

Structural and Effective Sentence Error Analysis in Undergraduate Student Thesis: A Syntactic Study

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ABSTRACT

Scientific writing requires the use of language in accordance with the rules of the Indonesian language, especially in compiling sentence structures and applying effective sentence principles. However, various syntactic errors are still common in undergraduate student theses, which can reduce the clarity of the ideas presented. This study aims to describe the forms of sentence structure errors and ineffective sentence use found in the undergraduate thesis of students of the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Nurul Huda University which will be completed in 2024. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data obtained from three undergraduate theses, especially from Chapters I and IV. Data is collected through observation, reading, and recording techniques and is analyzed by identifying, classifying, and describing each type of error. These findings reveal that the most common errors include incorrect Subject-Predicate-Object-Complementary (SPOC) sentence structures, words, ambiguous sentences, and incomplete sentences. Among the three theses analyzed, words were identified as the most dominant type of error, followed by inappropriate sentence structures, ambiguous sentences, and sentences that lacked complete syntactic elements. These findings suggest that students' understanding of syntactic rules and effective sentence construction principles still needs to be improved. Therefore, this research is expected to be a source of evaluation of academic writing teaching as well as help students in improving their ability to use Indonesian accurately, correctly, and effectively.

Keywords : Error Analysis, Syntax, Sentence Structure, Effective Sentences,
Undergraduate Thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is the main competency that must be mastered by students because it is a medium to communicate scientific ideas, research results, and scientific development. Various forms of scientific works, such as papers, journal articles, theses, theses, and dissertations, require the use of the Indonesian language that is standard, logical, systematic, and in accordance with linguistic rules. The quality of a scientific work is not only determined by the scientific substance presented, but also by the accuracy of the use of language so that the information conveyed can be understood clearly, accurately, and without causing ambiguity. Therefore, academic writing ability is one of the important indicators of the competence of university graduates (Nathania et al., 2023).

In the context of the Indonesian language, one of the aspects that determines the quality of academic writing is the use of effective sentences. An effective sentence is a sentence that is able to convey ideas precisely, concisely, logically, and easily understood by the reader. According to Arifin and Tasai in (Permita et al., 2026) Effective sentences must meet the principles of equivalence, parallelism, emphasis, frugality, precision, coherence, and logic. The application of these principles allows the author to convey ideas systematically so that the goals of scientific communication can be achieved. On the other hand, the use of ineffective sentences causes information to become vague, difficult to understand, and even has the potential to cause misinterpretation (Zaliana et al., 2025).

Conceptually, sentence effectiveness is inseparable from the mastery of syntax, which is a branch of linguistics that examines the structure and relationship between language units in forming phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax competence is the foundation for building the correct sentence structure according to the rules of the Indonesian language. In syntactic analysis, the pattern of relationships between the subject (S), predicate (P), object (O), complement (Pel), and adverb (Ket) determines the accuracy of the structure of a sentence (Puspawati et al. 2023). Markhamah and Sabardila as quoted in Zulfadhli et al. (2022) explained that the basic pattern of Indonesian sentences is built on subject elements and predicates as mandatory components that can be developed into various variations of patterns such as SP, SPO, SPC, SPA, and SPOK. Thus, deviations from the syntactic structure will have a direct effect on the effectiveness of sentences and the quality of information delivery in academic writing.

Various studies show that syntactic errors are still a dominant problem in students' scientific work. These errors include the omission of sentence elements, inaccuracies in the arrangement of syntax functions, excessive use of words, illogical relationships between clauses, and the emergence of ambiguity in meaning (Zebua et al., 2024). This condition is influenced by various factors, including low mastery of syntactic rules, the introduction of spoken language patterns into written language, and the suboptimal process of manuscript editing (Fatimah et al., 2024). As a result, the quality of scientific communication decreases because readers have difficulty understanding the information conveyed.

A number of previous studies have discussed syntactic errors in student academic writing. Agkris & Simorangkir (2023) identify various forms of syntactic errors in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program, especially in the formation of phrases and sentence construction. Allow dkk. (2026) found that students still often use ineffective sentences due to inaccurate structure, word waste, and unclear meaning. Meanwhile, Zulfadhli et al. (2022) emphasizing the importance of syntactic competence in producing effective sentences according to the rules of the Indonesian language.

Nonetheless, these studies generally focus on identifying forms of syntactic errors or sentence effectiveness separately. There have not been many studies that integrate syntactic structure analysis with the principle of effective sentences comprehensively in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program. In addition, previous research has described more types of errors without associating them with the factors that cause errors based on the characteristics of students' academic writing. This gap shows that

the relationship between the accuracy of syntactic structure and the effectiveness of sentences in producing quality academic writing still requires more in-depth study.

Based on these gaps, the *novelty* of this research lies in the integrated analysis between the aspects of syntactic structure and sentence effectiveness in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program. This study not only identifies the forms of errors that appear, but also classifies errors based on syntactic functions, evaluates their impact on sentence effectiveness, and uncovers the factors that cause errors to occur. This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of the quality of the use of Indonesian in student academic writing compared to previous studies.

This research has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the results of the research are expected to strengthen the study of applied syntax, especially regarding the relationship between sentence structure and sentence effectiveness in the context of academic writing. Practically, research findings can be the basis for improving the learning of academic writing skills, the preparation of Indonesian teaching materials in universities, as well as guidelines for supervisors in coaching and evaluating the quality of student thesis. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of linguistic studies, but also supports the improvement of the quality of students' scientific work as part of improving the quality of higher education.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a document analysis method (*document analysis*). The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to describe in depth the forms of sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness in academic writing, rather than testing hypotheses or making statistical generalizations. According to Murdiyanto (2020, in Mawahdah & Suryani (2025), qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences that are analyzed in depth based on their context. In line with that, Hardani in Mawahdah & Suryani (2025) explained that qualitative research is oriented towards comprehensively understanding phenomena under natural conditions, while, Nurul et al. (2024) states that qualitative descriptive research aims to describe, interpret, and explain phenomena systematically.

The object of the research is the error of sentence structure and the effectiveness of sentences contained in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University. The research focused on four categories of errors, namely (1) syntactic structure errors in sentence patterns (Subject, Predicate, Object, Complementary, and Caption), (2) ambiguous sentences, (3) word waste (redundancy), and (4) incomplete sentences. The analysis was carried out on Chapter I and Chapter IV because both chapters contain the most dominant scientific description so that they are representative to describe students' ability to compose academic sentences.

The data source is in the form of a thesis document for students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University which will be published in 2024. Sample selection was carried out using *purposive sampling*, which is a sample determination technique based on certain considerations that are in accordance with the research objectives. Three theses were chosen because they met the following criteria: (1)

they are original theses for students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University, (2) completed and published in 2024, (3) have access to complete documents, especially Chapters I and IV, and (4) use Indonesian as the main language for academic writing. The selection of three theses is intended to obtain an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of language errors in each document. Therefore, this study is not intended to generalize statistics to all student theses, but rather to produce a rich understanding of the forms and characteristics of syntactic errors in the context being studied. Data were collected using document observation techniques, intensive reading (*close reading*), and note (*note taking*). Document observation is carried out by examining each part of the thesis that is the object of research. Next, the researcher read each sentence carefully to identify the wrong form of sentence structure and sentence effectiveness. All findings are then recorded using a data analysis sheet that has been compiled based on indicators of syntactic theory and effective sentence principles (Sari et al., 2021).

The main instrument of the research is the researcher (*human instrument*) which is supported by data analysis guidelines in the form of an error classification matrix. The guidelines are compiled based on syntactic theory and effective sentence principles which include structural equivalence, coherence, frugality, precision, logic, and clarity of meaning so that the error identification process is carried out systematically and consistently. To ensure the *credibility* and validity of the data, the study applied theoretical triangulation by comparing the identification results using several key references regarding syntax and effective sentences. In addition, *peer debriefing* or peer examination was carried out, namely the results of the classification of errors were reviewed by two lecturers who have competence in the field of linguistics and Indonesian language learning. The level of inter-rater agreement was calculated using the *Percentage Agreement formula*, with a consensus result of 91%, which shows that the level of consistency of the assessment is in the very good category. If there is a difference in assessment, a discussion is held until a final agreement is reached regarding the category of error.

Data analysis was carried out following an interactive analysis model which included (1) data identification, (2) classification of error types, (3) interpretation based on syntactic theory and effective sentences, and (4) presentation of results in the form of narrative descriptions. Each data is analyzed based on the context of its use so that an overview of the form, frequency, and characteristics of sentence structure errors and the effectiveness of sentences in student thesis is obtained.

RESULTS

This study aims to identify sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University in 2024. The analysis was carried out on three theses that were selected *purposively* with a focus on Chapter I and Chapter IV, because the two chapters contained academic descriptions that used the most expository, argumentative, and descriptive sentences. Based on the results of the analysis, four categories of errors were obtained, namely word waste, SPOK structure errors, ambiguous sentences, and incomplete sentences.

In total, 90 error data were found spread across the six chapters analyzed. A recapitulation of the number and percentage of each category of errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Sentence Structure Errors and Sentence Effectiveness

Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Word-of-mouth	39	43,3
SPOK Structure	24	26,7
Ambiguous sentences	14	15,6
Incomplete sentences	13	14,4
Quantity	90	100

Based on Table 1, as many as 90 errors were found in all the analyzed data. The most dominant error was word waste as much as 39 data (43.3%), followed by SPOK structure errors as many as 24 data (26.7%), ambiguous sentences as many as 14 data (15.6%), and incomplete sentences as many as 13 data (14.4%). The dominance of word waste shows that most students have been able to compile the basic structure of sentences, but have not been able to apply the principles of frugality and correctness of diction consistently in academic writing. On the other hand, there are still errors in the structure of SPOK and incomplete sentences show that students' mastery of syntax is not fully optimal, thus affecting the effectiveness of information delivery in scientific papers.

Results of the First Thesis Analysis

In the first thesis entitled *Analysis of the Classification of Character Emotions in the Novel Kembara Rindu by Habiburrahman El Shirazy: A Study of Literary Psychology*, various forms of sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness were found in Chapter I and Chapter IV. The recapitulation of the results of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the First Thesis Analysis

Bab	SPOK Structure	Ambiguous	Word-Wasting	Incomplete Sentences	Quantity
Bab I	3	3	5	1	12
Bab IV	3	0	19	2	24
Quantity	6	3	24	3	36

Based on Table 2, in the first thesis, 36 error data were found. The most dominant error was word waste, which was 24 data (66.7%), while SPOK structure errors were found as many as 6 data (16.7%), ambiguous sentences as many as 3 data (8.3%), and incomplete sentences as many as 3 data (8.3%). In Chapter I, word waste is found in the background of the research that uses phrases or words with repeated meanings so that sentences become less effective. In

addition, there are still some sentences that do not have a clear relationship between subject and predicate, thus reducing the comprehension of information. As for Chapter IV, the frequency of word waste increases significantly because students tend to use long sentences when explaining the results of research and discussion. However, the number of ambiguous sentence errors in this chapter is comparatively less than in Chapter I.

Results of the Second Thesis Analysis

The analysis of the second thesis entitled *Ekranization of the Kretek Girl Novel by Ratih Kumala into a Kretek Girl Film directed by Kamila Andini and Ifa Isfansyah* also shows that there are various errors in sentence structure and sentence effectiveness. The recapitulation of the results of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Second Thesis Analysis

Bab	SPOK Structure	Ambiguous	Word-Wasting	Incomplete Sentences	Quantity
Bab I	3	4	4	3	14
Bab IV	6	4	5	2	17
Quantity	9	8	9	5	31

Based on Table 3, 31 error data were obtained. In contrast to the first thesis, the distribution of errors in the second thesis is relatively more even. SPOK structure errors and word waste were the most common categories, each with 9 data (29.0%), followed by ambiguous sentences with 8 data (25.8%), and incomplete sentences with 5 data (16.2%).

In Chapter I, many errors are found in the preparation of sentences that contain more than one main idea so that the relationship between clauses becomes less clear. Meanwhile, in Chapter IV, an increase in the number of SPOK structure errors was found which showed that students still had difficulty maintaining the consistency of sentence structure when presenting the results of the research analysis.

Results of the Third Thesis Analysis

The third thesis entitled *The Influence of Audio-Visual Media on the Ability to Write Short Stories with the Theme of Islamic Boarding Schools in Grade IX Students of SMK Nurul Huda Buay Madang* also shows errors in sentence structure and sentence effectiveness, although the number is less than the previous two theses. The recapitulation of the results of the analysis can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the Third Thesis Analysis

Bab	SPOK Structure	Ambiguous	Word-Wasting	Incomplete Sentences	Quantity
Bab I	5	2	4	4	15
Chapter IV	4	1	2	1	8
Quantity	9	3	6	5	23

Based on Table 4, 23 error data were obtained. The most common errors were found in the structure of SPOK, which was 9 data (39.1%), followed by word waste of 6 data (26.1%), while ambiguous sentences and incomplete sentences were found as many as 3 data (13.0%) and 5 data (21.8%) respectively. In Chapter I, most of the errors occur in the sentence structure in the background of research and theoretical studies that still show the inaccuracy of the relationship between subjects, predicates, and objects. As for Chapter IV, the number of errors decreased compared to Chapter I, which shows that the sentence structure in the presentation of research results is relatively better.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness are still found in all student theses of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University that are analyzed. Of the four categories of errors identified, word waste was the most dominant form of error, followed by SPOK structure errors, ambiguous sentences, and incomplete sentences. This pattern shows that even though students have basic skills in composing academic sentences, the application of effective sentence principles and syntactic rules is still not carried out consistently. These findings indicate that the quality of academic writing is not only influenced by mastery of the research substance, but also by the ability to organize language appropriately in accordance with the rules of the Indonesian language.

Sentence Structure Errors in Syntactic Perspective

The SPOK structure errors found in this study show that some students still have difficulty in building a complete syntactic relationship between subjects, predicates, objects, complements, and descriptions. The most common forms of errors are the loss of one of the syntactic functions, especially the predicate, the use of two subjects in one construction without a clear relationship, and the placement of an element of a statement that causes the sentence structure to be unbalanced.

According to Puspawati et al. (2023), sentences are syntax units built on a systematic relationship between subject functions, predicates, objects, complements, and descriptions. This relationship determines the completeness of the meaning and acceptability of a sentence. Markhamah and Sabardila (in Zulfadhli et al., 2022) also explain that the basic structure of Indonesian sentences must at least have subject elements and predicates, while objects, complements, and descriptions function to complement the information. Therefore, the loss of one of the main elements causes the sentence structure to be incomplete and reduces the effectiveness of the message delivery.

From a linguistic perspective, the error in the structure of the SPOK not only shows a weak mastery of grammar, but also reflects the lack of development of students' ability to organize ideas logically. Many sentences begin with long captions so that the subject and predicate lose their function as the core of information. As a result, the reader needs more effort to identify the main point that the writer wants to convey. This condition shows that syntactic errors not only have an impact on the grammatical aspect, but also on the readability and clarity of scientific communication.

This finding is in line with the research of Agkris and Simorangkir (2023) who found that syntactic errors still dominate the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program. The study showed that errors occurred most in the formation of phrases and the arrangement of syntactic functions in sentences. Similarly, Pratama (2023) stated that low syntactic mastery is one of the main causes of the emergence of ineffective sentences in student scientific works. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the previous finding that syntactic competence is the main foundation in producing quality academic writing.

Word Waste as a Dominant Form of Error

The results of the study show that word waste is the most dominant category of error. These forms of waste include the use of two words or phrases that have the same meaning, the repetition of unnecessary sentence elements, and the use of expressions that are too long to convey one simple piece of information.

According to Arifin and Tasai (in Permita et al., 2026), one of the main characteristics of effective sentences is the frugality of word usage. Each element of the language used must have a specific function so that it does not cause redundancy. If there are words or phrases that do not provide additional meaning, these elements should be omitted to make the sentence more concise and easy to understand. The dominance of word waste in this study shows that students tend to consider the use of long sentences as synonymous with scientific language styles. In fact, academic writing actually requires the delivery of information concisely, clearly, and directly on the subject matter. From a linguistic point of view, word waste increases the cognitive load of the reader because the same information is conveyed through several elements that have similar semantic functions. As a result, communication efficiency decreases even though sentence structure in general is still understandable.

The findings of this study reinforce the research results of Permita et al. (2026) who stated that the use of effective sentences is still the main problem in student academic writing. However, there is a difference with the study because this study found that word waste is more dominant than sentence structure errors. These differences show that the characteristics of language errors can be influenced by the type of scientific paper, the author's background, and the academic guidance process applied in each university.

Ambiguous Sentences and Unclear Meaning

In addition to word waste and structural errors, the study also found ambiguous sentences. Ambiguity arises due to unclear relationships between clauses, the use of diction that has more than one meaning, and the placement of sentence elements that cause readers to give different interpretations of the information conveyed. According to Fatimah et al. (2024), one of the main functions of language in scientific works is to convey information precisely so that it does not cause double interpretation. Therefore, the ambiguous sentence shows that the author has not been able to manage the relationship between ideas systematically. This condition not only reduces the effectiveness of scientific communication, but can also affect the validity of the arguments built in scientific works.

Syntactically speaking, the ambiguity is largely due to the use of overly complex sentences with multiple clauses combined without clear relationship markers. Improper placement of

captions also causes the boundaries between primary and additional information to become blurred. As a result, the reader must interpret for himself the relationship between ideas that the author actually wants to convey. These findings support the opinion of Fitriah et al. (2021) who stated that the unclear sentence structure is one of the main causes of ambiguity in academic writing. Therefore, the preparation of scientific sentences needs to pay attention to the principle of cohesion and accuracy of sentence element placement so that each information can be understood consistently by readers.

Incomplete Sentences

Another category of error is an incomplete sentence characterized by the absence of one of the mandatory elements, especially the subject or predicate. Incomplete sentences cause information to be cut off so that the reader has to interpret the missing elements themselves. In academic writing, this condition can reduce the clarity of arguments and reduce the quality of information presentation.

Nainggolan (in Pratama, 2023) explained that mastery of syntax is a prerequisite for building effective sentences. Sentences that lose one of the main elements no longer qualify as a complete language unit so that their communicative function is impaired. The results of this study are also in line with Mawahdah and Suryani (2025) who stated that incompleteness of sentence elements is still often found in students' scientific papers due to lack of attention to the language editing process.

Factors Causing Errors

Based on the overall findings, there are several factors that are suspected to be the cause of sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness. First, students are still influenced by the characteristics of spoken language so that the sentences produced tend to be long, repetitive, and less systematic. Second, the understanding of syntactic concepts has not been fully applied in academic writing practice. Students in general are familiar with the concepts of subjects, predicates, objects, complements, and descriptions, but still experience difficulties when implementing these concepts in complex sentence preparation.

Third, the manuscript editing process has not been carried out optimally. Many mistakes can actually be avoided if students re-examine sentence structure, word selection, and the relationship between clauses before the manuscript is submitted. These findings suggest that learning academic writing should not only emphasize the preparation of research content, but also devote a greater portion to the skills of revising and editing scientific manuscripts.

Research Implications

Theoretically, this study strengthens the study of applied syntax which states that the effectiveness of sentences is influenced by the accuracy of the relationship between syntactic functions, the efficiency of word use, the coherence between clauses, and the completeness of sentence structure. The findings of the study show that violations of one of these principles will have an impact on the decline in the quality of scientific communication. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence that syntax theory is not only relevant as a linguistic study, but also has an important role in the development of academic writing skills in college.

Practically, the results of this research can be used as evaluation material in learning Indonesian in universities, especially in the courses of Academic Writing, Syntax, and Language Editing. The study program can use the findings of this research as a basis for compiling learning modules that emphasize the practice of analyzing language errors and effective sentence editing. In addition, thesis supervisors can use the results of this research as a guideline in providing more targeted feedback on the linguistic aspects of students. For students, the results of this research are expected to be a reference in improving the ability to compose effective sentences so that the quality of the scientific work produced becomes better..

CONCLUSION

This research succeeded in identifying and describing various forms of sentence structure errors and sentence effectiveness in the thesis of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University in 2024. Based on the analysis of Chapters I and IV of the three theses that were the data sources, it was found that word waste was the most dominant form of error, followed by SPOK structure errors, ambiguous sentences, and incomplete sentences. The findings show that some students have been able to compile the basic structure of sentences, but have not applied the principles of effective sentences consistently, especially in the aspects of economy, coherence, completeness of syntactic structure, and clarity of meaning.

This research contributes to the development of applied syntax studies, especially in the analysis of language errors in student scientific works. The findings of the study show that the application of proper syntax functions and effective sentence principles are important factors in improving the quality of academic writing. In addition to enriching the study of syntactic error analysis, this study also provides an empirical overview of the characteristics of language errors that still often appear in student thesis.

Practically, the results of this research can be used as evaluation material in learning academic writing skills in higher education. The research findings are expected to be input for lecturers to strengthen learning syntax, effective sentences, and language editing, as well as a guideline for students in improving the quality of writing scientific papers through the application of correct, effective, and communicative Indonesian language rules. For the study program, the results of this research can be used as a basis for developing learning strategies and thesis writing assistance that is more oriented towards improving the quality of students' academic language.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the research results. First, the study only used three theses of students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Nurul Huda University as data sources. The selection of the number of documents aims to obtain an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of syntax errors, so that the results of the study emphasize more depth of analysis than generalizations of all students' scientific works.

Second, the analysis is only focused on Chapter I and Chapter IV of the thesis. Therefore, the results of the study have not thoroughly described the quality of language use in other parts, such as literature reviews, research methods, overall research results, and conclusions.

Third, this study only examines syntactic aspects which include sentence structure and sentence effectiveness. Other linguistic aspects, such as morphology, semantics, cohesion, coherence, spelling use according to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), as well as the style of scientific writing have not been comprehensively analyzed. Therefore, the results of this study are still limited to the description of syntactic errors in student academic writing.

Based on these limitations, further research is recommended to expand the data corpus by involving theses from various study programs, faculties, and universities so that a more representative picture of the quality of language in academic writing is obtained. In addition, subsequent research can integrate syntactic analysis with other linguistic aspects, such as morphology, semantics, cohesion, coherence, and spelling usage, so as to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of language errors in students' scientific works. Further research can also develop an analytical approach by examining the factors that cause the emergence of syntactic errors, the effectiveness of academic writing learning, and thesis guidance models, so that the research results are not only descriptive, but also provide more applicable recommendations for improving the quality of academic writing in higher education.

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