

## Errors Found in Students' Theses: Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling

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### ABSTRACT

Writing is a skill that is considered difficult because many aspects must be considered. This research aims to investigate and analyze the use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the abstracts of theses. Understand the impact of these errors on written communication and provide concrete recommendations to enhance the quality of academic writing. This research was a qualitative approach with text analysis, the population involves undergraduate students from the English Department of IAIN KERINCI, and the sample was the number of tenth theses on abstracts, taken from the theses of the last 5 years, Data was collected through manual analysis of thesis texts, focusing on capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Based on the results of the research finding capitalization errors of 52.17% are the most prevalent, totaling 60 instances. On the other hand, punctuation errors of 26.09%, specifically in the abstract section of the theses, are comparatively lower, with only 25 occurrences. Meanwhile, spelling errors of 21.74% identified in the abstracts of the theses amount to 30 mistakes.

**Keywords:** *Analysis, Capitalization, Punctuation, Spelling, Errors*

### Introduction

There are some skills in learning English, one of them is writing. Writing is a skill that is considered difficult because many aspects must be considered. Both non-native speakers and native speakers find writing challenging, as professional writers need to grasp a variety of writing norms, including vocabulary, structure, purpose, content, audience, and mechanics like spelling, capitalization, and punctuation (Mujiyanto & Shweba, 2017). Errors are a natural component of learning, which makes them one of life's most unavoidable things, particularly while learning a language (Anggraini, & Susanto, 2014). Therefore, there are many errors in writing, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Capitalization refers to the use of capital letters in writing. It involves the practice of starting sentences with capital letters and using uppercase letters for proper nouns, such as names of people, places, and organizations. Additionally, capitalization is used for the first word in a direct quotation and for certain titles. Punctuation involves the use of symbols such as periods, commas, exclamation marks, question marks, and more, to clarify meaning and indicate pauses, stops, or emphasis in written language. Proper punctuation is crucial for conveying the intended message and maintaining clarity in

communication. Spelling refers to the correct arrangement of letters to form words. It involves knowing and using the correct sequence of letters in a word, including understanding the rules of phonetics and the correct order of letters in a specific language. Proper spelling is essential for effective written communication

This research aims to investigate and analyze the use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors in students' abstracts of theses. Raja & Zahid (2013) discovered that errors made by undergraduate students in their study included those related to organization, grammar, vocabulary, and capitalization. Oktaviani et al., (2022) State using punctuation correctly helps to convey your true ideas in writing by indicating when to slow down, stop, or highlight a point. However, if you struggle with punctuation, the reader will find it difficult to understand what you've written. Al-zuoud & K. Kabilan, (2013) add that correct spelling improves the overall writing quality of documents.

English students are obliged to write theses, but there are often errors in writing capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Pescante-Malimas & Samson, (2018) mentioned that writing a thesis is a crucial component of the education program at the university. Students must pass a thesis writing

course to be eligible for any degree at all in a university. After taking multiple advanced courses, students are required to produce a thesis as their final project.

To practice their English skills, both inside and outside of the classroom, students in the English Department are required to write their thesis in the language. Teach the pupils how to communicate their ideas in English writing forms so that the readers may understand and be satisfied (Habibullah, 2010). If the knowledge of writing students is good, errors in writing theses are very small, and vice versa.

Considering the earlier research, Error analysis is a technique used to examine written or spoken words by second or foreign-language learners (Amiri & Puteh, 2017). Several studies examine the analysis of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors. (Al-zuoud & K. Kabilan, 2013) state that spelling errors demonstrated a dearth of research and the fact that few studies looked into the spelling challenges faced by Arab college students learning English as a second or foreign language. Anggraini, & Susanto, (2014) found there are mechanical errors University students make in their theses an overview of the research is punctuation, spelling, and capitalization errors, An example of mechanical errors: spelling errors, spelling errors happen when a word's letters are added, removed, changed, rearranged, or distorted. They found that punctuation errors include the deviant usage of periods, commas, hyphens, question marks, exclamation marks, and so on and the most common punctuation error made by pupils was an incorrect use of commas. According to the study, of Pathan, (2021), the examination of writing errors made by EFL students has been the subject of much research. The researchers identify several errors in various domains. One of the most frequent mistakes made by EFL learners in their work is a capitalization problem. Siddiqui, (2015) findings, that capitalization errors are widely distributed throughout the numerous capitalization rules, and the errors tend to be intra-lingual. At the same time, L1 does not positively encourage obtaining capitalization rules. Students are unaware of the importance of capitalization in the communication of EFL texts.

This research was conducted to find out how many errors English students make in writing their theses. Usually, the mistakes they make are caused by a lack of knowledge about them, and their mother tongue is also one of the causes of mistakes in learning English. Consequently, this

study sought to close this gap by examining the students' spelling errors.

Researching capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in language is a crucial aspect of applied linguistics. These skills significantly impact the clarity and accuracy of written communication. By understanding the proper use of capital letters, punctuation marks, and correct spelling, this research can contribute to improving writing standards, enhancing communication effectiveness, and supporting the development of consistent writing guidelines. A profound understanding of these aspects is also relevant for identifying linguistic trends, developing spelling correction tools, and providing practical guidance for writers in various contexts, including academic research such as student theses.

The researcher regarding the selection of research is based on the understanding that errors in writing, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, have a significant impact on the effectiveness of written communication, especially in the context of student thesis writing. With so many errors occurring in writing, it is important to identify patterns and trends in these errors to improve the standard of academic writing and communication skills of students. Through this research, it is hoped that it can provide in-depth insight into common errors and provide a basis for developing more effective writing guidelines and better learning strategies for improving written communication skills in English. Thus, this research has strong relevance and makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of student academic writing and communication.

This research has specific limitations to consider. It focuses on the abstract theses of English Department students at the State Islamic Institute of Kerinci within the time frame of 2019-2023. The primary data source is limited to tenth theses on abstracts, excluding full documents. The analysis is specifically concentrated on errors related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the abstracts, omitting considerations for other aspects such as sentence structure or writing style.

Research on capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors in the abstracts of students' theses would fill a knowledge gap, as there have been no studies focusing on these aspects at the IAIN KERINCI. While there are numerous studies on academic writing quality, particularly in the context of theses and dissertations, none have focused on the abstracts of students' theses at the institution. Therefore, this analysis can provide

valuable insights into students' academic writing standards, help improve the quality of produced theses, and enhance awareness of the importance of effective written communication in academic settings. Additionally, the research findings can serve as a foundation for developing tailored writing training programs to meet the needs of students at IAIN Kerinci.

### Method

This research was a survey of the final project papers, or “thesis”, written by students during their final semester (Sugeng, 2016.). This research was a qualitative approach with text analysis, the population involves undergraduate students from the English Department of IAIN KERINCI, and the sample was taken from the abstracts theses of the last 5 years, between the periods from 2019 to 2023. These samples include abstracts consisting of ten theses. In this research, the instrument used is a documentation study from English students' theses, these documents serve as the primary source of data for error analysis. Data was collected through documentation study and errors analysis manual of thesis texts, focusing on capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. These were systematically analyzed, collection of the data with coding applied to each type of error and writing pattern encountered, each error category was labeled to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The researcher understood the data collected and identified any errors. Data was classified and categorized based on the types of errors and writing patterns identified during the thesis analysis. The errors found were explained and evaluated. Analysis was conducted by grouping the results into general themes, considering variations across disciplines. Obtaining ethical approval from the research institution and ensuring confidentiality of the identity of the thesis authors.

### Findings and Discussion

The results of the researcher presented were the manual analysis of the student abstracts from theses undergraduate English Department of IAIN KERINCI. Assigned to take from the thesis 5 years, number of tenth theses on abstracts, which focus on capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. After analyzing the tenth of the student's IAIN KERINCI, there were several errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling by the English Department of IAIN KERINCI.

**Table 1**  
**Recapitulation of Errors English Students in Writing Abstracts Theses**

Name & year	Capitalization	Punctuation	Spelling
SM 2019	3	5	14
MK 2019	3	3	10
TPD 2020	-	2	1
SPS 2020	6	1	1
RP 2021	3	3	-
RA 2021	3	3	2
YB 2022	30	6	1
WE 2022	-	-	-
AJB 2023	9	1	1
PAM 2023	3	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>

Based on table 1 above presents the data overview of errors in the theses of English Department students at IAIN KERINCI, indicating issues with capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The table reveals that capitalization errors are the most prevalent, totaling 60 instances. On the other hand, punctuation errors, specifically in the abstract section of the theses, are comparatively lower, with only 25 occurrences. Meanwhile, spelling errors identified in the abstracts of the theses amount to 30 mistakes.

### Capitalization Errors

After analyzing the abstract, the researcher found capitalization errors as the following:

**SM 2019:** ...reading comprehension on the recount text at VIII Grade MTsN Hamparan Rawang... (the errors were made in the same two sentences).

The right writing should be ...reading comprehension on the recount text at VIII grade MTsN Hamparan Rawang...

**MK 2019:** The Population of this research... The right writing should be, The population of this research...

Furthermore found ...writing descriptive text at Eleventh Grade students of MAN Sebukar... The right writing should be ...writing descriptive text at eleventh grade students of MAN Sebukar...

**SPS 2020:** ...Four Square Writing Method... (the errors were made in the same three sentences). The right writing should be ...Four Square writing method...

**RP 2021:** (1) there is a very good correlation between... (2) there is poor correlation between... (3) there is a very good correlation among... The right writing should be (1) There is a very good correlation between... (2) There is poor correlation between... (3) There is a very good

correlation among...

**RA 2021:** ...the lowest average score in Writing skill among other classes. The right writing should be ...the lowest average score in writing skill among other classes. Meanwhile it also found, this research was improving students'... the right writing should be, This research was improving students'...

Then also found, the students' mean score in the... The right writing should be, The students' mean score in the...

**YB 2022:** The researcher formulated the problem into two research question, The first question What are the Strategies Used by students in Learning English for Improving Vocabulary

The right writing should be, The researcher formulated the problem into two research question, the first question, what are the strategies used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary?

Next found ...and the second question What Learning Strategies are dominant choose by Students in Learning English for Improving Vocabulary.

The right writing should be, and the second question what learning strategies are dominant choose by students in learning English for improving vocabulary.

Furthermore ...of each type of English Learning Strategies that Used by at the Eleventh Grade of SMAN 4 Kerinci. The right writing should be ...of each type of English learning strategies that used by at the eleventh grade of SMAN 4 Kerinci.

Furthermore found ...Eleventh Grade of SMAN 4 Kerinci. The right writing should be ...eleventh grade of SMAN 4 Kerinci.

Moreover ...to understand the strategies chosen in the Language Learning Used by students in learning English for Improving Vocabulary. The right writing should be ...to understand the strategies chosen in the language learning used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary.

Moreover found, The students used all the strategies in learning English and The dominant Language Learning Strategies Used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary... The right writing should be, The students used all the strategies in learning English and the dominant language learning strategies used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary...

**AJP 2023:** Mastering Grammar and vocabulary... The right writing should be, Mastering grammar and vocabulary...

Next found ...to know both Grammar and

Vocabulary in English. The right writing should be ...to know both grammar and vocabulary in English.

And then ...of the Third Semester Students of English Department of IAIN Kerinci. (the errors were made in the same two sentences). The right writing should be ...of the third semester students of English Department of IAIN Kerinci.

**PAM 2023:** ...for windows to analyze the questionnaire data. The right writing should be ...for Windows to analyze the questionnaire data. And then ...as follows: teacher motivation strategies that are widely used are... The right writing should be ...as follows: Teacher motivation strategies that are widely used are...

After analyzing the abstract, the researcher found 60 capitalization errors were identified across only 8 students' theses, while 2 theses did not exhibit any capitalization errors.

### ***Punctuation Errors***

Based on the result of the researcher on abstracts, the researcher found several punctuation errors were identified as follows:

**SM 2019:** ...speaking, listening, reading and writing, ... The right writing should be ...speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

And then, The problem of this reasearch were firstly, the students... The right writing should be, The problems of this research were, firstly, the students...

Next found, The population of this reasearch were 40 students that consisited of two calsses. The right writing should be, The population of this research were 40 students, that consisted of two classes.

Moreover, The value of t-count was higher than t-table. The right writing should be, The value of t-count was higher than t-table.

**MK 2019:** ...to practice writing, and the solution... The right writing should be ...to practice writing, and the solution...

Next ...learn about punctuation well and the English ... The right writing should be ...learn about punctuation well, and the English...

Next found ... students mistake in writing and give correction, input for students... The right writing should be ...students mistakes in writing and give correction and input for students...

**TDP 2020:** ...to achieve abilities in English (integrated skills) which include: speaking, listening... The right writing should be ...to achieve abilities in English (integrated skills), which include speaking, listening...

**SPS 2020:** The problem of this research was, firstly the students... The right writing should be,

The problems of this research were, firstly, the students...

**RP 2021:** ... of students in SMA N 9 Kerinci that consisted of 42 students from 2 classes which were taken by... The right writing should be ... of students in SMA N 9 Kerinci, which consisted of 42 students from 2 classes, which were taken by... And then ...to student's English achievement. The right writing should be ...to students' English achievement.

**RA 2021:** ...the pre-treatment test to post-test of cycle three. The right writing should be ...the pre-treatment test to post-test of the cycle three.

Furthermore, the students' mean score in the pre-treatment test... The right writing should be, the students' mean score in the pre-treatment test...

**YB 2022:** The first question is what are the strategies used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary and the second question is what learning strategies are dominantly chosen by students in learning English for improving vocabulary. The right writing should be, The first question, what are the strategies used by students in learning English for improving vocabulary? and the second question, what learning strategies are dominantly chosen by students in learning English for improving vocabulary?.

Next found ...XI MIPA 1 with a total 32 students consisting 9 males and 23 females and XI MIPA 2 with a total 32 students consisting 11 males and 21 females... The right writing should be ...XI MIPA 1 with a total 32 students, consisting 9 males and 23 females and XI MIPA 2 with a total 32 students, consisting 11 males and 21 females...

**AJP 2023:** ...correlation between students' grammar mastery, vocabulary mastery and translation ability. The right writing should be ...correlation between students' grammar mastery, vocabulary mastery, and translation ability.

**PAM 2023:** ...by teachers in junior high schools, as follows: teacher motivation... The right writing should be ...by teachers in junior high schools as follow: teacher motivation...

Based on the result of the researcher on abstracts in 9 students' theses, the researcher identified 25 punctuation errors, with only 1 thesis found to be free of punctuation errors.

### **Spelling Errors**

After analyzing the abstract of the students' theses, the researcher identified several spelling errors as follows:

**SM 2019:** problem (problems) on 'problem' the addition of suffix 's' is necessary to indicate that there is more than one element referred to in a

sentence.

research (research) 5X, learning (learning), classes (classes) 3X, the result of (the result of), an (and), suggested (suggested), consisted (consisted).

**MK 2019:** ability (ability) 2X, was grade (was grade), found the (found them), text at (text at), problem (problems), students (students), on 'problem' and 'students' in the sentence "...some problem it was students rarely to practice writing..." the 'problem' in the sentence should be written in the plural form "...some problems were students rarely to practice writing..."

learn (learn), develop (develop), and English (English).

**TDP 2020:** master (mastery).

**SPS 2020:** idea (ideas), 'idea' should written 'ideas' because, in the writing, one acquires more than one idea.

**RA 2021:** factor (factors), same as the explanation above, 'factor' should be written as 'factors' because there are more than one factor. outwhether (out whether).

**YB 2022:** question (questions), 'question' should be plural, which is 'questions,' because referring to more than one question.

**AJP 2023:** helps (help), 'helps' in the sentence "...vocabulary will helps them in their..." is incorrect. In the future tense, the verb 'help' does not take 's' after 'will'. The correct form is "...vocabulary will help them in their..."

Through a thorough analysis of the data and findings obtained in the abstract, various types of spelling errors were identified, including omission, substitution, insertion/addition, and transposition. A total of 30 spelling errors were found in 7 theses of students, and there are 3 theses where no spelling errors were found.

### **Discussion**

Based on the result of the research, there are several significant observations of usage errors capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the abstracts of theses by English Department students at IAIN KERINCI. Firstly capitalization errors were discovered 60 errors, which included the fault for writing at the beginning of the sentence and in the middle of the sentence. Errors occur when students don't understand the rules in writing capitalization. Siddiqui, (2015) stated that each of the 20 students has made a capitalization error. Despite having mastered several capitalization categories in school, the kids have made mistakes in other capitalization categories. (Kustina et al., 2018) also stated from the research that even after conducting research, the author discovered many mistakes in using capitalization in writing a thesis

in the STKIP Bina Nation, Getsempena Banda Aceh. Capitalization errors include people's names, places, titles, and subtitles, the beginning of a sentence, and the middle of a sentence that does not match the rules.

Then, the errors in writing the punctuation, particularly in the abstracts based discovery punctuation errors there were 25 errors, including problems with commas, colons, and hyphens. However, a common error students often make in writing abstracts for their theses is the misuse of commas. This was in line with the findings, of Rasyid & Ramadan, (2022) the PGMI student thesis contained punctuation errors, particularly in the writing of commas, IAIN Bone. There were errors made concerning comma punctuation when writing details and conjunctions between sentences.

The last, errors in spelling were 30 errors, which included the spelling error, omission, substitution, insertion/addition, and transposition. Spelling errors could have resulted in a change of meaning or the absence of meaning from a word making our writing bad. Spelling was the appropriateness of words. Fitria, (2020) stated that correct spelling is determined by how the letters are arranged and completed to form the word or phrase. Fitria, (2020) also found in the research that there were a few misspellings of certain words in her research. The four writing aspects that those spelling errors fell under were omission, transposition, insertion/addition, and substitution.

From these findings, it can be concluded that English Department students at IAIN KERINCI need to enhance their understanding and awareness of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling rules in their thesis writing. Further efforts are required in fostering writing skills that encompass the proper usage of these aspects. This is crucial for improving the quality and professionalism of students' scholarly work and ensuring that the conveyed message is clearly understood by readers.

## Conclusion

This research has specific limitations to consider. It focuses on the abstract theses of English Department students at the State Islamic Institute of Kerinci within the time frame of 2019-2023. The primary data source is limited to tenth theses on abstracts, excluding full documents. The analysis is specifically concentrated on errors related to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the abstracts, omitting considerations for other aspects such as sentence structure or writing style. The goal of this study was to identify

capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors in the abstracts of student theses. Usually, the mistakes they make are caused by a lack of knowledge about them, and their mother tongue is also one of the causes of mistakes in learning English. Consequently, this study sought to close this gap by examining the students' spelling errors. The implication of the research underscores the importance of a profound understanding of proper capitalization, punctuation, and spelling usage in writing English communication. The research highlights that errors in these areas can significantly impact the overall quality of written communication, particularly in academic contexts such as theses writing. By grasping the correct writing norms, the study can aid in enhancing writing standards, and communication effectiveness, the research provides valuable insights for educators and learners alike. Additionally, it offers a foundation for developing targeted interventions and resources to address specific writing difficulties, ultimately fostering more effective communication and academic success. Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that this research finds capitalization errors are the most prevalent, totaling 60 instances. On the other hand, punctuation errors, specifically in the abstract section of the theses, are comparatively lower, with only 25 occurrences. Meanwhile, spelling errors identified in the abstracts of the theses amount to 30 mistakes.

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