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Punctuation Error Analysis in Memo Writing

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Abstract

This article identifies and explains about the errors in using the punctuation in the writing of internal memo by the management of the Teacher Education Institute in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. The criteria for a perfect sentence as a grammatical language unit is a perfect form, in terms of the syntax and there is no case of language and writing deviation or conflict. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify and explain the errors in punctuation in the writing of memo content. This study is based on the book entitled *Canggihnya Bahasa Melayu: Sistem Tanda Baca: Kalimat Bertanda Intonasi Bergaya* (Dahaman, 2015) that describes a complete punctuation system. The study material is the internal memo produced by the management of the Teacher Education Institute in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak throughout the months of January to August 2018. Data was analyzed qualitatively and presented descriptively through the course of research. The linguistic data shows that there are five punctuation errors that are frequently found in the memo, out of 18 punctuation symbols. The full stop or period, error is the error that is very frequently made. This research is significant to the management at the level of Ministry of Education Malaysia, Teacher Education Institute, school administrators, government department administrators, especially those involved in the management field to overcome the issue of misinterpretation and misunderstanding the message to increase both internal and external communication in an organization.

Keywords: Punctuation, Memo Writing, Syntax, Punctuation Error, Punctuation System

Introduction

The official communication channel in a written form in an organization delivers and relays information through official documents. Through memo, all the reminders, instructions, warnings, and ideas of the writer are delivered in a written style to serve as information or for the recipients to act on the content of the memo. In general, memo's language style as an official tool of communication is delivered using a brief, accurate, precise and courteous language. Official communication that takes place can occur smoothly if the language user is proficient enough in using it.

Internal memo is an official document used as a written communication tool that relates to the importance of the task or work order that needs to be done by the recipient. *Modul Asas Tatabahasa dan Asas Penulisan Dokumen Rasmi* (2016) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, in general outlines the fact that the internal memo serves as a reminder and note of the outcome of the discussion in a meeting to be the grounds for the decision-making in departments.

Dahaman (2015) in *Canggihnya Bahasa Melayu; Sistem Tanda Baca: Kalimat Bertanda Intonasi Bergaya* has outlined 18 types of punctuation based on the function and the use of punctuation. The punctuation should be used correctly according to the function because only through the right and accurate punctuation can the grammar and writing discourse be solidified in Malay Language. When the punctuation is used correctly and clearly, the connection of ideas is balanced with the syntax as to produce high-level Malay Language discourse.

Literature Studies

Khazaai (1991), has conducted a study about the errors related to the set of punctuation contained in the official letters being examined. He fully used the descriptive qualitative method on the document analysis, which is official letters. The official letters used are the letters that were distributed to be received by all parties involved, and they are not confidential.

Nuwairi also explained that the aspect of the use of punctuation is very important as the syntactical structure would be affected. The finding reveals that the error in the punctuation found in official letters is the neglected use of hyphens among words. A few other symbols that have been abandoned are comma and full stop.

Ariyanti (2019) explained that she found some punctuation errors in the writing of journalists reporting for newspapers. It has been shown that there are some glaring errors, such as the wrong use of full stop, especially in abbreviations and ending of the sentence. Other than that, researcher also finds errors in the use of comma, semi colon, and a few others.

Problem Statement

Based on Article 152, Federal Constitution and National Language Act 1963/67, it is allocated that the Malay Language as the national language must be used as an official language in the national administration. Following this, in the field of public sector management, the government has issued Circular No.1 Year 2006 entitled "*Langkah-langkah Memperkasakan Bahasa Kebangsaan dalam Urusan Rasmi*". Government's order about this is strengthened by the Circular No 9 Year 2011 entitled "*Penggunaan Bahasa Kebangsaan dalam Perkhidmatan Awam*". The Service Circular No 9 Year 2011 has outlined several responsibilities of Public Officers and Members of the Administration, which is:

Perkara 7: "Bagi memastikan penggunaan Bahasa Kebangsaan dalam Perkhidmatan Awam dapat dilaksanakan dengan berkesan, maka semua pegawai awam hendaklah menggunakan Bahasa Kebangsaan dengan baik dan betul dalam semua urusan rasmi sama ada secara bertulis atau lisan.

Perkara 8: "Pegawai juga hendaklah melengkapkan diri dengan kemahiran dan pengetahuan Bahasa Kebangsaan yang baik dari segi ejaan, sebutan, istilah dan tatabahasa serta menghayati aspirasi penggunaannya semasa berkomunikasi dalam melaksanakan tugas dan tanggungjawab."

(Service Circular No. 9 Year 2011)

That said, in the compliance with this, based on the statement by Former Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin during the National Language Steering Committee

Meeting No.2/2014 on 9 September 2014 in Ministry of Education Putrajaya it is found that the quality and level of national language use in public services are still at moderate level and there are still a lot to improve to consolidate the deliverance of public services to the society.

There is still a lack of seriousness in focusing on the analysis of the memo content in all aspects by any parties. However, we cannot turn a blind eye to the efforts made by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) as the coordinating agency, also the planner and the formulator of Malay Language that audits the use of the language in official documents in government agencies. Such efforts are still deemed insufficient in ensuring the language proficiency among public servants in an organization. Thus, researcher takes advantage of these weaknesses and attempts to bridge the gap and fill the void concerning memo content analysis to identify any punctuation errors in the writing of memo content.

Methodology

This research is a descriptive study based on the document content analysis method. Through the research of the analysis, researcher used a book entitled *Canggihnya Bahasa Melayu: Sistem Tanda Baca: Kalimat Bertanda Intonasi Bergaya* (Dahaman, 2015) as the primary reference book.

Researcher had carried out a pilot study on the memo issued by the management at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG), Kota Samarahan. Although the place where the pilot study was done is the same with the place of the actual study, researcher had used a different memo for the actual study. The pilot study considered similar characteristics to the actual study document's characteristics. They include an internal memo that was produced and compiled in a special file, non-confidential, had the same format and only circulated internally.

The study data was analyzed through the descriptive study or a qualitative form of evaluation. According to Konting (2000), data processing is the method or technique used by researchers to collect, take note, analyze, edit, store and produce data. Data analysis will be done after researcher has gathered the data needed. The data categorized are analyzed to see the frequency and they are presented in the form of a table and the elaboration of errors.

Study Findings and Discussion

Punctuation Errors in Memo

Through the data obtained in this study, there are five punctuation errors limited by the researcher found in the sentence pattern of Malay Language in the content of the memo used in this study. All the punctuation marks with the errors identified in this memo content are the punctuation aspects that have been restricted by the researcher. The list of the errors in the memo study can be summarized in Table 4.1 below and the total number of frequency for the errors in using punctuation in the memo content can be summarized in table 4.1 below.

Table 1

List of Punctuation Errors in Memo

No.	Type of Punctuation	Symbols	Error Frequency
1.	Full stop	(.)	217
2.	Comma	(,)	60
3.	Semi Colon	(;)	55
4.	Colon	(:)	45
5.	Bracket	(())	31

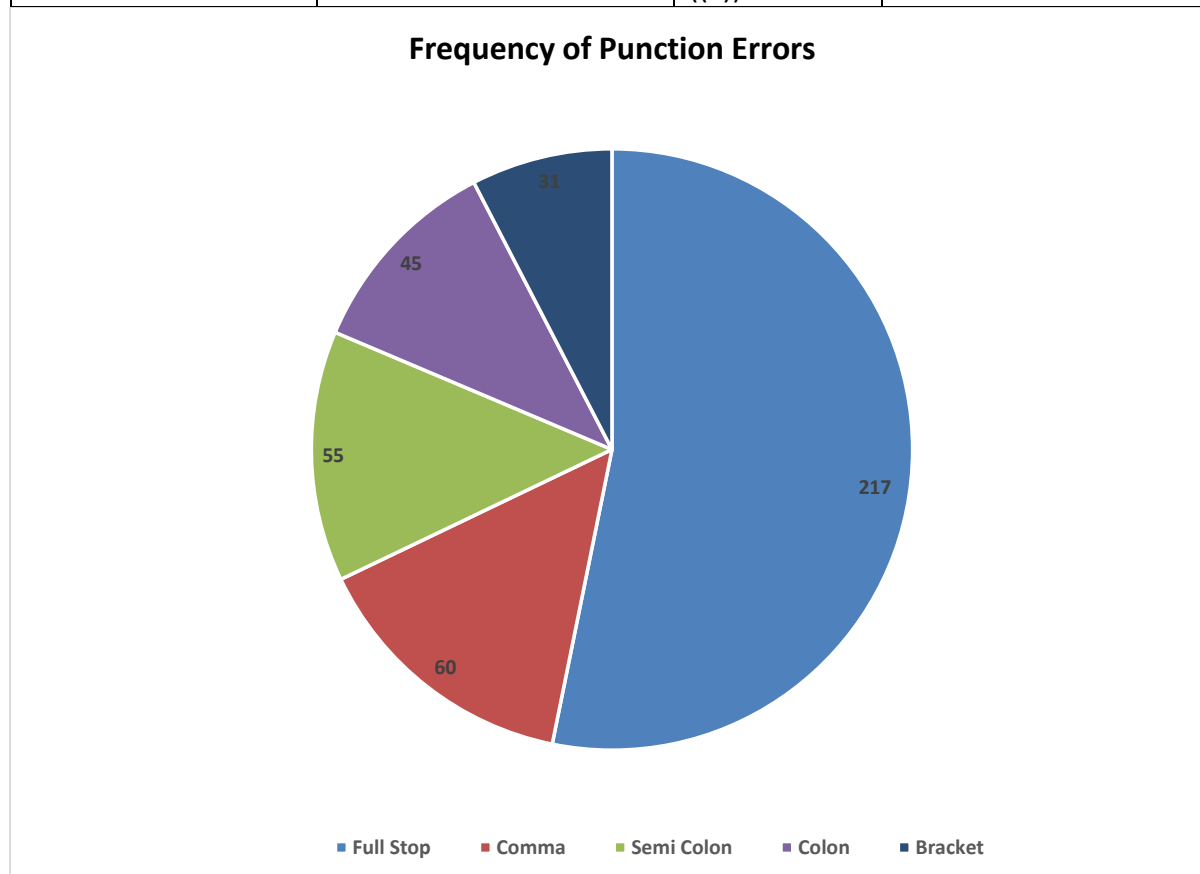


Diagram 1: The List of Punctuation Errors in Memo

Full stop(.)

The full stop is included in the punctuation that signifies a stop and it is placed at the end of a complete sentence to signify a complete stop on a sentence. The function of a full stop as elaborated by Dahaman (2015), as a complete stop in a sentence also supports the statement mentioned by Omar (2015), as ending with silence and the intonation suggests that the sentence is perfect and has come to its end.

The full stop that is frequently erroneous in this memo writing is in the case of marking abbreviations. Almost every page of the memo shows that there is a wrong use of the full stop for the purpose of marking abbreviations. The examples of the errors are as follows:

Table 2

Errors in the Full Stop Marking Abbreviations in Memo

Bil.	Incorrect	Correct
i.	<i>Tel (telefon)</i>	<i>Tel.</i>
ii.	<i>Sk (salinan Kepada)</i>	<i>S.k.</i>
iii.	<i>Ruj (rujukan)</i>	<i>Ruj.</i>
iv.	<i>Dr (dokter)</i>	<i>Dr.</i>
v.	<i>Hjh (hajah)</i>	<i>Hjh.</i>
vi.	<i>Hj (haji)</i>	<i>Hj.</i>
vii.	<i>En (Encik)</i>	<i>En.</i>
viii.	<i>Pn (Puan)</i>	<i>Pn.</i>
ix.	<i>Bp (bagi pihak)</i>	<i>b.p.</i>
x.	<i>Drp (daripada)</i>	<i>Drp.</i>

According to Dahaman (2015), the function of full stop not only marks the end of the sentence, but also marks abbreviations. The frequency in wrongly using the full stop to mark abbreviations is the most frequent error found in memo content. From the table above, the short form for *Tel* which is an abbreviation for *telefon* should be marked with a full stop after the abbreviation, so it becomes *Tel...* The finding in the study also finds that the full stop that does not mark the abbreviated *Tel* is the most frequent error contained in the memo.

There are also errors in terms of using the full stop, where it does not mark the end of sentence. Without using the full stop correctly, at the end of sentence, each sentence will not be complete and perfectly formed. Some of the examples are as follows:

Examples:

1. *Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas adalah dirujuk*
2. *Memastikan surat/memo telah ditandatangani oleh Pengarah/Timbangan Pengarah atau pegawai yang berkenaan sebelum mendapatkan nombor rujukan ataupun nombor folio yang berkaitan dari bilik fail*
3. *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar Pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan)*

According to Karim *et al.* (2015), utterances that begin with and end with silence is a general meaning for the sentences that are clear, and this proves that a sentence will not be complete if it does not end with full stop. Based on the examples, they need to be marked with a full stop as shown below.

Corrections:

1. *Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.*
2. *Memastikan surat/memo telah ditandatangani oleh Pengarah/Timbangan Pengarah atau pegawai yang berkenaan sebelum mendapatkan nombor rujukan ataupun nombor folio yang berkaitan dari bilik fail.*
3. *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar Pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan).*

Comma (,)

According to Dahaman (2015), comma is a single punctuation mark that occupies a space behind a word, phrase, clause or sentence just like other single punctuation marks, such as colon, semi colon, full stop, tanda noktah, hyphen, tdash, exclamation mark, question mark, quotation marks and so on.

From the data obtained through this study, it shows that the error in placing the comma at the end of the name of the position (or occupation) and the address of the person who signs the letter. The following is the example of error in terms of the use of comma as found in the memo writing of the researcher:

- [1] *Saya yang menurut perintah,*

 (HAMSIAH BINTI ABDULLAH MASNI)
 Pengarah → [designation]
 Institut Pendidikan Guru } [address]
 Kampus Tun Abdul Razak }
 Kota Samarahan Sarawak.
- [2] *Saya yang menurut perintah,*

 (CYNTHIA CHAN SING MEI)
 Pegawai Teknologi Maklumat → [designation]
 IPG Kampus Tun Abdul Razak } [address]
 Kota Samarahan }

Based on examples [1] and [2] above, the error in using the comma is that it is not placed at the end of the designation (or occupation) and address of the person who signs the letter. The error is often made in the writing of the memo. The right use of the comma is that it is placed at the end of every line of the designation (aor occupation) and the address of the person who signs the letter. In Example [1] and [2] clearly it shows that the use of comma does not come with the occupation or position, which is for the positions of “Pengarah”, “b.p. Pengarah” and “Pegawai Teknologi Maklumat”. In terms of the corrects use, this comma is placed after the position of the signee, “Pengarah,”, “b.p. Pengarah,” and “Pegawai Teknologi Maklumat,”. Thus, the right use of the comma is based on the samples of errors as follows:

- [1] *Saya yang menurut perintah,*

 (HAMSIAH BINTI ABDULLAH MASNI)
 Pengarah,
 Institut Pendidikan Guru
 Kampus Tun Abdul Razak,
 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.
- [2] *Saya yang menurut perintah,*

 (CYNTHIA CHAN SING MEI)
 Pegawai Teknologi Maklumat,

*IPG Kampus Tun Abdul Razak,
Kota Samarahan.*

Semi Colon (;)

According to Dahaman (2015), the semi colon is included in the category of semi-stop. This semi-stop in reading can produce a reading pause that takes slightly more time than the temporary stop indicated by the comma.

The study outcome finds that there are several errors of the use of semi colon in memo writing. The use of semi colon in the writing of official documents including memo, is placed in the end of the information or item in the list. The list is arranged vertically in the letter's paragraphs. Based on the finding, there are several errors of the semi-colon where it should be placed at the end of the item in the list. The examples of the errors are as follows:

Examples

Memo 12

1. *Sehubungan itu. tuan/puan dikehendaki mengemukakan dokumen-dokumen berikut untuk mendapat kelulusan.*
- 2.1 *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar Pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan)*
- 2.2 *Butiran pergerakan penyeliaan/pemantauan/rentasan praktikum (2 salinan)*
- 2.3 *Borang permohonan menggunakan kenderaan sendiri (2 salinan)*

The right use of semi colon is shown in the following:

Memo 12

1. *Sehubungan itu, tuan/puan dikehendaki mengemukakan dokumen-dokumen berikut untuk mendapat kelulusan:*
- 2.1 *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar Pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan);*
- 2.2 *Butiran pergerakan penyeliaan/pemantauan/rentasan praktikum (2 salinan);*
- 2.3 *Borang permohonan menggunakan kenderaan sendiri (2 salinan).*

Colon (:)

The main function of this punctuation mark, according to Dahaman (2015) is to as to explain the meaning of the main clause that comes previously, or as the sign that shows the ratio or comparison between clauses, or as the separator between clauses.

The use of the colon in the writing of the official documents is placed to accompany abbreviated words, like "Ruj.", "S.k.", "Drpd.", "Per." and so on. Other than that, the colon in the memo is placed after the main sentence that lists information that is presented vertically. In this error analysis, most of the colons are not placed on the main sentences. These are the examples of the main sentences that are not placed with colon:

Examples

Memo 7

2. *Sehubungan itu, kerjasama semua Ketua Jabatan/Ketua Unit dipohon untuk menghebahkan perkara ini kepada semua pegawai dan staf di jabatan/unit masing-*

masing. Bagi memastikan urusan Sasaran Kerja Tahunan 2015 dan Laporan Penilaian Prestasi 2015 diurus dengan cekap dan lancar, panduan berikut perlu dipatuhi;

Based on the example of the content of *memo 7 above*, there are errors in the colon that mark the main sentences. The right punctuation mark for them is the colon, as shown below:

The correction is as follows

Memo 7

2. *Sehubungan itu, kerjasama semua Ketua Jabatan/Ketua Unit dipohon untuk menghebahkan perkara ini kepada semua pegawai dan staf di jabatan/unit masing-masing. Bagi memastikan urusan Sasaran Kerja Tahunan 2015 dan Laporan Penilaian Prestasi 2015 diurus dengan cekap dan lancar, panduan berikut perlu dipatuhi:*

Bracket ()

The bracket, according to Dahaman (2015) is that the correlative punctuation functioning to separate the apposition insertion in the middle of the sentence or at the end of the sentence, and never at the beginning of the sentence.

Following Dahaman (2015), there are several ways how we use the bracket in memo writing. Nonetheless, in the study, the frequent error in the use of the bracket is that it 'squeezes in' the sequential order of the items listed under the sentence in the vertical form. The following is the example of errors in using the bracket in the memo writing as highlighted in this study:

Examples of errors in the use of the brackets:

Memo 12

2. *Sehubungan itu, tuan/puan dikehendaki mengemukakan dokumen-dokumen berikut untuk mendapat kelulusan:*

2.1 *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan);*

2.2 *Butiran pergerakan penyeliaan/pemantauan/rentasan praktikum (2 salinan);*

2.3 *Borang permohonan menggunakan kenderaan sendiri (2 salinan).*

Based on the data obtained with respect to the errors in using the bracket, the right use of the bracket for *Memo 12* will be as follows:

The corrections are given below:

Memo 12

2. *Sehubungan itu, tuan/puan dikehendaki mengemukakan dokumen-dokumen berikut untuk mendapat kelulusan:*

(2.1) *Surat arahan menjalankan Tugas Rasmi di luar pejabat yang ditandatangani oleh Timbalan Pengarah (2 salinan);*

(2.2) *Butiran pergerakan penyeliaan/pemantauan/rentasan praktikum (2 salinan);*

(2.3) *Borang permohonan menggunakan kenderaan sendiri (2 salinan).*

Implication

This study's finding has been able to give a remarkably important implication in the effort to increase public servants' language proficiency, especially those in the administration

and management. Researcher has raised a number of suggestions that need to be considered by the parties involved, especially those who are directly involved in the Malaysian education system.

The first suggestion is put forth to the parties involved directly in education. Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) should collaborate in enforcing this proposal to empower the use of Malay Language in everyday use.

The second suggestion might be one that can be applied to further studies. The study done can increase our capability and also give us the opportunity to equip ourselves with language efficacy and skills so that we can use the language accurately, especially in official matters.

Conclusion

Based on the argument and outcome in this study, the punctuation errors are regularly in the basic pattern of Malay Language sentences in memo content. The use of the full stop or period (.) shows the highest error frequency made, which is 217 times in researcher's study memo. Based on the data obtained by the researcher, the error frequency in terms of the full stop is that it is repeated in the same place, which is in short forms and there is no full stop at the end of the sentence. Despite the fact that the memo writer uses the right kind of, and diverse sentence patterns the punctuation errors contained in the sentence structure will make the meaning deviate from the intended one.

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