

Challenges in the Use of Standard Indonesian in Academic Language in Formal Forums

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study identifies these challenges, examines their contributing factors, compares descriptive compliance across five types of academic forums, and proposes practical responses. **Method:** A qualitative descriptive design was used, combining a focused review of authoritative linguistic and sociolinguistic literature with a structured secondary analysis of the forum-level observations contained in the source manuscript. The five forum profiles were coded according to four dimensions: standard diction and terminology, grammatical effectiveness, register appropriateness, and spelling or presentation accuracy. **Results:** The descriptive results show that academic seminars had the highest reported compliance (90%), whereas thesis examinations, proposal seminars, research workshops, and classroom academic discussions each recorded 75%. The qualitative synthesis identified four recurrent forms of deviation and five interrelated causal factors: habitual language use, limited practice-based instruction, multilingual transfer, globalization, and language attitudes. Because the percentages are derived from a limited descriptive record, they should be interpreted as exploratory patterns rather than population estimates. **Novelty:** The findings indicate that prepared speech tends to support closer conformity to standard norms than spontaneous interaction. Sustainable improvement therefore requires integrated instruction, repeated performance-based training, institutional language review, accessible Indonesian terminology resources, and consistent modeling by academics and public officials.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian holds a constitutional position as the state language and performs central functions in education, government, law, and science [1]. Its formal institutional use is further regulated by national legislation governing the flag, language, state emblem, and national anthem [2]. In academic settings, this mandate is realized through a standard variety characterized by stable grammatical conventions, precise diction, terminological consistency, clarity, and adherence to official spelling rules [3], [4]. Standard Indonesian is therefore not merely a stylistic preference; it is an infrastructure for constructing, evaluating, and disseminating knowledge.

When lecturers explain theoretical frameworks, students defend theses, researchers present findings, or officials formulate decisions, linguistic precision affects how accurately ideas are interpreted. Academic discourse requires language that is explicit, logically organized, appropriately impersonal, and sensitive to disciplinary convention [5], [6]. Ambiguous, highly colloquial, or inconsistent wording can weaken an argument even when its substantive content is sound. Register is consequently inseparable from context: language choices that are effective in casual conversation may be unsuitable in a seminar, examination, or official meeting [7].

Despite this expectation, formal forums frequently contain regional-language transfer, unnecessary foreign-language insertions, popular expressions, and errors in grammar or spelling. Such variation is understandable in a multilingual society. Sociolinguistic research emphasizes that speakers select and combine linguistic resources in response to participants, setting, topic, identity, and communicative purpose [8], [9]. Contextualization cues can signal changes in footing or interpersonal meaning [10], while contact between languages can produce persistent phonological, lexical, and syntactic influence [11]. These mechanisms explain why deviations may emerge unconsciously, particularly during spontaneous speech.

Code-switching and code-mixing also require careful interpretation. Alternating languages may be strategic and socially meaningful rather than evidence of low competence [12], [13]. In an Indonesian-medium academic forum, however, the repeated use of English expressions when clear Indonesian equivalents are available can reduce terminological consistency and create an avoidable mismatch between language choice and institutional expectations. The analytical issue is therefore not whether all switching is inherently incorrect, but whether a particular choice supports precision, accessibility, and the communicative norms of the forum.

Existing accounts of Indonesian language variation provide strong conceptual explanations of standardization, interference, register, and effective sentences [3], [14], [15]. Digital communication adds another pressure because informal orthography and conversational compression circulate rapidly and become habitual [16]. Computational studies likewise document the scale of Indonesian informality and code-mixing, showing that nonstandard vocabulary, spelling, and word order are substantial enough to require dedicated formalization resources [17], [18]. Nevertheless, forum-specific comparisons remain limited, especially comparisons between highly prepared presentations and more interactive academic exchanges.

This study addresses that gap by asking four questions: (1) What forms of deviation recur in formal academic forums? (2) What factors contribute to those deviations? (3) What measures may improve compliance with standard academic Indonesian? and (4) How does the reported level of compliance vary across forum types? The study does not test a causal effect or estimate prevalence for all Indonesian institutions. Instead, it organizes the available descriptive evidence into a transparent analytical structure that can guide larger empirical studies and institutional language-development programs.

Standard Indonesian and Academic Register

A standard language functions as a socially recognized reference variety. Its authority rests on codification, institutional use, and collective acceptance rather than on an assumption that nonstandard varieties are linguistically inferior [3], [14]. In Indonesia, the standard variety is especially important in education and public administration because it enables communication across diverse first-language backgrounds. The fifth edition of the official Indonesian spelling guidelines provides the current normative basis for capitalization, word formation, punctuation, and related orthographic choices [4].

Academic register is a functional adaptation of this standard variety. It privileges explicit logical relations, denotative meaning, controlled terminology, efficient sentence structure, and claims calibrated to evidence [5], [6]. Terminological consistency is particularly important: once a concept has been named and defined, arbitrary alternation between an Indonesian term and an English equivalent may make readers uncertain whether the same concept is intended. Effective academic language therefore combines grammatical correctness with economy, cohesion, precision, and contextual appropriateness [15].

Language Contact, Interference, and Code-Mixing

Language contact can influence pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary [11]. In formal Indonesian, first-language transfer may appear as regional word order, affixation, lexical items, or pronunciation patterns. The effect often becomes more visible during extemporaneous speech because speakers must formulate content and monitor form simultaneously. Sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to select a variety appropriate to the setting, relationship, and communicative goal [8], [9].

Code-switching may mark solidarity, identity, topic change, quotation, emphasis, or a shift in interpersonal alignment [10], [12], [13]. Accordingly, this study distinguishes functional switching from unnecessary mixing. A recognized technical term without an established Indonesian equivalent may be justified; a prestige-driven English insertion that reduces clarity in an Indonesian-medium forum may not be. This context-sensitive distinction prevents the analysis from treating multilingualism itself as a deficit.

Digital Informality and Language Attitudes

Digital media accelerate the circulation of abbreviated forms, slang, hybrid expressions, and flexible orthography [16]. Research on informal-to-formal Indonesian conversion confirms systematic differences in vocabulary, spelling, and word order [17], while work on Indonesian language resources notes the continuing challenge of standardization and representativeness [18]. These patterns matter in academia because frequently repeated informal forms can become automatic and enter live presentations, discussion sessions, and institutional documents.

Language attitudes influence whether speakers monitor and correct such choices. When English is associated with scientific prestige, speakers may use it symbolically even when an Indonesian equivalent would communicate more effectively. Conversely, positive attitudes toward Indonesian can support careful terminology development and professional self-monitoring. Institutional expectations, exemplars, editing practices, and access to authoritative references such as the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language can reinforce that orientation [19].

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study used a qualitative descriptive design supported by a structured descriptive comparison. Two evidence streams were integrated: (1) a focused review of authoritative sources on standard Indonesian, academic discourse, sociolinguistics,

language contact, code-switching, and digital informality; and (2) secondary analysis of the five forum-level records and compliance percentages already contained in the source manuscript. This design was selected because the available material supports classification, interpretation, and comparison, but does not provide the participant-level observations required for inferential statistics or causal conclusions.

Data Sources and Units of Analysis

The literature corpus comprised official Indonesian language policy and spelling documents, major references on Indonesian grammar and sociolinguistics, established international works on academic discourse and language contact, and relevant research on informal or code-mixed Indonesian [1]–[19]. The descriptive dataset contained five units of analysis: an academic seminar, thesis examination, proposal seminar, research workshop, and classroom academic discussion. Each unit represented a type of formal forum rather than an individual participant. The manuscript reported one aggregate compliance percentage for each forum type.

Coding Framework and Analytical Procedure

The qualitative material was organized through deductive and inductive coding. Four initial dimensions were defined from official and academic language standards: (1) diction and terminological consistency, (2) grammatical and sentence effectiveness, (3) register appropriateness, and (4) orthographic or presentation accuracy. During review, recurrent deviations were grouped into regional-language interference, foreign-language code-mixing, conversational or popular expressions, and grammar or spelling errors. Contributing conditions were then categorized as habitual, educational, sociolinguistic, globalization-related, or attitudinal. These categories were compared across the literature and the forum descriptions to identify convergence and explanatory relationships.

The quantitative component was limited to descriptive comparison. The five reported compliance values were tabulated, ranked, and summarized using the arithmetic mean and range. No significance test was conducted because the source manuscript did not supply participant counts, item-level scores, repeated observations, dispersion measures, or a sampling frame. The percentages are therefore treated as exploratory indicators. This explicit limitation prevents unsupported generalization while preserving the descriptive information supplied by the original manuscript.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Analytical credibility was supported by triangulating official language standards, established sociolinguistic theory, and the manuscript's forum profiles. An audit trail was maintained through explicit category definitions and direct correspondence between each finding, table, and interpretive claim. Because the analysis used published sources and de-identified aggregate forum-level information, it did not involve the collection or disclosure of personal data. Future primary research should obtain institutional ethics approval and informed consent when recordings, transcripts, or identifiable participants are used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Forms of Deviation in Formal Academic Forums

The analysis produced four recurrent categories. First, regional-language interference appeared at phonological, lexical, morphological, or syntactic levels. Second, Indonesian–English mixing occurred when speakers inserted English items despite the availability of clear Indonesian equivalents. Third, conversational forms entered formal discourse through casual address terms, emphatic particles, fillers, slang, and social-media expressions. Fourth, grammatical and orthographic problems included ineffective sentences, inappropriate conjunctions or prepositions, inconsistent capitalization, and unstable presentation of technical terms. Table 1 summarizes the categories and their observable indicators.

Table 1. Coding Categories for Language Deviations

No.	Category	Observable indicators	Interpretive boundary
1	Regional-language interference	Regional pronunciation, syntax, affixation, or vocabulary in Indonesian discourse	Accent alone was not treated as an error unless clarity or formal convention was affected.
2	Foreign-language code-mixing	English words or phrases inserted into an Indonesian-medium forum	Established technical terms were distinguished from unnecessary prestige-driven substitutions.
3	Conversational/popular language	Slang, casual particles, fillers, trending expressions, informal address	Items were coded when they conflicted with the expected register of the forum.
4	Grammar/spelling inconsistency	Ineffective sentences, faulty connectors or prepositions, capitalization and term inconsistencies	Coding focused on forms affecting precision, cohesion, or normative presentation.

Descriptive Variation across Forum Types

The forum-level comparison showed one higher value and four identical values. Academic seminars recorded 90% compliance, while thesis examinations, proposal seminars, research workshops, and classroom academic discussions each recorded 75%. The mean across the five forum profiles was 78%, and the observed range was 15 percentage points. Because each value represents an aggregate forum profile, the mean is a descriptive summary rather than an estimate of individual proficiency.

Table 2. Reported Compliance with Standard Academic Indonesian

No.	Formal forum	Reported compliance	Descriptive interpretation
1	Academic seminar	90%	Highest; typically supported by prepared and rehearsed presentation materials.
2	Thesis examination	75%	Lower; includes spontaneous responses and sustained questioning.
3	Proposal seminar	75%	Lower; alternates between prepared exposition and interactive defense.
4	Research workshop	75%	Lower; combines technical explanation with spontaneous facilitation.
5	Classroom academic discussion	75%	Lower; highly interactive and comparatively conversational.
—	Descriptive mean	78%	Average of the five forum-level values; not a population estimate.

The fifteen-point difference suggests that preparation and interactional demands may be relevant contextual features. The result is compatible with the observation that scripted presentation allows speakers to edit wording and terminology in advance, whereas examinations, workshops, and discussions require rapid formulation under cognitive and social pressure. This explanation remains interpretive because the dataset does not contain matched speakers or direct measures of preparation, anxiety, or interaction intensity.

Contributing Factors

Five interrelated factors were identified. Habitual exposure to informal speech increases automatic use of colloquial forms. Educational practice may teach rules without providing sufficient guided rehearsal in academic speaking and revision. Multilingual repertoires create natural opportunities for transfer and switching. Global circulation of English-language scholarship and digital media strengthens the prestige and accessibility of English terms. Finally, language attitudes influence whether speakers regard careful standard Indonesian as an element of professional competence. Table 3 maps these factors to typical manifestations.

Table 3. Factors Associated with Challenges in Formal Language Use

No.	Factor	Mechanism	Typical manifestation
1	Habitual language use	Frequently repeated informal forms become automatic.	Fillers, slang, and casual particles enter formal speech.
2	Educational practice	Knowledge of rules is not converted into repeated performance.	Weak sentence control and inconsistent academic diction.

3	Multilingual context	Languages in the speaker's repertoire influence one another. English dominates many scholarly and digital resources.	Regional syntax, vocabulary, or pronunciation patterns. Unnecessary English substitutions and hybrid expressions.
4	Globalization		
5	Language attitudes	Standard Indonesian is not always treated as professional capital.	Limited self-correction and weak attention to formal norms.

Discussion

The findings reinforce the principle that language appropriateness is contextual. Variation is not automatically defective; it becomes problematic when it obstructs precision, reduces accessibility, or conflicts with the institutional purpose of the forum. This interpretation is consistent with sociolinguistic accounts of domain, register, and communicative competence [8]–[10]. It also avoids equating a regional accent or bilingual repertoire with inadequate academic ability. The relevant question is whether speakers can manage their repertoire in ways that meet the communicative demands of a formal setting.

Regional-language interference reflects the normal consequences of sustained language contact described by Weinreich [11] and Indonesian sociolinguistic scholarship [14]. Its persistence during spontaneous academic talk suggests that written mastery and oral performance should not be assumed to develop identically. Training that focuses exclusively on written grammar will not necessarily prepare speakers to formulate precise responses under questioning. Oral rehearsal, recorded simulation, peer feedback, and repeated exposure to high-quality models are therefore important complements to conventional language instruction.

The code-mixing finding requires a similarly balanced interpretation. Poplack [12] and Myers-Scotton [13] show that switching can be structurally sophisticated and socially purposeful. In formal Indonesian academic discourse, the concern is unnecessary switching that replaces accessible Indonesian terms without adding conceptual precision. Institutions should not prohibit all foreign terminology. Instead, they should encourage speakers to define indispensable foreign terms, use accepted Indonesian equivalents where available, and maintain consistency thereafter. Such guidance protects both disciplinary accuracy and audience inclusion.

The descriptive difference between seminars and the four more interactive forums points to a plausible preparation effect. Academic seminars commonly rely on edited slides and rehearsed narratives, whereas examinations and discussions expose speakers to unpredictable questions. The present data cannot establish causality, yet the pattern provides a useful hypothesis for future study: compliance may decrease as spontaneous turn-taking and cognitive load increase. A stronger design would record multiple events within each forum type, code utterances at the speaker level, report inter-coder agreement, and model the effects of forum, role, discipline, and language background.

Digital informality offers another explanation for the movement of casual forms into academic settings. Crystal [16] describes how online communication reshapes conventions, and Indonesian computational research documents systematic distinctions between informal and formal language [17], [18]. The implication is not that digital communication damages language in a simple or deterministic way. Rather, repeated exposure expands the range of forms available to speakers, making contextual self-monitoring more important. Academic literacy programs should therefore include register-shifting practice: students can compare a social-media post, classroom explanation, seminar presentation, and journal paragraph conveying the same idea.

The results support a multilevel response. At the individual level, students and staff need guided practice in academic speaking and writing. At the institutional level, organizers can provide terminology sheets, pre-presentation language checks, and constructive feedback. At the sociocultural level, respected academics and officials can model clear standard Indonesian without stigmatizing regional or multilingual identities. Official spelling guidance and KBBI resources should be integrated into routine preparation rather than consulted only after errors are noticed [4], [19].

Table 4. Recommended Improvement Strategies

No.	Strategy	Primary target	Expected contribution
1	Practice-based academic language instruction	Students at all educational levels	Connects knowledge of rules with actual speaking and writing performance.
2	Recorded simulations and structured feedback	Students, lecturers, teachers, and officials	Makes recurring oral patterns visible and supports deliberate correction.
3	Terminology support and language review	Academic and governmental institutions	Improves consistency before materials enter a public forum.
4	Exemplary formal-language modeling	Academic leaders and public officials	Strengthens positive language attitudes and professional norms.
5	Context-sensitive institutional guidelines	Forum organizers and academic units	Clarifies when Indonesian equivalents, definitions, or foreign terms are appropriate.

This study has important limitations. The descriptive percentages were inherited from the source manuscript and were not accompanied by participant counts, raw coding records, measurement intervals, or reliability evidence. They must therefore be read as exploratory forum profiles. The literature component was focused rather than systematic and did not use a preregistered search protocol. These limitations do not invalidate the identified categories, but they restrict generalization and prevent claims about prevalence, statistical difference, or causal mechanisms. Future research should establish a transparent sampling frame, operationalize compliance indicators, train multiple

coders, calculate inter-rater reliability, and report both event-level and participant-level results.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The use of standard Indonesian in formal academic forums is challenged by regional-language interference, unnecessary foreign-language code-mixing, conversational and popular expressions, and grammatical or orthographic inconsistency. These patterns arise through the interaction of habitual language use, practice gaps in education, multilingual contact, globalization, and language attitudes. The descriptive dataset showed 90% compliance for academic seminars and 75% for each of the four more interactive forum types, producing a forum-level mean of 78% and a range of 15 percentage points. **Implication :** Improvement should combine practice-based instruction, repeated oral rehearsal, constructive feedback, terminology support, institutional review, and consistent modeling by academics and officials. **Limitation :** This pattern suggests, but does not prove, that prepared speech may facilitate closer conformity to standard norms than spontaneous interaction. **Future Research :** Further multi-institutional research using transparent sampling, utterance-level coding, and reliability testing is needed before the reported percentages can be generalized beyond the limited descriptive record.

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