An Analysis of Grammatical and Mechanical Errors in LIUNIC ON THINGS Products' Captions

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Abstract

Captions are one of the most important elements in social media because they can provide context, add narrative, or engage the audience with the posted content. However, captions that are written sometimes do not comply with the language rules used. This study aims to identify the kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors found in the captions of LIUNIC ON THINGS. The study applied theories from Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy (1982), Warriner and Griffith (1973), and Mitchell (2008). This study applied a document analysis method; the process of reviewing and evaluating documents both printed and electronic in a methodical manner. This method is useful for identifying, categorizing, analyzing, and interpreting physical data to gain understanding and come to a conclusion. From the data collection, it was found that there were 66 grammatical errors and 61 mechanical errors in 50 captions released in 2022. The results revealed that the grammatical errors found in its Instagram caption are 63.6% of misformation, 25.8% of omission, 6.1% of misordering, and 4.5% of addition. The mechanical errors, on the other hand, are 50.8% of punctuation errors, 44.3% of capitalization errors, and 4.9% of spelling errors. It can be seen that misformation is the most common grammatical error, and punctuation is the most common mechanical error. The result of this study is expected to be used as one of the evaluation resources for social media caption makers to prevent the occurrence of grammatical and mechanical errors.

Keywords: Grammatical error, mechanical error, error analysis, Instagram caption

Introduction

The rise of social media has transformed communication between people and created a new platform for self-expression, connection, and self-representation. Among the many social media platforms, captions are an essential element that offers context and insights. When users add captions to visual components like photos or videos, they can explain more about what they think and feel, or share information about the content.

Even though they are fairly popular, social media captions are frequently written quickly, with little regard for technical accuracy or language. These captions are common with grammatical and technical problems, including misspellings, improper verb tenses, improper punctuation, and even inadvertent ambiguity. Given the widespread use of social media and its significant impact on daily communication, it is necessary to look at the scope and consequences of these errors.

With a focus on social media captions, this study attempts to identify the kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors that occurred in the Instagram caption of LIUNIC ON THINGS. LIUNIC ON THINGS is one of the most productive local brands in Indonesia. It was chosen as the data source because its Instagram captions are written in English to introduce and sell its product globally. However, several grammatical and mechanical errors are found in their Instagram caption. This can make readers misinterpret information about the products they introduce or sell. In addition, errors in caption writing can make their credibility as a local brand that goes global go down.

Several studies focusing on error analysis, including mechanical and grammatical analysis, have been conducted. A study by Yunita (2014) entitled "Error Analysis of Grammar Found in Social Media Caption of Eigerindo's Products" showed that 84 grammatical errors were discovered, and the most common grammatical error is subject-verb agreement error with 36%. Another study conducted by Yuliah, et.al. (2019) revealed that the most common grammatical error detected in the student's essay is the usage of conjunctions (20.6%), while the most common mechanical error found is punctuation (21.6%). A study conducted by Kharmilah and Narius (2019) showed that 260 errors were found in the students' writing, including 50,77% errors of omission, 28,55% errors of misformation, 15% errors of addition, and 5,38% errors of misordering. Another study conducted by Calanoga (2019) showed that 35,81% of errors are in the form of the mechanical error category and 35,34% of errors are in the form of grammatical error category. Last, Suandhari, et.al (2019) found 19% errors of omission, 14% errors of addition, 55% errors of malformation, and 12% errors of disordering in the emails committed by the Reservation Staff of PT. Destination Asia Bali during 2015-2016.

Of the five previous studies, no research has been found that discusses the grammatical and mechanical errors found in Instagram captions. Thus, this study is essential to be carried out to identify the kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors found in the Instagram captions of LIUNIC ON THINGS. Theoretically, the results of this study may contribute to enriching the knowledge of grammatical and mechanical errors. Meanwhile, practically, it may be used as one of the evaluation resources for social media caption makers to prevent the occurrence of grammatical and mechanical errors.

Theoretical Framework

Error Analysis

Error analysis is an activity to reveal errors found in written and spoken languages (Richard:1973). It is also the process of observing, analyzing, and classifying incorrect statements (Brown: 2007). According to the two definitions above, error analysis is the process of identifying, categorizing, interpreting, or describing errors made by a speaker or writer. It is intended to find out what common problems speakers and writers of English sentences experience.

One of the ways to do error analysis is to use the Surface Strategy Taxonomy theory by Dulay et al. (1981:150). This theory explains that a surface strategy taxonomy exposes how surface structures are modified: people may add or remove necessary things, misform or reorganize objects, or omit necessary items. From this statement, it can be concluded that the surface strategy taxonomy can provide an overview of the grammatical errors that a person makes. A person may omit or add elements that are not needed in a sentence or elements that are not in accordance with grammar rules. In addition, a person may make mistakes in arranging and placing an element that is not based on grammatical rules.

Grammatical Error

Novita (2014) as cited in Yuliah et. al. (2019, p.63) stated that grammatical error happens when words are not correctly joined. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed four categories, such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. First, according to Duly et al (1982), the lack of certain aspects that must be present in sentences is called omission. Second,

Dulay et al (1982) define addition as the presence of unwanted items in sentences. Third, Dulay et. al. (1982) refer misformation to as the wrong forms of certain structures or morphemes. Lastly, misordering is known as the inappropriate placement of certain morphemes (Dulay et al, 1982). Examples are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Examples of Grammatical Errors

Category	Example
Omission	She *[…] sleeping.
Addition	We *didn't went there.
Misformation	The dog *ated the chicken.
Misordering	What *[daddy is] doing?

Mechanical Error

For effective communication and clarity in writing, mechanics refer to the conventions governing the technical aspects of writing, including punctuation, abbreviation, capitalization, and spelling (Nordquist, 2020, para. 1). If there are issues with them, it is called a mechanical error.

Caption

According to the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary (2023), a caption is a brief text over or under a picture in a book, magazine, or newspaper that describes the picture or explains what the people in it are doing or saying. Grayam (2010) stated that caption is a brief description accompanying an illustration.

According to Eldor (2022), there are nine criteria of a good caption. First, the first sentence should be the most compelling. Since a long caption cannot be shown as a whole, the call-to-action (CTA) should be put in the first line. Second, the caption should include a CTA or ask a question. The objective is to encourage participation to foster discourse and conversation. Third, a value needs to be added to the caption. Including value in the captions will benefit the user and increase the likelihood of the post being shared and bookmarked. Next, the caption should look like it is written by a human, not a robot. It is important to make the caption sound natural as a conversation between friends. Also, use another platform to draft captions. If captions are written on a different platform, people will be more likely to do so without interruptions and with strategic thinking. A storytelling technique is a good way to make a caption as well. It is better to have a caption that includes the writer's personality. Furthermore, emojis can be used in the caption by adding them at the end of sentences or paragraphs. They animate the caption, but it should match the tone of voice and branding. Eighth, the length of the caption has to be considered. It is important to be concerned more about its quality than its quantity. Lastly, to make it searchable, it should add hashtags.

Meanwhile, according to Smock (2018), there are two exact formats for captions. First, the present tense and complete sentences should be used while writing photo captions. The image has an immediate quality thanks to the present tense. When it makes no sense to do so, the first sentence of the caption is written in the present tense, but the subsequent sentences are not. Second, the captions should be written briefly. The majority of captions consist of one or two brief, declarative

sentences. If sophisticated contextual information is required to fully explain the image, certain sentences may go on to a third one.

Method

This study applied a document analysis method. This method is the process of reviewing and evaluating documents both printed and electronic in a methodical manner. It is useful for identifying, categorizing, analyzing, and interpreting physical data to gain understanding and come to a conclusion (Payne and Payne in Ahmed: 2010).

The data of this study are in the form of 50 Instagram captions of LIUNIC ON THINGS written in English. They were obtained from the official Instagram account of LIUNIC ON THINGS, @liuniconthings, posted from January to December 2022.

In the data collection process, English Instagram captions were collected and categorized into two categories: 20-word Instagram captions and 70-word Instagram captions. Each Instagram caption was then recorded in a table for analysis. Each Instagram caption was then recorded in a table for analysis. The analysis process was conducted by identifying grammatical and mechanical errors contained in the Instagram captions. To analyze grammatical errors, the theory of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy (1982) was used while to analyze mechanical errors, the theory of Warriner and Griffith (1973) and Mitchell (2008) was used.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results of the study revealed 127 errors found in 50 Instagram captions of LIUNIC ON THINGS; 66 grammatical errors and 61 mechanical errors. The grammatical errors include omission (25.4%), addition (4%), misformation (64.2%), and misordering (6%). While, in terms of mechanical errors, they cover punctuation (50.8%), capitalization (44.3%), and spelling (4.9%). The detailed results of this study are presented in the following chart.
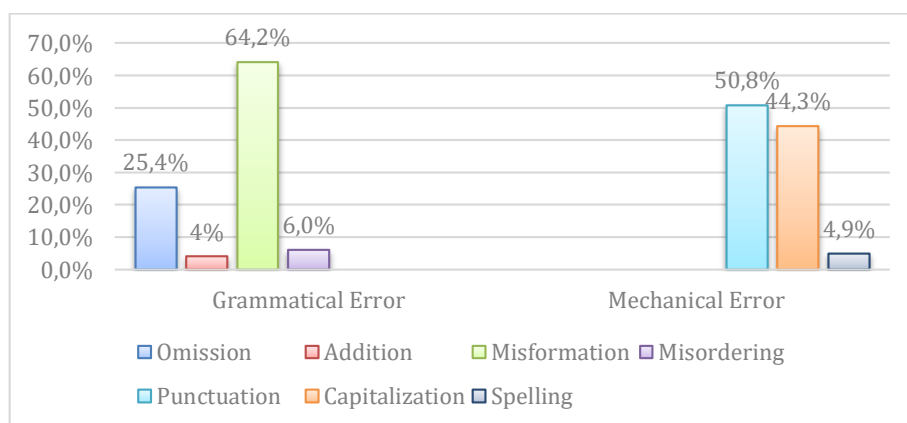

Figure 1 The finding of the study

Discussion

1. Misformation

Misformation refers to the incorrect shapes of particular structures or morphemes. After evaluating the data, various types of misinformation were discovered in the captions. The following table presents the types of errors related to misformation.

Table 2 Types of Error Related to Misformation

Types of Misformation	Total of Errors
Tenses	23
Pronoun	5
Noun (Singular and Plural)	5
Subject-verb Agreement	4
Preposition	3
Article	1
Parallelism	1
Total	42

Sample 1

LIUNIC ON THINGS promotes its shirt and sling bag as written in this caption. The caption is written below.

> We tried wearing an outfit based on the color wheel, turns out we love it! Would you guys try using this triadic technique? Shop our Flutterby Shirt & Logo Sling Bag thru Shopee, Tokopedia & Worldwide Website.

It can be seen that the first sentence used the past tense. On the other hand, the caption has to be written in the present form as stated by Smock. Hence, the verb 'tried' should be changed to 'try.' Table 3 below shows the possible correction of Sample 1.

Table 3 Analysis of tense misformation

Original Caption	Possible Correction
We tried wearing an outfit based on the color wheel, turns out we love it! Would you guys try using this triadic technique? Shop our Flutterby Shirt & Logo Sling Bag thru Shopee, Tokopedia & Worldwide Website.	We try wearing an outfit based on the color wheel, turns out we love it! Would you guys try using this triadic technique? Shop our Flutterby Shirt & Logo Sling Bag thru Shopee, Tokopedia & Worldwide Website.

Sample 2

LIUNIC ON THINGS asks people about whose drawing is the closest as written in this caption. The caption is written below.

> We told our team to draw our studio cat (Azuki) with their left hand, and this is how it turns out! Tell us in the comment who's drawing is the closest?

As shown in the caption, 'who's' is 'who is.' Meanwhile, the caption is asking about who belongs to the certain thing (drawing). Therefore, 'whose' is the correct interrogative pronoun, which means "belonging to a person." Table 4 below shows the possible correction of Sample 2.

Table 4 Analysis of Pronoun Misformation

Original Caption	Possible Correction
We told our team to draw our studio cat (Azuki) with their left hand, and this is how it turns out! Tell us in the comment who's drawing is the closest?	We told our team to draw our studio cat (Azuki) with their left hand, and this is how it turns out! Tell us in the comment whose drawing is the closest.

Sample 3

LIUNIC ON THINGS promotes their clothes for cats as written in this caption. The caption is written below.

> Go give your cat a dress-up because they deserve it! Shop Furry Friends Cat Collar thru our Shopee and Tokopedia.

As shown in the caption, since the pronoun in the first sentence is "they", the noun "cat" should be in a plural form. Thus, a suffix -s should be at the end of the word 'cat.' Table 5 below shows the possible correction of Sample 3.

Table 5 Analysis of noun misformation

Original Caption	Possible Correction
Go give your cat a dress-up because they deserve it! Shop Furry Friends Cat Collar thru our Shopee and Tokopedia.	Go give your cats a dress-up because they deserve it! Shop Furry Friends Cat Collar thru our Shopee and Tokopedia.

2. Punctuation

Craiker (2022) explained that a series of symbols and marks, which make the written language easier to read is known as punctuation. Several punctuations were used incorrectly in its Instagram captions. They are listed in the following table.

Table 6 List of Punctuation

Punctuation	Total of Errors
Comma	11
Period	10
Exclamation Mark	5
Colon	2
Semicolon	2
Question Mark	1
Total	31

Sample 4

LIUNIC ON THINGS announces its backpack is available on e-commerce as written in this caption. The caption is written below.

> This backpack keep selling out since we launch 'em! and we're happy to announce that it's now available on Shopee & Tokopedia.

As shown above, the caption is a compound sentence, but LIUNIC ON THINGS puts an exclamation mark before the coordinating conjunction 'and'. It is supposed to be a comma; thus, the exclamation mark should be replaced. Table 7 below shows the possible correction of Sample 4.

Table 7 Analysis of comma error

Original Caption	Possible Correction
This backpack keep selling out since we launch 'em**!** and we're happy to announce that it's now available on Shopee & Tokopedia.	This backpack has kept selling out since we launched 'em**,** and we're happy to announce that it's now available on Shopee & Tokopedia.

Sample 5

LIUNIC ON THINGS promotes their phone cases. The caption is written below.

> This is what we do when we're feeling sad! Raise your hand if you're with us? Shop our phone cases thru Shopee, Tokopedia, and Website www.liuniconthings.com

It can be seen that the second sentence is not a question, but it is an imperative sentence. Based on Warriner's and Griffith's theory, an imperative should use an exclamation mark. Therefore, the question mark should be replaced with an exclamation mark. Table 8 below shows the possible correction of Sample 5.

Table 8 Analysis of exclamation point error

Original Caption	Possible Correction
This is what we do when we're feeling sad! Raise your hand if you're with us**?** Shop our phone cases thru Shopee, Tokopedia, and Website www.liuniconthings.com	This is what we do when we're feeling sad! Raise your hand if you're with us**!** Shop our phone cases thru Shopee, Tokopedia, and Website www.liuniconthings.com

Sample 6

LIUNIC ON THINGS asks people about their moods based on their outfits. The caption is written below.

> Isn't it fun to have the same dress but with a different mood. Which one are you? the Let Go White Overall Dress or the Black Overall Dress? Shop thru our Worldwide Website www.liuniconthings.bigcartel.com & Marketplaces.

It can be seen that the first sentence is a question, but it ends with a period. According to Warriner and Griffith, a direct question is followed by a question mark. Thus, the period should be replaced with a question mark. Table 9 below shows the possible correction of Sample 6.

Table 9 Analysis of question mark error

Original Caption	Possible Correction
Isn't it fun to have the same dress but with a different mood**.** Which one are you? the Let Go White Overall Dress or the Black Overall Dress? Shop thru our Worldwide Website www.liuniconthings.bigcartel.com & Marketplaces.	Isn't it fun to have the same dress but with a different mood**?** Which one are you? The Let Go White Overall Dress or the Black Overall Dress? Shop thru our Worldwide Website www.liuniconthings.bigcartel.com & Marketplaces.

Conclusion

This study focuses on Grammatical and Mechanical Errors found in LIUNIC ON THINGS Instagram captions. The data of this study are 50 Instagram captions released in 2022 and these data were analyzed using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Warriner and Griffith's punctuation and spelling theory, and Mitchell's capitalization theory.

From the analysis, 66 grammatical errors and 61 mechanical errors were found. The grammatical errors found are 63.6% of misformation, 25.8% of omission, 6.1% of misordering, and 4.5% of addition. The mechanical errors, on the other hand, are 50.8% of punctuation errors, 44.3% of capitalization errors, and 4.9% of spelling errors. It can be seen that misformation is the most common grammatical error, and punctuation is the most common mechanical error.

With the results of this study, it is expected Instagram caption makers to be more careful in making their Instagram captions, especially those in English. Writing Instagram captions on a business's Instagram account can cause misinterpretation of information and can make the reputation of the business decrease.

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