasons behind these errors. This investigation was driven by research indicators designed to address the research questions comprehensively. The analysis revealed various language errors in the essays written by BIPA students in Timor-Leste, including issues with sentence structure, diction, and punctuation. Punctuation errors encompassed the misuse of commas, incorrect placement of quotation marks, improper use of exclamation points and question marks, lack of punctuation, inadequate spacing, incorrect capitalization, misuse of apostrophes, and inconsistent use of double quotation marks. Diction errors were identified as inappropriate word choices, rigid word selection, mismatched language proficiency levels, erroneous phrase usage, frequent word repetition, a lack of Indonesian vocabulary, incorrect pronoun selection, inconsistent language style usage, and improper use of words from regional dialects. Ineffective sentences were characterized by verbosity, repetition, rigidity, and neglect of the subject-predicate structure.

Several factors contribute to the difficulties faced by BIPA students in Timor-Leste when learning Indonesian, especially in writing. These factors include language and cultural gaps, inadequate learning materials for BIPA students, a shortage of instructors experienced in teaching Indonesian, an inactive and unproductive teaching process, and a mismatch between the intended curriculum and the actual needs of the students. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions to improve teaching resources, training for educators, and a curriculum aligned with the specific needs of BIPA students in Timor-Leste. In conclusion, this study highlights the linguistic challenges faced by BIPA students in Timor-Leste and underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues. By enhancing language education through improved resources, teacher training, and curriculum development, the learning experience for BIPA students can be significantly improved.

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