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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVERBS IN ENGLISH AND INDONESIAN

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Abstract

Adverbs play an important role in both English and Indonesian because they provide additional information about actions, qualities, and situations. They can modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and even entire sentences. Although both languages use adverbs to express concepts such as manner, time, place, degree, and frequency, there are notable differences in their forms, functions, and sentence positions. These differences often create challenges for Indonesian learners of English, who may apply Indonesian grammatical patterns when using English adverbs. This study aims to compare the forms and functions of adverbs in English and Indonesian. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a comparative approach. Data were obtained from grammar references and two literary works: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J. K. Rowling and Laskar Pelangi by Andrea Hirata. The findings show that English adverbs are commonly formed through derivation, especially by adding the suffix -ly to adjectives (for example, quick → quickly). In contrast, Indonesian adverbs are typically expressed through base words (cepat), reduplication (diam-diam), or prepositional phrases (dengan jelas). In terms of function, adverbs in both languages can modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and entire clauses. However, English generally follows stricter rules regarding adverb placement, whereas Indonesian allows greater flexibility in sentence structure. The study concludes that while English and Indonesian adverbs share similar communicative functions, they differ considerably in their morphological and structural characteristics. A better understanding of these differences can help Indonesian learners reduce grammatical errors and support teachers in designing more effective English language instruction.

Keywords: adverbs, comparative study, English, Indonesian, descriptive qualitative research.

Abstrak

Adverbia (kata keterangan) merupakan salah satu unsur penting dalam tata bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia karena berfungsi memberikan informasi tambahan terhadap verba, adjektiva, adverbia lain, maupun keseluruhan kalimat. Meskipun kedua bahasa sama-sama menggunakan adverbia untuk menyatakan cara, waktu, tempat, tingkat, dan frekuensi, terdapat perbedaan yang cukup signifikan dalam bentuk, fungsi, dan posisi penggunaannya dalam kalimat. Perbedaan tersebut sering menimbulkan kesulitan bagi pembelajar bahasa Inggris di Indonesia karena mereka cenderung menerapkan pola bahasa pertama ke dalam penggunaan bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan bentuk dan fungsi adverbia dalam bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan komparatif. Data diperoleh dari berbagai referensi tata bahasa serta dua karya sastra, yaitu *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* karya J.K. Rowling dan *Laskar Pelangi* karya Andrea Hirata. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa adverbia dalam bahasa Inggris umumnya dibentuk melalui proses derivasi, terutama dengan menambahkan akhiran *-ly* pada kata sifat, seperti *quick* menjadi *quickly*. Sebaliknya, adverbia dalam Bahasa Indonesia umumnya dinyatakan melalui kata dasar, seperti *cepat*, reduplikasi, seperti *diam-diam*, atau frasa preposisional, seperti *dengan jelas*. Dari segi fungsi, adverbia dalam kedua bahasa dapat memodifikasi verba, adjektiva, adverbia lain, maupun keseluruhan klausa. Namun, bahasa Inggris cenderung memiliki aturan yang lebih ketat terkait penempatan adverbia dalam kalimat, sedangkan Bahasa Indonesia memberikan fleksibilitas yang lebih besar dalam penempatannya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun adverbia dalam bahasa Inggris dan Bahasa Indonesia memiliki fungsi komunikatif yang serupa, keduanya menunjukkan perbedaan yang cukup mendasar dalam aspek morfologis dan struktural. Pemahaman yang baik terhadap perbedaan tersebut dapat membantu siswa mengurangi kesalahan berbahasa serta mendukung guru dalam merancang strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang lebih efektif bagi pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).

Kata Kunci: adverbia, studi komparatif, bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Indonesia, deskriptif kualitatif.

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1. BACKGROUND

Language is an essential tool for human communication, serving as a medium to convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Every language consists of different components such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Among these components, grammar plays an important role because it provides rules that govern how words are formed and combined into meaningful sentences. One of the significant parts of grammar is the study of adverbs. Adverbs are considered one of the most essential parts of speech in both English and Indonesian. They function to modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and sometimes even entire clauses. In doing so, adverbs provide additional information related to time, place, manner, frequency, degree, or reason. For example, in English sentences such as "She runs quickly," the word quickly serves as an adverb modifying the verb runs. Similarly, in Indonesian sentences like "Dia berlari dengan cepat," the phrase dengan cepat functions as an adverbial phrase that clarifies the action.

Although both English and Indonesian use adverbs to enrich meaning, there are fundamental differences in their forms, functions, and positions within sentences. In English, most adverbs are formed morphologically by adding the suffix -ly to adjectives (e.g., quick to quickly), whereas in Indonesian, adverbs are commonly expressed through separate lexical items, reduplication, or the use of prepositional phrases such as dengan + adjective (e.g., dengan hati-hati). Moreover, the syntactic position of adverbs also differs. In English, adverbs may appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence, depending on the type of adverb, while in Indonesian, adverbs are often more flexible in placement but still follow certain strict syntactic patterns. These structural discrepancies often lead to interference and confusion among Indonesian students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), as they tend to negatively transfer the rules of their first language (L1) into the target language (L2).

While several contrastive studies have extensively discussed major syntactic categories such as nouns and verbs in English and Indonesian, comprehensive comparative studies focusing specifically on the morphological structures and syntactic distributions of adverbs remain limited. Most previous linguistic research has analyzed adverbs only as a sub-component of larger parts of speech studies, leaving a gap in dedicated contrastive adverbial analysis. This research fills this gap by presenting a focused, integrated comparative analysis of the adverbial systems in both languages. Understanding these distinct differences is highly important; it not only enriches the field of contrastive linguistics but also provides practical benefits for EFL pedagogy in Indonesia, helping teachers design targeted materials and assisting students in avoiding common errors caused by cross-linguistic influence.

Consequently, this article provides a brief yet comprehensive linguistic mapping of adverbial systems in both languages. This study specifically aims to describe and contrast the morphological forms of adverbs in English and Indonesian, as well as to explain and compare their syntactic functions within sentence structures. Through these objectives, the findings are expected to contribute a valuable reference for linguistics researchers and EFL educators in developing more effective grammatical instructions.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a comparative (contrastive) approach. A qualitative descriptive method was selected as this research did not involve statistical calculations, but rather focused on analyzing, describing, and comparing linguistic data qualitatively. As this study is library research, it was conducted from January to May 2025. The research design was engineered to compare and contrast the morphological forms and syntactic functions of adverbs in English and Indonesian to map out their grammatical similarities and differences.

The data of this research consisted of English and Indonesian adverbs extracted from both authoritative grammar references and authentic literary texts. The English data sources comprised: (1) Understanding and Using English Grammar by Betty S. Azar (1999), (2) A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language by Quirk et al. (1985), and (3) the authentic corpus from the novel Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J.K. Rowling (1997). Correspondingly, the Indonesian data sources included: (1) Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia by Alwi et al. (2003), (2) Kamus Linguistik by Harimurti Kridalaksana (2008), and (3) the authentic corpus from the novel Laskar Pelangi by Andrea Hirata (2005).

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In this qualitative inquiry, the primary research instrument was the researcher himself, who functioned as the main planner, data collector, analyzer, and interpreter. To support the data collection and analysis, the researcher utilized secondary instruments including a structured data checklist to categorize the selected adverbs according to their morphological forms and syntactic functions, and a systematic note-taking technique to collect authentic examples of adverbs from the novels.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the comparative findings on the morphological forms, syntactic functions, and syntactic positions of adverbs in English and Indonesian. The analysis is based on authentic linguistic corpora extracted from two prominent novels: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (Rowling, 1997) as the English corpus and Laskar Pelangi (Hirata, 2005) as the Indonesian corpus.

3.1 Morphological Forms of English and Indonesian Adverbs

The comparative analysis reveals that English and Indonesian adverbs exhibit significant differences in their morphological structures. English adverbs are heavily dependent on derivational morphology, particularly through the affixation of the suffix -ly to base adjectives. Conversely, Indonesian adverbs are more morphologically diverse, utilizing base words, reduplicated structures, and prepositional phrases. These structural differences are summarized in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Forms of Adverbs in English and Indonesian

No	English Adverb (Harry Potter)	Sentence Example	Form	Indonesian Adverb (Laskar Pelangi)	Sentence Example	Form	Similarity/ Difference
1	quickly	*He ran quickly across the hall.*	Derived (*adj* + -*ly*)	cepat	*Ikal berlari cepat menuju kelas.*	Base word	Different: English uses a suffix; Indonesian uses a root.
2	very	*She was very happy to see him.*	Intensifier	sangat	*Lintang sangat cerdas dalam pelajaran.*	Intensifier	Similar: Both function as intensifiers.
3	fortunately	*Fortunately, they arrived on time.*	Sentence adverb	sayangnya	*Sayangnya, ia tidak hadir di kelas.*	Sentence adverb	Similar: Both modify the whole clause.
4	silently	*He walked silently into the room.*	Derived (*adj* + -*ly*)	diam-diam	*A Kiong pergi diam-diam tanpa pamit.*	Reduplication	Different: English derivational, Indonesian reduplication.
5	hard	*He worked hard all day.*	Irregular	pelan-pelan	*Lintang berjalan pelan-pelan ke kelas.*	Reduplication	Different: irregular vs reduplicated.
6	outside	*Hagrid was waiting outside.*	Place adverb	di luar	*Mereka belajar di luar kelas.*	Prepositional phrase	Similar in meaning but different in form.

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7	now	*Harry is now famous in the wizarding world.*	Time adverb	sekarang	*Sekarang Ikal tinggal di Belitong.*	Time adverb	Similar: both simple form for time reference.
8	always	*She always reads before sleeping.*	Frequenc y adverb	selalu	*Lintang selalu datang tepat waktu.*	Frequen cy adverb	Similar: both express frequency.
9	nearby	*The sound came from nearby.*	Adverb of place	di sekitar	*Guru itu berdiri di sekitar muridnya.*	Preposit ional phrase	Different form, similar function.
10	quite	*She runs quite quickly.*	Degree adverb	agak	*Ikal agak malu saat tampil di depan kelas.*	Degree adverb	Similar: both show degree.

The data in Table 1 indicate that English relies strongly on rule-governed morphological processes, such as adding -ly to adjectives, with occasional irregular forms like hard. On the other hand, Indonesian relies on lexical bases (cepat, sekarang) and productive reduplication (diam-diam, pelan-pelan) to express the same adverbial concepts.

3.2 Syntactic Functions of English and Indonesian Adverbs

Despite their morphological differences, adverbs in both languages serve highly similar syntactic and semantic functions. Both systems possess adverbs that modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and entire clauses. The comparative mapping of these functions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Functions of Adverbs in English and Indonesian

No	Function	English Example (Harry Potter)	Indonesian Example (Laskar Pelangi)	Similarity/ Difference
1	Modifying verbs	*He spoke clearly to the class.*	*Lintang belajar dengan tekun setiap malam.*	Similar: Both show a manner of action.
2	Modifying adjectives	*She was very kind to him.*	*Mahar sangat pintar membuat puisi.*	Similar: Both intensify adjectives.
3	Modifying other adverbs	*She runs quite quickly.*	*Ikal berlari agak cepat sekali.*	Similar: Both modify another adverb.
4	Modifying sentences	*Luckily, Harry escaped the danger.*	*Untungnya, Ikal lolos dari hukuman.*	Similar: Both comment on the entire clause.
5	Showing frequency	*He always visited the library.*	*Lintang selalu membaca buku setiap hari.*	Similar in function.

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6	Showing time	*Harry is now a Quidditch player.*	*Sekarang Ikal sibuk belajar di sekolah.*	Similar function, simple adverb form.
7	Showing place	*Hagrid was waiting outside.*	*Mereka bermain di luar rumah.*	Similar: Both indicate location.

Table 2 highlights a functional equivalence between the two language systems. For example, sentence adverbs (luckily and untungnya) are structurally different but pragmatically equivalent as they both comment on the truth value of the whole clause

3.3 Syntactic Position and Flexibility

A significant syntactic divergence lies in the word order and positioning of adverbs within sentences. English generally adheres to relatively strict syntactic rules:English: Adverbs of frequency typically occupy the pre-verbal position (e.g., She always studies hard), and adverbs of manner generally follow the verb or the object (e.g., He spoke clearly). Changing these positions can often result in ungrammatical sentences.Indonesian: In contrast, Indonesian exhibits greater syntactic flexibility. Adverbs can occupy multiple positions depending on the desired emphasis or stylistic preference. For example:

a) Lintang selalu belajar dengan giat. (Adverb precedes the verb)
b) Selalu Lintang belajar dengan giat. (Adverb occupies the sentence-initial position for thematic emphasis)

This comparative observation suggests that the Indonesian adverbial system provides more stylistic and syntactic options for speakers than the more rigid English system.

3.4 Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The comparative findings hold critical implications for both contrastive linguistics and foreign language pedagogy. In terms of Form, the morphological discrepancy between English derivational suffixes (e.g., -ly) and Indonesian root words or reduplications can lead to negative L1 transfer. Indonesian EFL learners often struggle with the morphological rules of English adverbs, frequently producing errors such as over-generalizing base words (e.g., translating cepat directly as fastly instead of quickly, or hard as hardly, which alters the semantic meaning).

In terms of Function, the universal syntactic functions of adverbs (modifying verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and clauses) can be leveraged by teachers to ease the translation process, as students can easily grasp the concept of adverbial modification. However, in terms of Position, the strict word order rules in English pose a persistent challenge. Indonesian learners accustomed to the flexible word order of their native language may produce awkward or ungrammatical English sentences by misplacing adverbs of frequency or manner. Conversely, English learners of Indonesian may find the productive use of reduplicated adverbs (e.g., pelan-pelan, diam-diam) difficult to acquire naturally since such morphological replication is absent in English. Pendidik harus mengonseptualisasikan perbedaan kontrastif ini untuk merancang latihan tata bahasa yang berfokus pada ketepatan posisi dan bentuk adverbia.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the comparative findings and discussion, this study concludes that while adverbs in English and Indonesian share identical functional parameters in modifying verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and entire sentences, they exhibit profound divergences in their morphological forms and syntactic positions. Morphologically, English adverbs rely heavily on systematic derivational processes, mainly through the suffixation of -ly to base adjectives, whereas Indonesian adverbs are represented through more diverse lexical structures including base words, reduplicated forms, and

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prepositional phrases. Syntactically, English governs adverb placement with rigid positioning rules, whereas Indonesian provides speakers with a high degree of word order flexibility to shift adverbs to the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence depending on thematic emphasis. These morphological and syntactic discrepancies often trigger negative grammatical transfer and interlingual errors among EFL learners, emphasizing the critical need for a deeper understanding of contrastive grammar in language classrooms.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions for future research can be proposed. First, since this comparative study relied on a manual analysis of two specific literary novels as authentic corpora, future researchers are encouraged to expand the dataset by utilizing larger digital corpora (such as the British National Corpus and the Indonesian National Corpus) to verify the frequency and distribution of adverbs in various genres. Second, further research is recommended to focus on oral speech corpora to compare how adverbs are produced in spontaneous spoken English and Indonesian. Finally, it is highly suggested that future researchers conduct empirical quantitative or classroom action researches (CAR) to test the effectiveness of contrastive-based pedagogical materials in reducing students' grammatical errors in using English adverbs.

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