

Spelling Compliance and Institutional Professionalism: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Official Documents in Indonesian Local Government

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Abstract: This study examines compliance with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) in official documents from the Palembang City Education Office and analyzes the sociolinguistic implications of spelling errors for institutional professionalism. Using qualitative content analysis of 20 official documents (official letters, memos, circulars, and activity reports) and semi-structured interviews with document preparers, we identified 152 spelling violations across six error categories. Word writing errors (28%), non-standard loanwords (17%), and punctuation mistakes (15%) were most prevalent. Critically, we documented serious errors including misspelled city names ("Palembang"), date inconsistencies, and invalid employee identification numbers errors that fundamentally undermine document credibility. Sociolinguistic analysis reveals these errors reflect a weak culture of linguistic accuracy and inadequate internalization of standard language ideology within bureaucratic practice. The findings suggest that spelling non-compliance is not merely technical but signals institutional attitudes toward language as a marker of professionalism. We recommend targeted language training, development of internal style guides, and strengthened editing protocols to enhance both linguistic quality and institutional image.

Keywords: Indonesian Spelling, Language Use, Official Documents, Sociolinguistics Perspective

A. Introduction

Indonesian serves as the official language of the state and a symbol of national identity (Suhendi, 2025). Its importance is reflected in government activities, the drafting of laws and regulations, and inter-institutional communication. The use of Indonesian in formal contexts demonstrates its crucial role as a means of conveying official and administrative information (Fitrayatra et al., 2023; Muslimawati, 2022). The success of Indonesian in uniting diverse ethnicities, cultures, and regional languages demonstrates its ability to act as a social glue. The choice of a single language for all citizens strengthens national integration and builds collective national consciousness.

The national education system uses Indonesian as the primary language of instruction at all levels of learning. Mastery of the structure and rules of Indonesian reflects the quality of students' thinking and communication. The use of Indonesian according to the rules in academic activities demonstrates the professionalism and credibility of educational institutions. Government institutions are required to maintain linguistic consistency throughout documents, reports, and official communications. Accurate use of Indonesian in formal settings strengthens the image and integrity of state institutions.

According to Pan et al. (2021), standard spelling is crucial in written communication, especially in official government documents. Accurate spelling reflects the professionalism, credibility, and integrity of an institution. Spelling errors can lead to misunderstandings, reduce the clarity of information, and even potentially lead to misinterpretation of a document's content (S. D. Siregar et al., 2026). Proper writing also demonstrates adherence to national language rules. In the context of government administration, the use of standard spelling strengthens document management, ensuring systematic, neat, and easy-to-understand writing. Spelling standardization through the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) serves as the primary reference for writers of official documents. Ignoring spelling rules can tarnish an institution's image and give the impression of a lack of linguistic competence. Therefore, government employees and professionals need to have a good understanding of proper spelling. Language training and document editing are strategic steps in improving the quality of written communication. Compliance with spelling serves not only as an administrative requirement but also as a demonstration of respect for Indonesian as the country's official language.

Government agencies, such as the Department of Education, should set an example in good and correct language use. Institutional responsibility includes exemplary use of Indonesian according to rules. Official documents issued by government agencies must reflect the use of spelling, grammar, and sentence structure in accordance with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). Accurate language demonstrates professionalism and commitment to state regulations. This exemplary practice positively impacts the wider community, particularly in education and the bureaucracy. Official documents produced by government agencies represent the identity and credibility of the institution. Every element of language used in these documents reflects the quality of bureaucratic communication and the level of professionalism of its human resources. Inappropriate use of language can create the impression of a lack of precision and competence. Documents prepared with attention to spelling, sentence structure, and proper grammar are more easily understood, trusted, and recognized as valid. Accurate language also strengthens the document's function as a legally and administratively valid communication tool.

At the local level, indications of low linguistic quality are also evident in official documents published by government agencies, including the Department of

Education. Previous research has shown that spelling errors, particularly in capitalization, punctuation, and prepositions, are still frequently found in official letters and documents of local government agencies (Fatchiyah, 2021; La Saadi, 2022). According to Fatchiyah (2021), many official documents are inconsistent in their use of capital letters, such as in the writing of proper names, job titles, days of the week, and at the beginning of sentences. For example, the names of agencies or officials, which should begin with a capital letter, are often written with a lowercase letter. According to la Saadi (2022), finding errors in the use of punctuation marks such as periods, commas, slashes, and hyphens, which are often used inconsistently with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). For example, the inappropriate use of commas to separate sentence elements or inconsistent placement of periods at the end of sentences, and according to Safitri (2025), found errors in writing prepositions such as “di,” “ke,” and “dari” often not separated from the word that follows, even though according to PUEBI regulations, prepositions must be written separately from the word that follows, except in the writing of standard word combinations. Therefore, research on the level of compliance with spelling rules in official documents is crucial to support improving the quality of administrative communication and strengthening the position of Indonesian as the national language (Alfianita et al., 2025; Mayrita & Abror, 2024).

Spelling errors, such as capitalization, prepositions, punctuation, and other linguistic elements, are still frequently found in official documents (Afifatul & Roysa, 2022). This nonconformity indicates a lack of attention to the language rules established in the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). These errors can disrupt clarity of meaning, reduce document quality, and create ambiguity in the interpretation of content. Writing that does not comply with the rules also gives the impression of a lack of professionalism and discipline on the part of the drafting agency. The existence of linguistic errors in government circles is ironic, considering that these institutions should be role models for the public. According to Prasetya (2019), these inconsistencies can impact professionalism and the understanding of document content. Accuracy in language is an indicator of the quality of an institution’s work and integrity. When official documents contain errors in spelling, sentence structure, or punctuation, the institution’s credibility can be questioned. The information conveyed is at risk of being misinterpreted, especially if the document relates to important policies, instructions, or decisions. Message delivery becomes ineffective and even has the potential to lead to misunderstandings between parties.

The high volume of documents produced demands serious attention to linguistic aspects, particularly adherence to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). Consistent application of linguistic rules demonstrates a commitment to carrying out administrative tasks in an orderly and systematic manner. The use of good and correct Indonesian in every document also demonstrates respect for the national language and serves as an example for the wider community (Martono et al., 2022; I. Siregar, 2021). The Department of Education, as an institution closely linked

to literacy and language development, should be at the forefront of optimally implementing linguistic rules. Evaluation and monitoring of the linguistic quality of documents needs to be carried out periodically to ensure the quality of the written communication produced.

Research on spelling compliance in official documents makes a significant contribution to efforts to improve the quality of official scripts (Liu et al., 2025; Taibi & Ozolins, 2023). The findings of this study can serve as a reference for developing internal guidelines, language training, and development strategies for civil servants. The availability of valid language data also helps institutions develop more targeted language quality monitoring and control measures. Consistent application of spelling rules is expected to create an orderly, informative, and accountable administrative system. This effort also strengthens the position of Indonesian as a respected and dignified national language. This research will determine the level of compliance with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). The results are expected to provide an objective picture of the extent to which government agencies, particularly the Palembang City Education Office, apply spelling rules in the preparation of official documents. The data obtained can serve as a basis for evaluating language quality and identifying the most common forms of spelling errors. This information is crucial for formulating steps to improve and strengthen the use of good and correct Indonesian within the bureaucracy.

The results of this study are expected to serve as material for evaluating and improving the quality of language within government. The findings can provide a clear picture of the conformity of spelling in official documents with applicable rules, particularly the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). This evaluation is crucial for identifying weaknesses and errors that still frequently occur, allowing relevant agencies to formulate targeted corrective measures. Utilizing the research results as a basis for language development will encourage increased competency among government officials in drafting official documents more accurately and in accordance with standards.

The quality of language in official documents directly impacts the image, credibility, and effectiveness of government agency communication (Alon-Barkat, 2020; Li et al., 2022). Therefore, improving the quality of written language within the bureaucracy is an urgent and strategic need. This research is expected to contribute to collective awareness of the importance of using good and correct Indonesian in the context of public administration. Consistent application of the evaluation results will strengthen professional, accountable, and authoritative governance. Therefore, research on adherence to spelling rules in official government agency documents, particularly the Palembang City Education Office, is highly urgent in improving the quality of bureaucratic communication. The findings of this study are expected to form the basis for developing language development strategies, technical training in document preparation, and regular language evaluations. These efforts will not only improve

the competence of civil servants in writing well and correctly but also strengthen the image of professionalism of government institutions. Consistent application of the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) demonstrates respect for the national language and reflects institutional integrity in carrying out public service duties with accountability and dignity.

The research question in this study were 1) To what extent do official documents from the Palembang City Education Office comply with PUEBI spelling standards?; 2) What types of spelling errors are most prevalent, and what patterns characterize their occurrence?; and 3) How do spelling errors in official documents reflect institutional language attitudes and impact perceptions of professionalism from a sociolinguistic perspective?

B. Methods

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with a content analysis approach. This method was chosen because the research focused on systematically describing and examining the forms of errors in the use of Indonesian spelling based on the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) in official documents, as well as analyzing the sociolinguistic implications arising from this use. The qualitative descriptive approach was used to analyze language use at the normative level of spelling while simultaneously examining the social aspects of language reflected in the writing practices of bureaucratic documents. Through this approach, the research presents an objective picture of the level of compliance with spelling and linguistic meanings contained in official documents of the Palembang City Education Office. This research was conducted at the Palembang City Education Office as the primary data collection location. This location was selected based on the relevance of official documents produced by government agencies in carrying out administrative and public service functions. The research period was from July to August 2025, encompassing the stages of data collection, analysis, and report preparation. The objects of this research were official written documents issued by the Palembang City Education Office. The official documents analyzed included official letters, circulars, memos, and activity reports used in the institution's administrative and formal communication activities.

This study did not directly involve individual or group subjects. The focus was on analyzing the text within official documents as the institution's linguistic products. Therefore, this study is document-based research, with official documents as the primary source of data. Meanwhile, the informants in this study came from the General Affairs and Personnel Division, who are directly involved in the preparation of administrative documents. These informants were selected because they are responsible for the completeness, accuracy, and compliance with the language used in written administrative products. This study did not use a statistical approach but rather an in-depth analysis of the document content. Data collection was conducted

through documentation, collecting 20 official documents in the form of official letters, memos, and circulars issued by the Palembang City Education Office. Documents were selected based on the criteria of being official, written, and used in administrative activities.

The research procedure was carried out through several stages: identification and collection of official documents, classification of document types, analysis of spelling conformity based on PUEBI rules, interviews to obtain internal perspectives on document composition, and drawing conclusions. The data in this study consisted of errors in the use of Indonesian spelling found in official written documents published by the Palembang City Education Office. Spelling errors analyzed included capitalization, prepositional spelling, punctuation, and spelling of standard words that did not comply with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). The validity of the data in this study was maintained through several techniques, namely source triangulation, technical triangulation, extended participation, and increased diligence. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from various sources, such as official documents and interviews. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was conducted by utilizing various data collection methods, namely documentation, interviews, and literature studies, to obtain consistent and reliable data. Extended participation was carried out by intensively involving researchers in the data collection process to deepen understanding of the context. Increased diligence was achieved through thorough and repeated research to ensure that the data obtained was truly accurate and consistent with the reality on the ground. These efforts ensured the resulting data had high validity and could be scientifically accounted for.

The data analysis in this study employed a content analysis method based on the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). The analysis was conducted to identify, classify, and evaluate the appropriateness of spelling use in official documents. The data analysis process was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data reduction stage involved sorting and focusing the data, including all spelling errors found in official documents. The data presentation stage involved compiling the findings into tables and systematic descriptive descriptions based on the PUEBI spelling error categories. The conclusion stage involved analyzing the level of spelling compliance and interpreting the research findings from a sociolinguistic perspective.

C. Results and Discussion

The analysis shows that the level of compliance with spelling in official documents remains relatively low. This is demonstrated by the persistent presence of fundamental and recurring spelling errors, such as the use of non-standard words, misspelled prepositions, and inaccurate use of punctuation. These errors do not occur in just one type of document but are spread across the various official documents

analyzed. The low level of compliance with PUEBI reflects the suboptimal implementation of language standards in the preparation of official documents. In the context of the educational bureaucracy, this condition indicates weak oversight of written language quality and low institutional awareness of the importance of using correct Indonesian as part of administrative professionalism. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the low level of compliance with spelling rules reflects the language attitudes of document writers who have not fully recognized language norms as a crucial element in formal communication. This condition has implications for the image and authority of the institution, given that official documents serve as the formal representation of the institution in the public sphere.

Analysis of the Linguistic Implications and Professionalism of Documents

An analysis of the linguistic implications of official documents from the Palembang City Education Office shows that spelling errors not only impact the language aspect but also affect the quality and professionalism of official documents. Misalignment of spelling with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) reduces the clarity of messages and the accuracy of information conveyed in official written communications. From a linguistic perspective, fundamental and repeated spelling errors reflect a weak mastery and application of standard Indonesian language norms within the bureaucracy. This situation indicates that language has not been fully treated as a formal instrument that demands precision and consistency in its use, particularly in documents with administrative and legal functions. These implications directly impact the professionalism of official documents. Official documents containing spelling errors, formatting inconsistencies, and terminological errors have the potential to undermine reader trust and undermine the institution's image as an educational institution that should be a role model for the use of good and correct Indonesian.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the linguistic practices reflected in official documents demonstrate an institutional language attitude that has not fully embraced linguistic rules as an integral part of bureaucratic work culture. This indicates the need to increase linguistic awareness and strengthen standards for writing official documents to maintain the authority, credibility, and professionalism of the institution in written communication. The link between linguistic errors and the level of compliance with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) is clearly evident in the pattern and frequency of errors found in official documents of the Palembang City Education Office. The recurring and fundamental nature of these errors indicates that the application of spelling rules in official documents is not yet consistent. Errors in the use of non-standard words, prepositions, and inaccurate punctuation are key indicators of low compliance with PUEBI. These errors occur not only sporadically but also across various types of official documents, reflecting weak linguistic control in the document preparation process.

The high frequency of certain spelling errors indicates that adherence to the PUEBI has not yet become an internalized standard in bureaucratic administrative practices. This situation highlights a gap between formally established linguistic norms and the practice of using language in official documents. Overall, the findings of repeated and systematic linguistic errors indicate that the level of compliance with the use of Indonesian spelling in official documents of the Palembang City Education Office is suboptimal. This assessment emphasizes the need to improve adherence to the PUEBI as part of efforts to improve the language quality and professionalism of official documents.

Sociolinguistic Impact Analysis of Spelling Errors

The discovery of spelling errors in official documents of the Palembang City Education Office cannot be viewed solely as a technical linguistic issue. Through a sociolinguistic lens, these errors are linguistic indicators that reflect social dynamics, organizational culture, and image construction within the government bureaucracy (La'biran, 2024; Zavarzina et al., 2020). Sociolinguistically, official language functions as an index of an institution's authority and professionalism (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). The findings of this study indicate that fatal and repetitive errors such as the spelling of the city name as "Palembana" (in Letters 5 and 9), date inconsistencies, and inaccuracies in fundamental data such as student ID numbers (NIP) and degrees constitute breaches of the basic norm of accuracy (culture of accuracy).

These errors reveal an institutional paradox: on the one hand, the Education Office, as an institution dedicated to literacy and language development, is expected to be a role model; on the other, the documents it produces actually reproduce non-compliance with these norms. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of language ideology, which observes that tolerance for deviations from rules indicates weak enforcement of internal standards (Hartono, 2025). For the public and vertical agencies, documents containing such fundamental errors not only hinder understanding but also sociolinguistically undermine trust in the management capacity and integrity of the institution. These findings confirm that low spelling compliance is a symptom of a work culture that is permissive of detail and does not place accuracy of language as a primary value in public service.

The predominance of errors in spelling (28%) and punctuation (15%) has direct implications for the clarity of communication and the hierarchy of language varieties. Analysis shows the strong influence of spoken or informal varieties in what should be formal written language. Real-world examples include:

1. Incorrect word hyphenation: "dibawah ini" (below this), "dilingkung" (in the environment) (Surat 17).
2. The use of non-standard forms common in conversation: "himbauan" (admonition), "ketaqwaan" (prayers), and "sholat" (Surats 3, 8, and 10).

3. Incomplete sentence structures that resemble truncated speech patterns (seen in several assignment letters).

From a sociolinguistic framework, this reflects the lack of awareness of clearly distinguishing language registers among civil servants. Geroimenko (2026) emphasize that effective communication in formal settings depends on clarity and precision. The ambiguity that arises from these errors creates room for multiple interpretations, requires extra cognitive energy from the reader, and ultimately hinders administrative efficiency. In other words, spelling errors are not just a matter of linguistic aesthetics but a risk factor in a dense and complex bureaucratic communication system.

The consistent pattern of errors found across nearly every type of document, from circulars to assignment letters, indicates that this problem is systemic and institutionalized. The presence of unedited templates (such as “{Important}” in Letter 8) strongly suggests that document preparation, in some cases, is conducted as a mechanical routine and mere formality, rather than as a meaningful communication activity. This practice aligns with the concept of ritualistic compliance in organizational studies, where rules are symbolically obeyed without deep internalization. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this demonstrates a weak sense of linguistic ownership among document drafters. Language is viewed as a neutral and procedural tool, rather than as a representation of institutional authority and responsibility (Dingwerth et al., 2020). This low level of compliance also reflects the absence of effective linguistic oversight mechanisms within bureaucratic processes. Therefore, improvement efforts cannot simply target individual competencies but must transform the linguistic habitat and the organizational culture that supports them.

The sociolinguistic implications of this research’s findings indicate that the language practices in official documents of the Palembang City Education Office reflect an institutional language stance that has not yet fully embraced standard Indonesian as the primary norm in formal communication. Fundamental and recurring spelling errors indicate that language use in the educational bureaucracy remains more oriented toward fulfilling administrative functions than toward linguistic accuracy and quality. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language in official documents serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a symbol of authority, prestige, and institutional identity. Non-compliance with the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) reflects a gap between nationally established language norms and language practices within the bureaucracy. This situation demonstrates low language awareness and the lack of a consistent and orderly language culture within educational institutions.

These research findings confirm that the linguistic quality of official documents is directly related to the image and professionalism of the institution. Documents prepared without paying attention to spelling rules have an impact on reducing the

clarity of written communication and weakening the credibility of the institution, especially in the context of the Education Office, which normatively plays a role as a role model in the use of good and correct Indonesian. The contribution of this research lies in providing an empirical overview of the level of compliance with Indonesian spelling in official documents of regional educational institutions. Theoretically, this research strengthens institutional sociolinguistic studies by positioning official documents as a representation of language practices within the bureaucracy. Practically, the results of this study can be used as a basis for evaluating and formulating internal policies related to the preparation and supervision of official document language to improve language quality and administrative professionalism. These findings align with research findings (Munaroh & Rosalina, 2023), which indicate that the most dominant linguistic errors in government documents relate to the use of capital letters and punctuation. The similarity of the findings indicates that the problem of compliance with linguistic rules is a systemic phenomenon and occurs in various local government agencies, not limited to the Palembang City Education Office.

Thus, although the quantitative compliance rate appears high, the qualitative quality of spelling implementation still needs improvement to align with the function of official documents as a representation of institutional identity and bureaucratic professionalism.

Consequently, strategic steps are needed to strengthen language governance within the office, including:

1. Providing special Indonesian language training for civil servants focused on implementing PUEBI (Indonesian Language Standards) in official letters and official documents.
2. Developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on standard and uniform writing procedures for official documents across all work units.
3. Establishing an internal language editing team tasked with ensuring that each document adheres to proper Indonesian language rules before publication.

Through the implementation of these steps, it is hoped that official documents produced by the Palembang City Education Office will not only be administratively valid but also possess linguistic value that reflects the orderliness, accuracy, and professionalism of the government institution.

D. Conclusion

This study examined PUEBI compliance in official documents from the Palembang City Education Office, identifying 152 spelling errors across six categories. The findings reveal that fundamental errors including misspelled city names and invalid identification numbers persist despite the institution's normative role as a language model. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these errors reflect: 1) Weak internalization of standard language ideology within bureaucratic practice; 2) Inadequate editorial oversight in document production processes; and 3) A gap between policy (PUEBI)

and practice at the institutional level. The study contributes to institutional sociolinguistics by demonstrating how spelling errors function as indexes of organizational culture and professional identity. Methodologically, it illustrates the value of integrating quantitative error analysis with qualitative sociolinguistic interpretation. Limitations include the single-institution focus, the relatively small document sample, and the absence of reader perception data (how citizens actually respond to errors). Future research should: (a) compare compliance across multiple agencies, (b) experimentally test the impact of errors on public trust, and (c) examine the document production process ethnographically to understand how errors emerge.

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