



AN ANALYSIS OF ERROR PHRASES ON INSTAGRAM'S CAPTION (A Study of Syntax)

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyze error phrases in Instagram captions, focusing on the syntactic structures used by public figures. With the rise of social media, particularly Instagram, the language employed in captions has become a significant aspect of communication, influencing followers and shaping linguistic norms. The study aims to identify common syntactic errors in captions written in English, especially by non-native speakers. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected from 30 Instagram captions of verified public figures with over 100,000 followers. The analysis revealed five types of phrases: noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), adjective phrases (AdjP), adverb phrases (AdvP), and prepositional phrases (PP). The researcher found that there are eighteen noun phrase, verb phrase appeared in five, adjective phrase appeared in six, and prepositional phrase appeared in one. Among these, noun phrases were the most prevalent, highlighting the need for awareness regarding grammatical accuracy in social media communication. The findings suggest that public figures should be more cautious with their language use, as errors can mislead their audience and perpetuate incorrect language forms. This research contributes to the understanding of language use in digital contexts and offers recommendations for improving caption writing among social media users.

Keywords: Syntax, Error phrase, Types of phrases, Instagram caption, Public figure.

INTRODUCTION

As time goes by, social media become everyone's daily food. Social media has fundamentally transformed the human communication, providing fresh opportunities for connection, self-expression, and share ideas. The rise of social media has not only changed how human communicate, but also how they present themselves to the whole world. And this phenomenon has given rise to influencers,



celebrities, and content creators who use social media to benefit both personally and professionally.

Social media is an internet platform that facilitates people to interact with others by creating or sharing content (Wardoyo et al., 2023). Nowadays, people worldwide have social media, cause not only for communicate or sharing something, this medium provide users to find anything they want. For example, when individuals seek to prepare a dish but lack the necessary knowledge, social media serves as a valuable resource, offering access to a diverse range of recipes for various foods (Helmie & Syafrudin, 2019).

The social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. These platforms are very famous in today's era, because they can spend a day only scrolling through social media. Because all the sources we need are on social media. For example, when we want to make a food, there are many recipes we can use from social media. Not only that, we can also learn from there, it can also be a place of entertainment for everyone, and there is much more that can be explored further.

Instagram one of the most popular social media platforms that everyone uses. People use Instagram as a medium to express feelings, ideas, and activities by displaying photos and uploading videos (Wardoyo et al., 2023). Pictures and videos often published by users on Instagram are usually accompanied by words describing the images and videos uploaded. These words are called captions.

According to Grayam (2010) cited in (Maulina et al., 2018b), caption is a brief description accompanying an illustration, the part of a legal document that gives the important details of a photograph. Individuals not only post their images but some photos are also captioned with information about the circumstance, which might be their sentiments or emotions (Dasuki & Sulistyningrum, 2024). Caption accompanying Instagram posts offer space for users to share their emotions, thoughts, or context behind the visual content. Not only that, these captions range from deeply personal reflections to creative or humorous expressions (Helmie, 2015).

The language that users used in these captions have a big impact on how their followers and the community at large view them. Instagram captions are frequently distinguished by their conversational and informal tone, which reflects the relaxed atmosphere of social media exchanges. Slang, acronyms, idioms and phrases are commonly used by users, and they can foster a feeling of connection and relatability. However, when people use language that may not be understood by everyone, this informally can also result in misunderstandings.



Some of them create captions in any language, especially English. As an Indonesian, English is not our mother tongue, however the use of English has become popular. The growing dominance of English on social media platforms like Instagram, reflects the trends in globalization and digital communication. As a global lingua franca, English enable cross-cultural interaction and allows users from diverse linguistics backgrounds to connect and share content. However, for non-native English speakers, where users opt to write captions in English is a way to reach a wider audience, regardless of their native language.

Nowadays, Instagram's influence extends beyond just communication it shapes language trends, particularly among younger users. As an Instagram user, sometimes people look up to celebrities and influencers, adopting their language patterns, even when those captions contain grammatical errors. Because they admire them or see them as role models (Halimah et al., 2018). As a public figure, they need to be mindful of their actions when posting photos, videos, or even captions on Instagram. Cause many fans look up to them, they should be more aware of the content they share, as even the smallest details can catch their followers' attention.

The use of English in Instagram captions requires particular attention, especially by the public figures. English is not the first language for many users, people often replicate what they read without verifying its accuracy. As a result, errors in phrasing frequently occur and spread through these captions. Influencers and celebrities play a pivotal role in shaping language on social media, serving as linguistic models for their followers. Even when captions contain grammatical mistakes, they are widely copied and imitated. Younger users, in particular may adopt these flawed expressions unknowingly, contributing to the broader dissemination of incorrect English forms. Therefore, public figures should be more mindful of their language user, recognizing the significant impact their content has on shaping linguistic norms within digital communities.

The key part of language that shapes how sentences are structured and how words are arranged to express meaning it's called syntax. In English, syntax follows specific rules that determine how different parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs come together to form clear and grammatically correct sentences. Understanding syntax is essential for effective communication because it directly affects clarity and comprehension.

The importance of syntax in communication cannot be underestimated. A proper sentence structure ensures that messages are not only grammatically accurate but also easy to understand. On social media, where shorts and clear messages are crucial, using correct syntax becomes even more important. In



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Instagram creativity and brevity often take priority over grammatical accuracy. As a result, understanding common syntactic errors in Instagram caption is important for recognizing patterns and offering better support to non-native speakers.

These mistakes can affect how clearly the message comes across and reduce the effectiveness of communication. Error phrases occur when words or phrases are used incorrectly, often causing misunderstandings. On Instagram, these errors may arise from problems with sentence structure, word choice, or grammar. When syntax is incorrect, the sentence structure becomes confusing, making the intended meaning unclear. Studying these mistakes is essential because they show how social media users especially those learning English might unintentionally use language in ways that aren't grammatically or syntactically accurate (Helmie et al., 2023). If these errors aren't corrected, they can spread, reinforcing incorrect language use over time.

This research aims to help readers analyze common errors in phrases, particularly in the context of social media. Researchers will provide insights into what readers should consider when creating captions, especially on platforms like Instagram. As a fans, it is important to be mindful when selecting caption to share. Additionally, the study will guide readers on how to craft appropriate captions in English, enabling them to distinguish between well-written captions and those that may contain mistakes. This understanding is crucial not only for personal expression but also for ensuring that the content shared aligns wit proper language use and conveys the intended message effectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Syntax

Syntax is one of the linguistics branches that study how to arrange words into a sentence. Radford (2004) cite in (Budianto & Amaliyah, 2017) that syntax is the study of how words are combined to form phrases and sentences. In addition, Finegan (2004) argues that syntax is the part of grammar that governs.

According to Yule (1996: 4) cite in (Ma'rif & Pramudyawardhani, 2017) defines Syntax as the study about relationships between linguistic forms, how they are arranged in sequence, and which sequences are well formed. Moreover, Wekker and Haegeman (1985: 5) define Syntax as influential relevant element parts of a sentence and describing these parts grammatically.

According to Crane, et al. (1981:102) cite in (Surayya et al., 2024) argues that syntax is the way words are put together to form phrases and sentences. Syntax is the study of combining words to form phrases and sentences.



And Noam Chomsky said that syntax is a central part of human grammar. Chomsky assert that humans have an innate ability to understand and use the grammatical structure of language, known as “universal grammar”. In this perspective, syntax is not only seen as a set of grammar rules but also as an inherent characteristic of human cognitive nature.

A mastery of syntax makes the students capable to speak and write English accurately. The entry behaviors of syntax are grammar (the grammatical units) and morphology (the word classes). It is concluded that syntax is the arrangement of words, phrases, clauses and sentences based on grammatical rules.

Syntactic Categories

A syntactic category is a group of words that share similar grammatical properties and function similarly in sentence structure. These categories help classify words base on their roles in sentences, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and more complex structures like noun phrases (NP) or verb phrase (VP). Syntactic categories are central to the study of syntax, the branch of linguistics that examines how words combine to form sentences. Common syntactic categories:

Lexical Categories (Part of Speech):

a) Noun (N)

A noun is a word which is used to denote a person (woman, pianist, Prime Minister, etc.), a concrete or abstract entity (fork, field, truth, etc.) or a place (office, garden, railway station). These are all common nouns; there are also proper nouns which are the names of a specific person, place, event, etc., usually starting with a capital letter, for example, Saturday, Mark, Johnny.

b) Verb (V)

Verb is a word that characteristically is the grammatical center of a predicate and express an act, occurrence, or mode of being, that in various languages is inflected for agreement with the subject, for tense, for voice, for mood, or for aspect, and that typically rather full descriptive meaning and characterizing quality but is sometimes nearly devoid of these especially when used as an auxiliary or linking verb. For examples; *enjoy, go, purchase, visit, believe*.

c) Adjective (Adj)

An adjective is a word that describes or clarifies a noun. Adjectives describe noun by giving some information about an objects size, shape, age, color, origin or material.

d) Adverb (Adv)

Adverb is a word or phrase that modifies or qualifies an adjective, verb, or other adverb, or a word group, expressing a relation of place, time,



circumstance, manner, cause, degree, etc.

e) Preposition (P)

Prepositions are usually used in front of nouns or pronouns and they show the relationship between the noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence. For example; *after, in, to, on, with, up, for, from, etc.* There are types of prepositions or the position of preposition; the position of something (*Her bag was under the chair*), the time when something happens (*They arrived on Sunday*), the way in which something is done (*We went by train*), and some prepositions are made up of more than one word (*They moved here because of the baby*).

Syntactic Unit

A syntactic unit is defined as collection of words that operates as a singular element within the framework of a sentence, adhering to established grammatical principles. These unit can differ in both size and complexity and are frequently classified as constituents. The grammatical patterns such as, word is the smallest unit, encompassing nouns, verbs and adjectives. Phrase is combinations of words that act as a cohesive unit, such as noun phrase, verb phrase, adverbial phrase, adjective phrase and prepositional phrase. Clause is a unit that include a subject and a predicate, such as independent clause and dependent clause. The last is sentence, the largest unit serving as a complete thought and adhering to specific grammatical rules. A sentence consists of one or more clauses.

Words

Word is the basic unit of syntax. Orthographically, words are typically bounded by a blank space either side of them, as for example in *a bunch of flowers*. Compound words like birthday and sunshine are still individual units, but the position is complicated by the fact that the same expression may be written as a single, compound word with or without a hyphen or as two separate words, e.g. *airlock, air-lock, or air lock*. The normal practice of writing words with a blank space before and after them is violated in cases such as *Mark's out*, where *Mark* belongs to one word class and 's, which here is a contracted form of is, belongs to another. The 's is a clitic, a word form which cannot stand on its own and which, in this instance, is fused or leached onto the preceding word. Then, word is a unit which can be assigned to a recognized word class and which is not a (hyphenated or un hyphenated) component of a compound unit (Morley, 2000).

Phrases



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Phrase in meaning terms expresses one of the elements of a proposition. Grammatically, it is the grouping of one or more words which together fulfill the role that in other circumstances might be expressed by a single word. So, for example, *the fastest winner of the 100 meters heats* could be replaced by *he or she, might have been training* could be substituted by *trained*.

The English phrases dealt with categories and functions. The categories included noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, and prepositional phrase, and the functions included subject, predicate, object, complement and adjunct.

Clauses

A clause is a group of related words containing a subject and a verb. A clause can be usefully distinguished from a phrase, which is a group of related words that does not contain a subject-verb relationship, such as "in the morning" or "running down the street" or "having grown used to this harassment" Haque (2017).

Clauses can be classified in many different ways, main or independent and subordinate or dependent. Main or independent clause is a clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Subordinate clause is a clause in a sentence which adds to or completes the information given in the main clause, it cannot stand alone as a sentence. A dependent clause is a group of words that also contains a subject and a verb, but it is not a complete thought and cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

Sentences

According to Haque (2017), a sentence is a group of words that expresses a statement, command, question, or exclamation. A sentence consists of one or more clauses, and usually has at least one subject and verb. In writing, it begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark.

Phrase

A phrase is a grouping of two or more words with the same grammatical meaning or the meaning of the function parameters of subject, predicate, object, complement, and adverb (Siagian et al., 2021) cited in (Risamawarni et al., 2023). Phrases are also referred to as minor grammatical units that are nonpredicative (Maulina et al., 2018a)

Tarimini (in Suparmin, 2022: 3) cited in (Tahir et al., 2023) states that "a phrase is a construction consisting of two or more constituents capable of filling certain syntactic functions found in a sentence but does not exceed the boundaries of clause functions or what can be called non-predicative phrases."



Kridalaksana (1988) cited in (Abdullah, 2023) defines phrase as a combination of two or more words which are not predicative, the joint can be tight, stretchable, for example Mountain: High mountain is a phrase because it is a no predicative construction. This construction differs from the mountain that is high, which is not a phrase because it is a predicative. A phrase is a group or pairing of words in English. A phrase can be short or long, but it does not include the subject-verb pairing necessary to make a clause. Therefore, a phrase is a group of words which has no finite verb in it and acts to complete the sentence for making it meaningful.

The terms head and complement will appear in some types of English phrase structure such as noun, adjective, adverb, verb, and preposition. A phrase contains more than one word there will be a head. The general property of a phrase is to have a head determining the characteristic of the overall phrase. Head is defined as a functional label referring to the principal element in a phrase which identifies the category of a phrase (Hambali & Mirizon, 2017). Whereas complement simply refers to a word or words that complete the head.

Types of Phrases

1. Noun phrase (NP) is a word group with a noun as its head. A noun phrase may consist of determiner which has functions as the modifiers and a noun which is the head groups, e.g., a man, the students, his book, their father, one book, many students, that book. A noun phrase may also consist of determiner, an adjective, or a noun as modifier, and a noun as a head, e.g., a clever student, the young man, the good character, the table's leg, many diligent workers, the good island, the pretty woman, and some intelligent person.
2. Verb phrase (VP) states that a verb phrase is a phrase of which head contains a verb; it is a lexical verb along with any associated auxiliary verbs. The main verb phrase consists of a verb and any auxiliaries attached to it, at least one of which must be in the present or past tense. For example, have been eaten, eaten is past participle form as head while have and been are auxiliary that attached to it.
3. Adjective phrase (AdjP) An adjective phrase is formed by adjectives such as head; an optional modifier can be with a pre-modifier which comes before the head and a post-modifier (or complement) which comes after the head.
4. Adverbial phrase (AdvP) is stated as a group of words functioning as an adverb. An adverbial expression of time is expressed as when something happens or how often. Meanwhile, an adverbial phrase of place is stated as to where something happens. In an adverbial word of manner, it is indicated how the adverbial word can do something.



5. Prepositional phrase (PP) emphasizes the relation between two entities, one being represented by prepositional complement. and there are two kinds of most important prepositional phrases which are adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases. Basically, prepositional phrase is a phrase which is started by the preposition as the head and followed by noun or pronoun as a modifier. In combined phrases, there are many kinds of combined phrases such as noun phrase, adjective phrase, etc. but here, the study will lead us to focus only on a phrase where preposition being as a leader or the head of the phrase or usually called as prepositional phrase.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media that is used to upload a photo and write a caption to express or convey an opinion related to the uploaded photo. Caption Instagram can provide information in the form of news, business, activities, or convey opinions, arguments, assessments, and so on. In addition, Instagram users can also comment on a photo uploaded by other Instagram users. Captions on Instagram are in the form of text or sentences to explain an uploaded photo. The topic that people often discuss on Instagram social media today is fashion. Each person in writing a caption on Instagram to describe or describe a photo has a variety of different languages (Sari et al., 2020).

METHODS

The qualitative method is different from the quantitative method, which qualitative to collect data, analyze data, to report writing, and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher used a qualitative method to analyze error phrases data on instagram's caption by the public figure, the researcher also used non-participatory observation methods and documentation to collect the data, because there is no need to engage in the activities carried out by the object of research subjects. Researchers also obtain data by: Identify the error phrases based on Instagram caption, Classify the data based on types of phrases, Describes and explained the data, Interpreting the data using tree diagram, Draw the conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

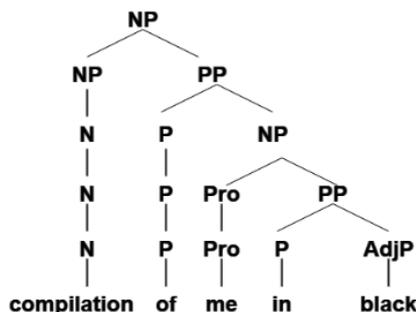
Following analysis of the data collected in this study. According to the findings, 30 mistake phrases were detected in the captions of public figures on Instagram, and the researcher identified five categories of phrases: 18 noun phrases (NP), 5 verb phrases (VP), 6 adjective phrases (AdjP), and 1 prepositional phrase (PP).



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1. Noun Phrase (NP)

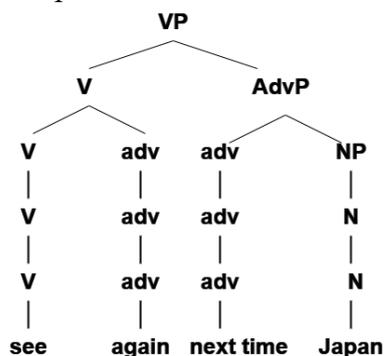
Data: compilation of me in black



The caption with compilation of me in black. The caption is written as noun phrase (NP), which containing the head word “compilation” and it includes prepositional phrase (PP) “of me in black”. In fact, there’s nothing happened with this caption. It’s an informal caption that captioning the photos that sources used. Nevertheless, the caption is an incomplete noun phrase (NP) because structurally noun phrase consist of noun as the head word and determiner as the modifier. In this context, the caption of “compilation of me in black” is lack of determiner before a singular count noun. Cause every singular count noun needs a determiner such as a/an/the/etc. Then, the correct noun phrase of “compilation of me in black” becomes “a compilation of me in black”.

2. Verb Phrase (VP)

Data: see again next time Japan



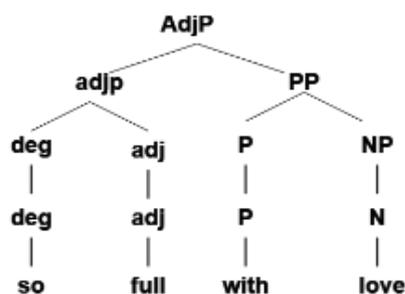
Based on the data, the caption is a verb phrase (VP) consist of verb as the head and it including the adverbial phrase (AdvP) as a compliment. The main components are “see again” is a verb and “next time Japan” is an adverbial phrase. In this context, adverbial phrase containing adverb as “next time” and



noun as “Japan”. Basically, this caption needs an object to complete the phrase. It missing the object after the word of “see” as a verb, by adding the object of “you” it can be make sense phrase become “see you” and its normally used. Then, to be more complete the writer should add punctuation comma after “next time” because it indicating a future occasion and “Japan” is the direct address. The correct phrase of “see again next time Japan” becomes “see you again next time, Japan” or “see you next time, Japan” could be helpful for clarity and correctness.

3. Adjective phrase (AdjP)

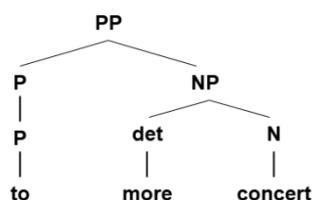
Data: so full with love



The caption is an adjective phrase (AdjP), consists of adjective as the head and include prepositional phrase (PP) as the modifier. There are the main components of this phrase such as, adverbial phrase which is “so full” and prepositional phrase is “with love”. The word of prepositional phrase is divided into preposition that is “with” and the noun is “love”. The caption of “so full with love” is normally correct but sometime becomes confused and not commonly used. Because the word of “full” it pairs with preposition “of” instead of “with”. In this caption, the correct phrase is “so full of love” instead of “so full with love”. The preposition of “full with” is used when something is accompanied by something else, and the use of preposition “full of” is describe a state of being filled by something.

4. Prepositional Phrase (PP)

Data: to more concert





This caption is prepositional phrase (PP). Which are “to” as a preposition and “more concert” as a noun phrase (NP). The word of “concert” is a countable, it must be plural not singular when follows by a quantifier “more”. It should be replaced “concerts” instead of “concert”.

CONCLUSION

This study, the researcher concludes the findings that is able to reveal the answers of two research question.

1. The researcher finds that there are five types of phrases that used on Instagram caption according to Yule’s theory. They are noun phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP), adjective phrase (AdjP), adverb phrase (AdvP), and Prepositional phrase (PP).
2. The researcher got 30 error phrases from Instagrams caption by public figures. The researcher got 18 data from noun phrase, got five data from verb phrase, 6 data from adjective phrase, and 1 data from prepositional phrase. Among these, noun phrases were found to be the most prevalent, it is indicated a strong preference for noun phrase in the context of Instagram captions, suggesting that users may favor clarity and directness in their communication.
3. The researcher found that the structure of captions can significantly impact how messages are conveyed on social media platforms. Proper use of syntax is crucial for effective communication, especially in a medium where space is limited and clarity is essential.

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