

An Analysis of Spelling Errors in Argumentative Texts Written by Ninth-Grade Students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman

Putri Melinda Hasibuan¹, Rizky Rahmawati Ritonga², Shaiki Roma Samudra³,
Feni Farmilia⁴, Afnita⁵

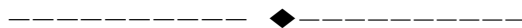
^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

Email: putrimelindahasibuan@gmail.com

Abstract

The main problem underlying this research is the students' low spelling accuracy in writing essays, whereas good argumentative writing requires the application of standard language rules. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze spelling errors, specifically in capitalization and punctuation, found in the argumentative texts written by ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The data sources were argumentative text documents written by the students. Data were collected through a documentation study, while data validation was conducted using source triangulation. The data analysis techniques included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that various significant language errors are still present. Capitalization errors were generally found at the beginning of sentences, in geographical names, and the first letters of people's names. Meanwhile, punctuation errors were dominated by the inaccurate placement of commas (,) in enumerations and clause separators, as well as the omission of periods (.) at the end of sentences. In conclusion, students' understanding and application of the Indonesian Spelling System (EYD) guidelines still need to be improved.

Keywords: *Error Analysis, Capitalization, Punctuation, Argumentative Text.*



A. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are one of the essential and complex aspects of language that students must master in Indonesian language learning (Escuadra, 2024a, 2024b; Shankweiler et al., 1996). Through writing activities, students are required to produce their ideas, thoughts, and opinions systematically in the form of coherent and meaningful written texts (Efendi et al., 2024). In the learning curriculum at the junior high school level, particularly in Grade IX, argumentative texts constitute one of the crucial learning materials. Argumentative texts require writers to express opinions supported by reasons, facts, and logical evidence to persuade readers (Harahap, 2022). To achieve this communicative purpose, the construction of argumentative texts relies not only on the clarity and depth of ideas but also on mastery of standardized linguistic structures and conventions. Argumentative texts require writers to express opinions supported by reasons and logical evidence to persuade readers. To achieve this communicative purpose, the construction of argumentative texts relies not only on the strength of ideas but also on the use of standardized, systematic, and well-structured language conventions (Choi, 2005; Gutiérrez et al., 2015; Rini et al., 2025a).

One of the fundamental elements in constructing coherent argumentative texts is mastery of spelling conventions, which includes the accurate use of capital letters and punctuation marks. According to the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia yang Disempurnakan, EYD), Fifth Edition (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2022), the use of capital letters and punctuation marks plays a vital syntactic and semantic role. Punctuation marks, such as periods and commas, function to indicate intonation, separate elements within sentences, and clarify clause structures. Meanwhile, capital letters serve as markers of sentence beginnings and identify proper names and geographical names. Errors in the placement of punctuation marks and capital letters are not merely technical writing problems; they can alter sentence structures, obscure meaning, and ultimately weaken the persuasive power of students' arguments (Ali et al., 2025).

According to the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD), the use of capital letters and punctuation marks serves a crucial syntactic and semantic function. Punctuation marks, such as periods and commas, function to indicate intonation, separate elements within sentences, and clarify clause structures, whereas capital letters serve as markers of sentence beginnings and identify proper names and geographical names. Errors in the placement of punctuation marks and capital letters are not merely technical writing problems; they can alter sentence structures, obscure meaning, and ultimately weaken the persuasive power of the arguments constructed by students (Handayani et al., 2023; Mamondol et al., 2026; Rini et al., 2025b).

Although spelling conventions have been taught since the elementary education level, actual classroom conditions reveal a situation that contradicts these competency expectations. Based on observations and preliminary analyses of argumentative essays written by Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman, students' awareness and accuracy in applying spelling conventions remain relatively low. Commonly observed problems include students' frequent failure to capitalize the first letter of sentences and geographical names, as well as errors in placing commas in enumerations and between clauses (Aminah, 2026; Boyle, 2025; Engeness, 2025). Furthermore, periods marking the ends of sentences are often omitted, causing sentences to overlap and become indistinct. These errors make the flow of reasoning in students' argumentative texts unclear. This condition is consistent with the findings of (Nurningsih et al., 2025)(Andrianto et al., 2025), who stated that interference from oral language habits on social media and insufficient practice in independent editing are major factors contributing to the high incidence of spelling errors in secondary school students' writing.

Spelling errors and sentence effectiveness in students' written work have consistently been serious concerns among language researchers (Andrianto et al., 2025; Carter, 2025). Several previous studies have demonstrated that the tendency for spelling errors to occur in students' written work is influenced by insufficient understanding of standardized language conventions and students' lack of familiarity with independently editing the texts they produce (Andrianto et al., 2025). In the context of language learning at the secondary education level, (Nurminto & Afrita,

2020) explained that junior high school students frequently encounter mechanical difficulties in applying spelling conventions and constructing effective sentences. These difficulties arise from informal oral language habits that carry over into written communication and limited opportunities for editing practice in the classroom.

Although numerous studies have examined language errors, most previous studies have focused on narrative, descriptive, or expository texts. Research specifically examining spelling errors, particularly those involving the use of capital letters and punctuation marks in argumentative texts written by junior high school students, remains relatively limited. However, argumentative texts have distinctive characteristics that require a higher degree of linguistic precision than other text types. Constructing arguments requires a logical and unambiguous line of reasoning. Consequently, technical errors, such as the omission of periods, incorrect comma placement in compound sentences, and the inappropriate use of capital letters, can directly undermine the structural coherence of argumentative clauses.

The gap between the curriculum's intended learning outcomes and students' actual writing abilities in the field constitutes the primary rationale for conducting this study. To address gaps in previous research and identify more concrete solutions, this study specifically focuses on spelling analysis. The scope of the study is limited to errors in the use of capital letters, particularly at the beginning of sentences and in geographical names and proper names, as well as the appropriate use of punctuation marks, specifically periods and commas, in argumentative texts written by Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman. Accordingly, this study aims to describe and analyze the forms of spelling errors that occur and identify the types of errors most frequently or predominantly committed by students.

In terms of its benefits, this study is expected to make meaningful theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it may enrich the body of knowledge in applied linguistics, particularly in the field of language error analysis. Practically, the findings may serve as material for reflection and evaluation for Indonesian language teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman in designing more innovative strategies for teaching spelling conventions. For students, these findings will provide useful feedback to help them become more careful when producing written texts and develop the habit of consistently following the Fifth Edition of the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD).

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was selected based on the research objective, which was to explore and understand linguistic phenomena in depth without testing hypotheses (Nurhayati et al., 2024). The descriptive method was applied because the data consisted of words, phrases, and sentences that were described, explained, and analyzed objectively in accordance with the actual conditions found in the students' written work. The data in this study comprised all forms of deviations or mechanical

inaccuracies, focusing on errors in the use of capital letters and punctuation marks, particularly periods and commas.

The data sources consisted of authentic documents comprising 26 argumentative texts written by Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman. The primary research instrument (human instrument) was the researcher, who served as the planner, data collector, analyst, and reporter of the research findings (Nurfaidah et al., 2025). As a guide for the analysis, the researcher used the Fifth Edition of the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD) and a data recording table. Data were collected using documentation and reading-and-note-taking techniques. The documentation technique involved collecting 26 argumentative texts submitted as assignments from the Indonesian language teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman. Subsequently, the reading-and-note-taking technique was implemented by carefully and comprehensively reading the students' written work, identifying words or sentences that violated spelling conventions, and recording them in a data table. After the data had been collected, data analysis was conducted by referring to the language error analysis procedures proposed by (Syafira et al., 2026).

The data analysis began by identifying and marking sentence segments containing errors in the use of capital letters, periods, and commas throughout the students' written work. The identified data were then classified into specific error categories. The next stage involved describing the forms of these errors in detail and explaining the reasons for the inaccuracies based on the applicable conventions. Finally, the researcher evaluated the data by providing reconstructed sentences or alternative corrections to improve sentence effectiveness and ensure that the writing conformed to the Fifth Edition of the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD). To ensure data trustworthiness and validity, this study employed persistent observation and theoretical triangulation. Persistent observation was conducted by repeatedly examining all 26 student writing documents in a detailed and continuous manner to ensure that no errors were overlooked. Theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing and cross-checking the findings of the spelling analysis against relevant scholarly literature and the latest language guidelines.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a careful document analysis of argumentative texts written by Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman, various forms of linguistic deviations and mechanical errors were identified. All identified errors were described qualitatively, and their percentages were summarized as presented in the following table:

Table 1. Aspect of Spelling Error

No.	Aspect of Spelling Errors	Type of Error	Number of Recorded Data Instances	Percentage (%)
A	Capitalization			
1	Errors	Omission of capital letters at the beginning of sentences	4 example instances	25.00%

2	Punctuation Errors	Use of lowercase letters in geographical names, country names, and religious names	4 example instances	25.00%
3		Inconsistent capitalization in the middle of sentences (hypercorrection)	4 explicit instances	25.00%
B				
4		Omission of periods (.) at the end of sentences	2 explicit instances	12.50%
5		Use of periods (.) that separate closely related clauses	1 explicit instance	6.25%
6		Omission of commas (,) in enumerations and errors involving conjunctions	1 example instance	6.25%
7		Incorrect punctuation placement around the word "yang"	Discourse-based description	–
Total Identified Data Instances			16 instances	100.00%

Empirically, these errors were systematically classified into two main linguistic aspects, namely errors in the use of capital letters and errors in the use of punctuation marks. The following sections present an analysis of each type of error.

1. Analysis of Errors in the Use of Capital Letters

Errors in applying capitalization rules were prevalent throughout the students' written work. Based on the analyzed corpus, these capitalization deviations were categorized into three main types. Omission of Capital Letters at the Beginning of Sentences: Numerous sentences written by students were found to begin without the required capital letters. Clear examples of this negligence consistently appeared in sentences beginning with the phrases "*rokok mengandung banyak sekali zat...*" and "*ada banyak sekali zat racun...*". Similar error patterns were also found at the beginning of other sentences, such as "*rokok memiliki zat adiktif juga...*" and "*kandungan racun yang masuk...*". These findings indicate that students continue to overlook basic orthographic rules concerning the markers used at the beginning of sentences.

Use of Lowercase Letters in Geographical Names, Country Names, and Religious Names: Students demonstrated insufficient care and accuracy in applying capital letters to specific names and identities. This was evidenced by the use of lowercase initial letters in the names of countries and regions, such as "*di Indonesia*" and "*timur tengah*", as well as in the name of a religion, "*agama islam*". In addition, similar errors occurred in abbreviations of regional names that require uppercase letters throughout but were instead written in lowercase, as shown in the form "*di dki*".

Inconsistent Capitalization in the Middle of Sentences (Hypercorrection): The analysis of students' written work revealed four instances of incorrect capitalization in the middle of sentences. These errors involved the words "*Masyarakat*", "*Sampah*", "*Perubahan*", dan "*Industri*". All four words were capitalized even though they appeared in the middle of sentences and did not belong to the category of proper names or other elements that must begin with capital letters according to the applicable conventions.

In the first instance, the word “Masyarakat” was written with an initial capital letter, even though it is a common noun used to refer to a group of people in general. Therefore, when the word appears in the middle of a sentence and is not part of a proper name, the correct form is “masyarakat”. The same errors were found in the words “Sampah”, “Perubahan”, and “Industri”. These three words are also common nouns; therefore, capitalization in the middle of a sentence is unnecessary.

These four errors reveal a tendency among students to use capital letters excessively for certain words. Capitalization should not be based on the assumption that words considered important must begin with uppercase letters. Instead, it must be determined by the function and position of each word within a sentence. The words “masyarakat”, “sampah”, “perubahan”, dan “industri” do not denote personal names, place names, institutional names, or other proper names. Consequently, they should remain lowercase when appearing in the middle of a sentence.

Thus, four instances of inappropriate capitalization in the middle of sentences were identified, indicating that students do not yet fully understand the function of capital letters. These errors can be categorized as improper capitalization because uppercase letters were used for common nouns that do not function as proper names. This finding indicates that students need to pay closer attention to the context in which capital letters are used, particularly when distinguishing common nouns from proper names while composing texts.

2. Analysis of Errors in the Use of Punctuation Marks

In addition to orthographic errors involving letters, students also frequently used punctuation marks incorrectly, even though these marks function to regulate intonation, convey meaning, and indicate syntactic boundaries.

Omission of Periods (.) at the End of Sentences: The examination of students' written work revealed two instances of errors involving the omission of periods at the ends of sentences. These errors occurred when students ended a section of their writing without providing the punctuation mark required to close a sentence. A period serves to establish a clear boundary indicating that a statement has ended. The absence of a period can make the boundaries between successive ideas less distinct, thereby reducing the organization and coherence of students' writing.

In the first instance, the segment kalimat “...jika tidak segera mendapat” was found to lack a closing punctuation mark. Based on its sentence structure, this segment did not actually express a complete idea because it began with the word “jika”, which indicates a conditional relationship. A clause beginning with this word requires another clause to complete its meaning. Therefore, the problem in this instance is not merely the absence of a period but also the incompleteness of the idea when the writing was terminated. The sentence should have been continued until the intended information was fully conveyed, after which a period should have been placed at the end of the complete statement.

Meanwhile, the second instance appeared in the excerpt “...dan hiu hanya membunuh lo orang setiap tahunnya”. At the end of this statement, the student did

not place a period after the word “tahunnya”. Unlike the first instance, the statement in this second example can be understood as a complete piece of information. Therefore, a period should have been placed directly at the end of the sentence. The corrected form can be written as “...dan hiu hanya membunuh 10 orang setiap tahunnya.” Adding a period clarifies the end of the statement and distinguishes it from the following sentence.

Based on these two findings, it can be concluded that the two instances of period omission reflect students' lack of precision in determining sentence boundaries. The first instance shows that the student terminated the writing while the idea was still incomplete, whereas the second demonstrates negligence in adding a period even though the intended idea had been fully expressed. This condition indicates that understanding the function of periods involves more than memorizing punctuation rules; it also requires the ability to recognize sentence boundaries based on structural and semantic completeness. Therefore, writing exercises should focus on helping students construct complete sentences and determine the appropriate placement of periods.

Use of Periods (.) That Separate Closely Related Clauses: The analysis of students' writing revealed one instance of an error involving a period placed between sentence components that remained semantically and structurally connected. The error appeared in the sentence “*Satu diantaranya adalah zat Aceton. Yang biasa dipakai dalam pembersih kuku*”. In this instance, a period was placed after the word “Aceton”, whereas the segment “*Yang biasa dipakai dalam pembersih kuku*” still provided information about the previously mentioned element. Placing a period at this point separated information that should have formed a single sentence into two parts.

From a syntactic perspective, the segment “*Yang biasa dipakai dalam pembersih kuku*” cannot function as an independent sentence. The use of the word “*yang*” at the beginning of this segment indicates that the information still serves as a modifying clause related to an element in the preceding sentence. Therefore, a period should not have been placed after the word “Aceton”. The sentence can be corrected as “*Salah satu di antaranya adalah zat aseton yang biasa dipakai dalam pembersih kuku*”. This correction maintains the relationship between the main information and the explanatory clause, thereby improving sentence coherence.

This finding indicates that the error in period usage was associated with students' inability to determine sentence boundaries accurately. Students used a period when the written information was still connected to a preceding element. As a result, the explanatory clause became separated, producing a less effective sentence structure. Thus, the single instance of error in this category demonstrates the need to improve students' understanding of interclausal relationships and sentence boundaries in writing activities. Mastery of sentence structure is essential because appropriate punctuation serves not only a mechanical function but also influences the clarity and coherence of information in written texts.

Omission of Commas (,) in Enumerations and Errors Involving Conjunctions: Students frequently neglected the requirement to use commas when listing more than

two lexical items in a sentence. Factual evidence of this omission can be seen in the enumeration excerpt "...banjir, longsor dar kebakaran hutan". In this instance, the student not only made a writing or spelling error by writing the conjunction "dan" as "dar", but also failed to insert commas consistently to separate each listed disaster.

Incorrect Punctuation Placement Around the Word "Yang": Students frequently placed punctuation marks incorrectly in explanatory clauses connected by the word "Yang". Based on students' texts on religious topics, such as texts concerning the history of the arrival of Islam, punctuation errors involving periods or sentence breaks were found immediately after or before the word "Yang". Consequently, the word "Yang" appeared to be treated as the beginning of a new, independent sentence. This finding confirms that students have not yet understood the syntactic boundaries between a main clause (main clause) and a subordinate clause (subordinate clause) connected by this word.

The empirical findings from the analysis of 26 sample argumentative texts written by Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2 Pariaman indicate that students' mechanical competence in applying the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) or the Fifth Edition of the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD) in written communication still requires serious attention and pedagogical intervention. Based on the data obtained, students' language errors can broadly be examined through two main dimensions, namely capitalization errors in orthography and punctuation errors related to syntax.

First, the high frequency of capitalization errors, manifested in the omission of capital letters at the beginning of sentences, the use of lowercase letters for geographical and religious names (such as "indonesia", "timur tengah", and "islam"), and hypercorrection in the form of random capitalization in the middle of sentences (such as the words "Sampah" and "Masyarakat"), reflects students' misconceptions regarding linguistic conventions. As learners at the secondary education level, students often fall into the mistaken assumption that words considered important, prominent, or central to an argument must begin with capital letters, regardless of their position within the sentence structure (a phenomenon known as hypercorrection). Furthermore, the use of lowercase letters for proper names and specific identities is strongly suspected to result from negative interference from informal communication habits in digital spaces or on social media, where typing speed and efficiency are prioritized over compliance with standardized orthographic conventions. A study by (Kumar, 2026) on junior high school students' written work indicates that language errors are not limited to orthography but encompass all the complex dimensions of language and require comprehensive pedagogical intervention.

Second, problems related to punctuation, such as the omission of periods at the ends of sentences, the incorrect separation of connected clauses (for example, separating phrases using a period in the middle of a sentence), the omission of commas in enumerations (including the misspelling of the conjunction "dan" as "dar"), and the incorrect placement of punctuation marks around the conjunction "Yang",

highlight students' limited understanding of cohesion and syntactic boundaries. Argumentative texts have essential characteristics that require logical reasoning, coherent organization of ideas, and a high level of readability to ensure that persuasive arguments are effectively conveyed to readers. When sentence structures become overlapping due to incorrect punctuation, such as treating the conjunction "Yang" as though it were the beginning of a new, independent sentence, the logical reasoning underlying the argumentative text is disrupted. Ultimately, this reduces discourse cohesion and weakens the persuasive power of students' writing.

From both theoretical and practical perspectives, this series of mechanical errors indicates that the cognitive process of independent editing (self-editing) has not been optimally internalized in students' writing activities. In the context of Indonesian language instruction at the secondary school level, these findings have significant implications, suggesting that writing instruction should not stop at the stages of idea generation or drafting alone. Teachers are required to consistently integrate text-editing stages into core learning activities. Establishing habits of self-editing and peer-editing, with strict reference to the EYD guidelines, is essential to ensure that students become accustomed to analyzing, revising, and evaluating mechanical orthographic and syntactic errors before their written work is published or assessed.

D. CONCLUSION

Students' mechanical competence in applying the conventions of the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) or the Fifth Edition of the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling Guidelines (EYD) remains relatively low and requires serious attention. These errors fall into two main linguistic aspects. First, capitalization errors include the omission of capital letters at the beginning of sentences, the use of lowercase letters for geographical names, country names, and religious names (such as "indonesia", "timur tengah", and "islam"), as well as hypercorrection in the form of random capitalization in the middle of sentences involving common nouns (such as "Sampah" and "Masyarakat").

Punctuation errors related to syntax include the omission of periods at the ends of sentences, the incorrect use of periods to separate connected phrases or clauses, the omission of commas in enumerations accompanied by a misspelling of the conjunction ("dar" instead of "dan"), and the incorrect placement of punctuation marks around the conjunction "Yang", making it appear as though it introduces a new sentence.

Overall, these mechanical errors indicate that the process of independent editing (self-editing) has not been adequately internalized by students. This finding highlights the need for teachers to strengthen writing instruction strategies and systematically cultivate self-editing practices based on standardized linguistic conventions in schools.

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