



Diction in Indonesian Students' English Messages to Lecturers: A Language Error Analysis

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Abstract. Inappropriate use of diction in text messages can be very risky because it can lead to misunderstanding and somehow affect politeness in communication. This research aims to discover the diction errors in Indonesian students' English messages to their lecturers and the factors behind them. 32 WhatsApp messages written in English sent by Indonesian students to the lecturers were analyzed to answer the research questions. The data were taken from students at three prestigious universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where most Indonesian youth study in this city of education. The result shows that the errors are divided into words, phrases, abbreviations, and titles/honorific categories. In addition, the error made by students is due to the use of direct translation from the student's source language, Bahasa Indonesia, to the target language, English. The use of Google Translate without any assistance can also cause errors and many mistakes. The result also proves that non-English and English Department students make errors. Students are expected to be more aware of the dictions they use when sending text messages, especially to their lecturers.

Keywords: error analysis, diction, WhatsApp messages, students, lecturers

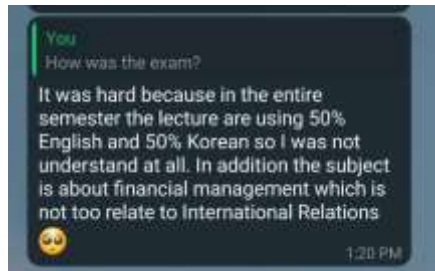
1 INTRODUCTION

Lately, WhatsApp has emerged as a powerful global communication platform. In addition, WhatsApp has become the most familiar chatting application for many Indonesians. Not to mention, in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, many educational institutions use this application to ease all academicians in the teaching and learning process [1]. Even after the pandemic, this application is still used and even more massive because of the feature of the application that allows the user to not only send a message but also documents, pictures, and videos. Indonesia is one of the most significant WhatsApp users in the world [2]. As communication gets more accessible, most students often forget several things regarding crucial variables in the communication process.

One of the crucial variables in communicating, both spoken and written, is the choice of diction. One of the challenges in writing is the use of diction. Diction, in this case, greatly influences the meaning or message that a speaker wants to convey to the person he is talking to. Many people take it for granted or do not want to double-check the

diction they use in the speech they deliver. Mistakes in the choice of diction can affect the meaning of a speech. In every diction, there is a certain meaning that is expressed, so its use must be correct [3]. There are at least three (3) disadvantages in the wrong use of this diction. Initially, this diction error can make the meaning of a speech ambiguous and confuse the person you are talking to.

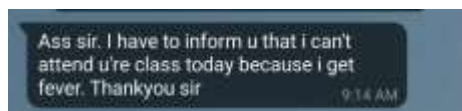
Furthermore, this ambiguous meaning can offend or hurt the person you are talking to. What is worse than a diction error is that the message from the speaker to the person you are talking to is not delivered because of differences in perception and interpretation. Here are two examples of diction errors in Indonesian students' messages through WhatsApp:



Lecturer: “How was the exam?”

Student: “It was hard because in the entire semester the **lecture** are using 50% English and 50% Korean so I was not understand at all. In addition, the subject is about financial management which is not too relate to International Relations (sad emoticon)”

In the sentence above, the word “lecture” or “course” should be replaced with the word “lecturer” because the student is explaining how his lecturer teaches a particular course, namely by using 50% Korean and 50% English, where he finds it difficult because he is the only non-Korean in the class. The word “lecture” seems possible if included in the sentence above since they mainly talked about the subject. However, the student who delivered the utterance also explained about the “course” with the synonym of the word “lecture” namely “subject”. So, it is likely that the word “lecture” in the utterance above is a diction error which should be “lecturer”. This ambiguity of course makes the interlocutor have to interpret the meaning of the utterance themselves. Another example is the sentence below:



Students: “**Ass** sir. I have to inform u that I can’t attend u’re class today because I get fever. Thankyou sir”

The sentence contains the word "Ass" which actually means "*Assalamualaikum*", a greeting commonly said by Muslims and it is very familiar to Indonesians since the majority of Indonesians are Muslims. Nonetheless, it is shortened inappropriately. In the context of English, the word "ass" means part of the body that we sit on. This is certainly not good when used in communication, especially communication between students and their lecturers.

Research on diction errors in writing has been previously studied by several authors, such as Luberta [3] and Özkayran & Yılmaz [4]. Luberta analyzed the diction errors made by students in their thesis background. The subjects of this study consisted of 19 students. The results showed that the most common error made by students was "connotative." This error occurs due to the influence of the student's mother tongue. Students often feel confused when choosing the right words in sentences. In addition, they try to translate words from Indonesian to English without paying attention to English rules. In the other hand, Özkayran and Yılmaz focused on the students' errors in English writing tasks. They believe that teaching students basic English forms will be very helpful in avoiding errors.

Another study that discusses the error in the use of diction in communication is the work of Kartikasari & Suyitno [5] and Aswad & Sardi [6]. Kartikasari and Suyitno describe the diction error in the speech of foreign students of Malang State University (UM) during Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) learning and the factors behind it. The results of this study indicate that there is a misuse of diction in the aspects of (1) word standardization, (2) word accuracy, (3) word conventions, and (4) word harmony. Furthermore, Aswad and Sardi describe diction's effects on the teacher teaching English as a foreign language. They believe that the power of diction can significantly influence students to learn English. They also suggest that teachers must be cautious when choosing their diction during learning.

From the four (4) studies above, we know that the analysis of diction errors in English made by students has never been conducted before. However, with the rapid development of technology, research regarding the analysis of diction errors made by Indonesian students on WhatsApp text messages has not been written yet. Moreover, since WhatsApp allows people to communicate at any time, errors may develop not only in words or phrases. This research will also be very distinct from the previous ones because none of the research discusses the text messages sent from students to their lecturers. Thus, the research regarding types of errors in English messages written by Indonesian students to their lecturers is urgent. This research aims to analyze the diction in Indonesian students' messages to lecturers. Therefore, this research comes with two research questions, namely:

1. How many forms of diction errors do Indonesian students make when texting their lecturers through WhatsApp?
2. What are the factors of the errors?

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Written communication

Written communication is different from the spoken. Students may find it challenging to employ written phrases at times since written language is thought to be hard, and mistakes are common when practicing it [7]. Usually, the inaccuracy in question concerns the word's definition. This is because variations in diction and punctuation can also lead to variations in meaning when communicating in writing. Toba [8] even argued that effective communication requires careful consideration of word choice.

These items are covered in the semantics topic in linguistics. A subfield of linguistics called semantics studies a language's meaning. Surono [9] describes semantics as the study of linguistic meaning and significance. It is also the meaning or meaning of a language. Additionally, he clarifies that a semantic approach can be used to study three different types of meaning precisely:

- a. Lexical Meaning: The basic meaning is the interpretation or sense that is immediately apparent in the dictionary.
- b. Grammatical Meaning: meaning that is identifiable through grammatical operations like derivations, inflections, and affixes.
- c. Contextual Meaning: meaning that is discernible from an utterance's context or the context inside the utterance.

Parker & Riley [10] add that the study of semantics is a subfield of linguistics that examines the meaning of language, encompassing the meaning of individual words, phrases, and sentences. Parker illustrates how "hide" and "conceal" are interchangeable.

2.2. The Use of Diction

Keraf [11] explains that there are three main conclusions regarding diction. First, diction includes understanding the words used to convey an idea, how to form the right groupings of words or use the right word expressions, and the appropriate language style to use in certain situations. Second, diction is the ability to correctly distinguish the nuances of meaning of the ideas to be conveyed and the ability to find a form that suits the situation and the taste values of the listening group. Third, vocabulary mastery influences the use of correct and appropriate diction.

Furthermore, Soedjito and Saryono [12] argue that there are things that need to be considered when using diction both in writing and orally. In using diction, these things are conditions that must be met. There are five conditions for using diction: (1) Standard-correct words follow morphological rules and use standard language varieties. This is something that really needs to be paid attention to when students send messages to their lecturers. Moreover, in Indonesia's cultural context, we have to use standard and formal language when communicating with a teacher or lecturer who is actually highly valued, not only because of the age difference but also because of their services. Fabian [13] also said that our cultural background can influence our chosen diction.

Conditions number two until 5 are explained further. Number (2) is called precision - careful words are words in context that are neither more nor less, not ambiguous

and are idiomatic. Ambiguous meaning also enters this language- diction that does not give rise to multiple interpretations. Apart from that, idiomatic meanings also tend to confuse the interlocutor because the meaning of idioms, if related to culture, can be quite difficult to understand. The third (3) is named accuracy. The right word is a word that can express an idea accurately and be recognized based on its distribution or collocation with the words on the right or left. Crossley [14] added that someone needs to have adequate lexical knowledge to produce an appropriate word in a certain context/situation. Number (4) is commonality -common words are words whose use is accepted by the general public. Diction errors also often occur, such as using words or abbreviations that are not generally accepted, such as the previous example. Finally, number (5) is called compatibility, a harmonious word with a semantic relationship with other words in a particular context.

2.3. Texting through WhatsApp

WhatsApp plays a very important role as a communication tool in Indonesia. When it first entered in the early 2010s, this application was not played much because many Indonesians still believed in Short Message Services (SMS) provided by cellular operators in Indonesia. However, the features available on WhatsApp have increased, making it easier for people to exchange information. As written by König [15], one of WhatsApp's features is to determine whether other users are online so that we can predict the time for the recipient of the message to reply.

Many Indonesians can access the features available on WhatsApp. Unlike SMS services that charge a lot of costs on cellular credit, the burden of sending messages through this application uses a much more affordable internet connection. Cellular operators usually charge additional fees if the message is addressed to another country. Documents can also be sent using this application, not only sending messages.

Documents can be in the form of photos, videos, files, or voice messages. The quality of the documents sent is already in extraordinary resolution and is delivered quickly [16]. Therefore, the sender can send documents with original quality. In addition, this application is also supported by the ability to make voice calls and video calls to all corners of the world without any additional costs, thus shortening the distance.

However, it should be noted that WhatsApp messages differ from other written messages. Sánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya [17] said that written communication in WhatsApp is written oral communication. Unlike writing letters or electronic mail (e-mail) written very formally, messages on WhatsApp will adjust to whom the message will be sent, just like communicating verbally. This application provides an emoji feature to avoid misunderstandings or emphasize the meaning of communicating via WhatsApp. Misunderstandings can also usually be avoided by using this emoji.

3. METHODOLOGY

This current study used a qualitative descriptive research approach. The researchers collected messages sent in English from Indonesian students. 32 English messages sent to lecturers, regardless of their genders, who teach English, and those who teach in the international undergraduate program by Indonesian students in Yogyakarta province

were analyzed. The researchers observed and picked the messages with the error dictions inside them. There was a particular reason for choosing Yogyakarta as the location. Yogyakarta was chosen because this province is well known for being an educational city; hence, the students come from various regions in Indonesia and overseas [18]. The data were taken from the students of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), and Universitas Sanata Dharma (USD). These three universities are well known for attracted many students to study there, and the number of students is always stable every year. More than 5000 new students are accepted into these universities each year.

The researchers gathered the data from our personal experience as lecturers and other fellow lecturers by asking for screenshots of the English messages sent by their students. To keep the research ethics, the researchers did not use the actual names of the participants. Therefore, the messages were only shown in the research without personal information. Then, the data were classified into error categories based on semantic meanings relying on Parker and Riley's [10] theory, which were words, phrases, or sentences.

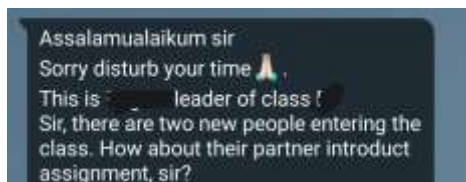
The data were presented descriptively by transcribing the messages from the WhatsApp application. There were examples for each category with detailed explanations of why certain dictions were wrong or improperly used. Three types of meaning by Surono [9] – lexical, grammatical, and contextual- were also considered in analyzing the data.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to discover the diction error in Indonesian students' English messages to their lecturers and the factors behind it. The data says the errors are divided into words, phrases, abbreviations, and titles/honorifics. The classification is quite different from [10], where the classifications are in terms of words, phrases, and sentences. However, the researchers try to extend the errors into the categories based on the findings. The explanation of each category is as follows:

a. Words

In this category, students usually make a mistake using incorrect diction in a certain situation. Mostly, it is because they use a direct translation from Bahasa Indonesia without knowing the meaning of the word in a certain situation, such as:

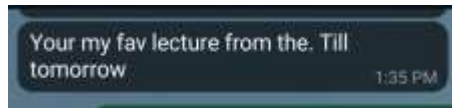


Students: "Assalamualaikum sir
Sorry disturb your time 🙏."

This is *** leader of class *.

Sir, there are two new people **entering** the class. How about their partner introduct assignment, sir?

The word “enter” means come/go into. It is used to describe an action when someone go from one room to another. However, what the student meant in the message is more than that. They do not only explain the action of going to a room, but they want to convey a message that two more students were taking the lecturer’s class that semester. Thus, the word “entering” in the message should be best replaced with “taking”. Below is another diction error in a word level:

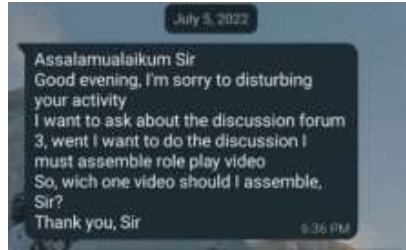


Students: “**Your** my fav **lecture** from the. Till tomorrow.”

The error diction is in bold. Firstly, it is a common mistake even for a native English speaker. The word “your” is a possessive adjective and should not be followed by another adjective, “my”. A noun or a noun phrase must directly follow possessive adjective. In the message, the student would like to express that the teacher or lecturer in this case, is their favorite. Thus, it must be written as “You are” or “You’re” is the common contraction. Many people get confused about the difference and the use of “you’re” and “your”.

Secondly, Indonesian students often confuse these words: “lecture” and “lecturer”. “Lecture” means the subject that a teacher/lecturer teaches. It usually contains knowledge or information for the students or audience. Conversely, the word “lecturer” has a very different meaning from the previous word. “Lecturer” means the one who gives the lecture. It is a person or individual working in a university. Therefore, there is confusion in the meaning, whether it is the subject or the teacher that the students like. However, based on the subject, it can be assumed that the teacher is the student's focus.

Here is another example:

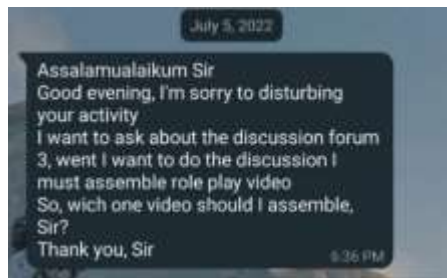


Student: “*Assalamualaikum* Sir Good evening, I'm sorry to disturbing your activity I want to ask about the discussion forum 3, went I want to do the discussion I must **assemble** role play video. So, wich one video should I assemble, Sir? Thank you, Sir”

The student really is confused with the use of “assemble” and “submit”. Both of them are verbs, but they are very different when used in a sentence. The word assemble is a verb meaning people gather together in one place for a common purpose. In the other hand, “submit” is a word meaning people are in the process of collecting something. In case of the message, the student is trying to hand in the assignment. Hence, “submit” or “hand in” is correct when put as the verb there.

b. Phrase

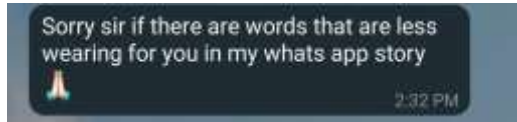
Almost the same as the error in word category, in terms of phrase, students do not really understand certain expressions used in English; therefore, they tend to use word-by-word translation in expressing what they think. Indonesian learners need to be careful with this because sometimes, the phrase is hard to understand. Here are the examples:



Student: “*Assalamualaikum* Sir Good evening, I'm **sorry to** disturbing your activity I want to ask about the discussion forum 3, went I want to do the discussion I must assemble role play video. So, wich one video should I assemble, Sir? Thank you, Sir”

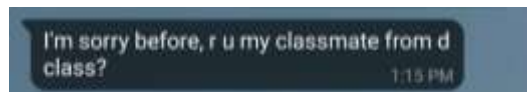
The use of prepositions can be frustrating for English learners, especially when a certain word has a specific preposition that forms a phrase to

convey meaning. The message above is an example. The preposition for the word “sorry” must be “for” and after that, followed by gerund. Hence, the correct statement for the message should be “I’m sorry for disturbing...”. Another error phrase is:



Student: “Sorry sir if there are words that are **less wearing** for you in my whats app story 🙏”

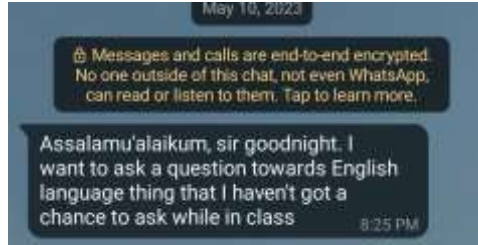
Any recipient of this message must think twice or thrice to find out the meaning of the phrase. For instance, the word “wear” is usually used to state everything we put on our bodies. If we try to relate on “words”, this will be very confusing to understand. It can probably be understood by the word “wear” in Bahasa Indonesia, which can be translated into *memakai*. *Memakai*, is one word in English “wear” and “use”. We can try to predict that the student was trying to say that they feel guilty for the words he wrote in their WhatsApp story were not common words or could be a little bit offensive and impolite. From this, it can strengthen the previous theory stating that diction error can lead to confusion as well as the idea of the message cannot be interpreted well. Following is the other example:



Student: “I’m **sorry before**, r u my classmate from d class?”

In English, when we say “before”, there must be a noun, noun phrase, or a clause explaining what happens earlier. However, it turns out that the concept is quite different from that of Indonesia. In Indonesian, “I’m sorry before” means someone is trying to apologize if the utterance they are about to say will probably be offensive or make the listener uncomfortable. In English, the expression is usually stated “I’m sorry in advance”.

Another example is:

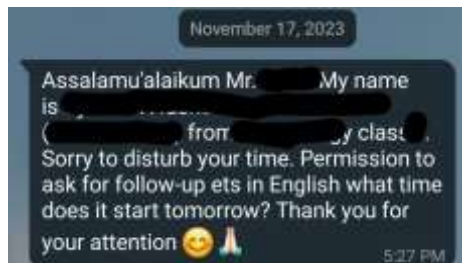


Students: “*Assalamu'alaikum*, sir **goodnight**. I want to ask a question towards English language thing that I haven't got a chance to ask while in class”

The error diction is in bold. In Bahasa Indonesia, there is a little bit of confusion between “good evening” and “good night”. It is because the word “night” in Indonesian means a time to indicate the period of darkness in each twenty-four hours. Thus, many Indonesians know that when they want to greet someone in that period, they say “good night” or “*selamat malam*” in Indonesian. In fact, English is quite tricky. When it comes to “good night”, it means “good bye” at night or it also can be wishing someone a good sleep. This, of course, will create some ambiguous meaning or confusion to the recipients. Especially by reading the situation in the messages, it is clear that these students did not want to wish the lecturer a good sleep.

c. Abbreviation

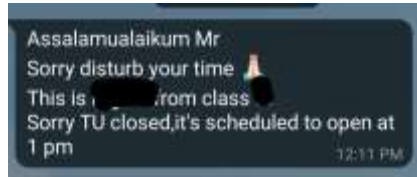
In this category, students usually use the abbreviation in Indonesian while texting in English. This situation confuses the lecturer as the recipient because lecturers are usually unaware that the abbreviation is in Bahasa Indonesia while the whole text is in English. For example:



Student: “*Assalamu'alaikum* Mr. ***. My name is *** (231****) from *** class **. Sorry to disturb your time. Permission to ask for follow-up **ets** in English what time does it start tomorrow? Thank you for your attention 😊🙏”

Few people can soon find out that *ETS* means *Evaluasi Tengah Semester*, or in English, it means “a midterm exam”. The term or abbreviation *ETS*

is used by students, mostly those who use Curriculum 2013 in Indonesia. Earlier, it is usually called as *UTS* or *Ujian Tengah Semester*. Hence, *ETS* can clearly confuse the recipient of the message. Following is another example:

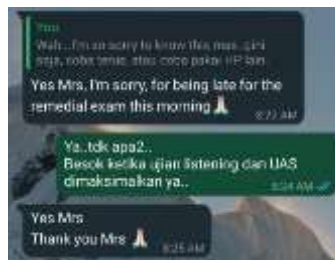


Student: Assalamualaikum Mr
 Sorry disturb your time 🙏
 This is *** from class **.
 Sorry **TU** closed,it's scheduled to open at 1 pm

In the message, students do not use the right terms, such as “Administration Office,” to express the situation. In Bahasa Indonesia, the abbreviation *TU* stands for *Tata Usaha*. It is an office handling all of the administration in the educational institution.

d. Titles/Honorifics

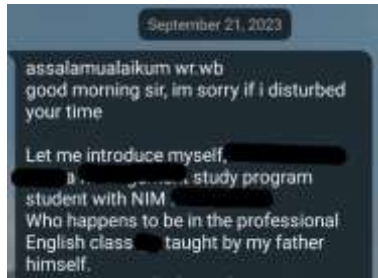
For Indonesian learners, titles or salutation can be very frustrating because it somehow reflects someone’s status. English has Mr. / Sir. for men and Mrs. / Ms. / Miss / Madam for women. Here are some of the error made by students in their text messages:



Student: “Yes **Mrs**, I'm sorry, for being late for the remedial exam this morning 🙏”
 “Yes **Mrs** Thank you Mrs 🙏”

The same student sent these messages to their male lecturer. These messages are only three minutes distant; hence, we cannot say that the student was making a typo. Calling a male lecturer “Mrs” can be quite

dangerous because gender can be very sensitive these days. This student's understanding of titles/honorifics needs to be considered. Another example is:



Student: “*assalamualaikum wr.wb*
good morning sir, im sorry if i disturbed your time
Let me introduce myself, **, a ** study program student with NIM
** Who happens to be in the professional English class (**) taught
by **my father himself.**”

The student can confuse everyone when trying to determine what their father is doing in class. In fact, what the student was trying to say by a statement “by my father himself” was “the lecturer” that they sent the message. We can be quite sure that this student used Google Translate or any other translating machine to send the message. In Bahasa Indonesia, “by my father himself” means “by you or by Mr. xxx”. “Father” can also mean *Bapak* in Bahasa Indonesia, where the word *Bapak* can also be used to substitute Mr. It is because Mr. can also be translated into *Bapak* in Bahasa Indonesia. A machine such as Google Translate cannot check the contextual meaning of the sentence. As [9] has said that we also need to consider the context inside the utterance. In addition, the student also did not re-read the message and took it for granted by directly sending it to the lecturer.

This finding is also supported by [4] and [6] research studies, which stated that student errors are related to word and word formation. They believe that teaching the students part of speech in English and the basic subject and verb agreement would be necessary to avoid errors. Furthermore, they also believe that the correct choice of diction can influence the success of the communication process since the idea inside the message can be delivered well. Similarly, Ulan et al. [19] also did research that is in line with this discussion. They believe that word formation is one of the biggest errors in students' WhatsApp messages. Alfitriani [20] and Owais [21] also supported this research by stating that vocabularies take a big deal in students writing errors, especially in WhatsApp applications, because most of them lack familiarity with formal and informal communication.

From the data analysis above, we can see that the error can be caused mostly by the use of direct translation from the student's source language, Bahasa Indonesia, to the target language, English. The use of Google Translate without any assistance can

also cause errors and big mistakes. Abbreviation is also vital to notice. Some abbreviations can be very offensive in English, such as *ass*, which can mean a very respectful greeting in Arabic and Indonesian but is considered rude in English. Not only non-English Department students make the errors, but they also come from English Department students.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, diction takes a big deal in a text message. It becomes more critical to double-check when we text someone with higher authority than us. This research aims to analyze the diction error in Indonesian students' English messages to their lecturers. Furthermore, the researchers would like to know the factors behind it. Based on Parker's opinion, there are three categories of errors in diction: words, phrases, and sentences. However, it is found in this research that before the sentence/clause category, the error can be classified more into some categories, namely abbreviation and titles/honorific, because these two other categories can also create problems in messages.

Even though this research can reveal new categories of the errors made by students, the real impact on the lecturers or what the lecturers feel when receiving the messages needs to be elaborated more. Hence, future researchers can elaborate more by extending the instrument to the structured interview to determine the impact of the diction error on the lecturer and how the students compose the messages before they are sent to the lecturers.

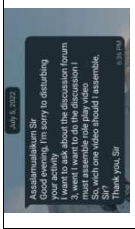



Nonetheless, the researchers hope this research can give more insight into the importance of diction in text messages. We hope that the learners or students will be more aware of their choice of diction before sending the messages. In addition, the lecturers will be more aware of what the students mean even though they struggle to compose the messages with some diction errors.





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| <p>Assalamualaikum mba husniyati m when Believe to gather kids ??</p> | <p>Sir I'm sorry before i umy classmate from d class?</p> <p>May I help you?</p> <p>Yes</p> | <p>wassalam/alaikum wa wb good morning sir, h... as PJ English class of... sorry to disturb your time, i just want to ask you, are there any class classes today as usual? thank you</p> <p>wassalam/alaikum wa wb</p> | <p>September 17, 2023 Assalamualaikum wa wb good morning sir an story if i disturb your time Let me introduce myself, i am a student of... study program English with... Who happens to be in the professional class... enough for my father honor!</p> | <p>I am... with... some... Applying for permission to be absent from English lectures on Monday 30 October 2023 due to menstrual cramps and being unable to move from bed. I hope you can understand my situation. That's all from me, thank you sir</p> | <p>Sorry sir if there are words that are less wearing for you in my whats app story</p> | <p>Assalamu/alaikum Mr... My name is... Sorry to disturb from... class, ask for follow up on English what time does it start tomorrow? Thank you for your attention</p> | |
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