

Analysis of syntactic errors in student papers: a study of sentence effectiveness and structure

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze various syntactic errors found in student papers and provide recommendations for their improvement. Two papers served as examples in this study: a paper from the Religion Group 3 course and a paper from Civics Education. The approach used was descriptive qualitative with data collection through documentation. Data were obtained by carefully reading, then identifying and classifying each sentence deemed problematic in terms of syntax. The analysis results indicate that there are two main types of errors frequently found. The first is errors related to sentence effectiveness, which are generally indicated by the use of excessive words and inappropriate conjunctions. The second is errors in sentence structure, which include the absence of subjects, incomplete sentences, and overall structures that appear unconnected to each other. These findings illustrate that students' understanding of syntactic rules in Indonesian still requires more attention. As a step for improvement, the author provides several suggestions, including restructuring sentences to make them more effective, adding missing sentence elements, and using conjunctions in accordance with scientific writing guidelines. This study is expected to be used as a source of evaluation to improve the quality of students' scientific writing in the future.



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INTRODUCTION

During the learning process at university, students are often given academic assignments in the form of writing scientific papers. By writing papers, students can convey ideas and practice critical thinking skills. However, in reality, many language errors are still found in student papers, one of which is syntactic errors. Hermawan et al. (2025) revealed that syntactic errors are still found in student papers. This indicates that students' ability to construct sentences according to Indonesian language rules still needs to be improved.

Syntax is branch linguistics that studies connection interword in form meaningful phrases , clauses and sentences . Syntactic studies play a role important in understand structure Language Because arrange arrangement elements language to produce grammatical and easy sentences understood . According to Chaer (2015), syntax discussing relationship management interword in form unit more languages big so that can convey meaning in a way clear . Therefore that , understanding to rules syntax be one of aspect important in writing work scientific student Because error in compilation elements syntax can cause ambiguity meaning and reduce effectiveness delivery information .

Syntactic errors relate to inaccuracies in the construction of phrases, clauses, and sentences that do not conform to language rules. This condition can cause the idea or information intended to be conveyed to the reader to be unclear. Syarif et al. (2025) state that syntax not only regulates word order but also determines the meaning and effectiveness of the message conveyed. In practice, errors at the syntactic level can include unclear subject and predicate functions, excessive use of conjunctions, irregular phrase structure, and misalignment of forms. Therefore, any deviation from syntactic rules can affect meaning and even change the author's intended intent.

The relationship between syntax and effective sentences is very close because the accuracy of the arrangement of syntactic elements influences the effectiveness of a sentence. Effective sentences are sentences that are structured according to certain rules so that they are able to convey information accurately and easily understood. Randi and Heny (2017) explain that effective sentences have six main requirements, namely unity, cohesion, parallelism, accuracy, economy, and logic. The importance of mastering these aspects is also emphasized by Supartini et al. (2023) and Nainggolan and Simanjuntak (2025), who state that understanding syntactic rules directly impacts the formation of logical sentences and the clarity of information. These requirements will not be met if the syntactic elements are not arranged correctly. In line with this, Chairani and Marisya (2024) explain that the use of effective sentences in student papers still requires attention because various forms of sentence ineffectiveness are still found.

Many studies have been conducted on syntactic errors. Hermawan et al. (2025) found various syntactic errors in student papers. Chairani and Marisya (2024) also found inaccurate sentence structure that rendered the sentences ineffective. This indicates that syntactic errors are still a common phenomenon in student papers. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the syntactic errors found in two student papers. The analysis focused on inaccurate phrase structure, ineffective sentences, and incomplete sentence elements. Through this study, it is hoped that various forms of syntactic errors that are frequently found can be identified, thus providing evaluation material in students' scientific papers.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive research aims to systematically describe and analyze syntactic errors found in student writing.

The research subjects were two student papers prepared in previous lectures: a Group 3 paper on Religion and a paper on Civics (PKn). Both papers served as data sources because they contained sentences that could be analyzed syntactically.

The data collection technique used a documentation method. Data was obtained by carefully reading both papers, then identifying and noting sentences containing syntactic errors. The errors found were then grouped by type.

The data analysis technique is carried out in several stages, namely: (1) reading the entire contents of the paper, (2) identifying sentences that contain syntactic errors, (3) classifying errors based on their type, such as ineffective sentences, errors in the use of conjunctions, errors in the use of punctuation, incomplete sentence elements, and errors in sentence structure, (4) correcting sentences according to good and correct Indonesian language rules, and (5) drawing conclusions based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out.

The analyzed data is then presented in the form of tables and descriptive descriptions to make it easier for readers to understand the forms of syntactic errors found in the two papers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of students' Civics papers, several syntactic errors were found, which can be grouped into two main categories: sentence effectiveness and sentence structure. The analysis data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Analysis of Syntactic Errors in the PPkn Paper

No	Wrong sentence	Type of error
1.	Penulis menyadari bahwa penulisan laporan ini jauh dari kata sempurna, Penulis memohon maaf jika terdapat kesalahan dan kekurangan dalam penulisan laporan ini, Penulis menerima kritik dan saran yang membangun kesempurnaan laporan ini.	Kalimat tidak efektif
2.	Semenjak awal pengaplikasian Pancasila sebagai landasan dan filosofi hidup bangsa Indonesia, setiap hendak merumuskan sesuatu peraturan atau undang-undang harus selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip yang terkandung dalam Pancasila.	Ketiadaan subjek

3	Dan kapitalisme yang memberikan kebebasan individu untuk menguasai sistem ekonomi negara yang tidak sesuai dengan prinsip ekonomi kerakyatan, yang dapat menimbulkan gaya hidup konsumtif.	Kalimat tidak lengkap
4	Lalu unsur individualisme yang terkandung dalam liberalisme tidak selaras dengan prinsip kerja sama atau gotong royong dalam sila keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia.	Ketidaktepatan penggunaan konjungsi
5	Nilai-nilai Pancasila yaitu Ketuhanan, Kemanusiaan, Persatuan, Kerakyatan, serta Keadilan Sosial. Diakui sebagai unsur yang mencerminkan dan mengakomodasi keberagaman tersebut melalui prinsip toleransi.	Struktur kalimat tidak utuh

Sentence effectiveness errors were found in data points 1 and 4. In data point 1, several ideas are combined in one sentence, namely the author's acknowledgment of writing limitations, an apology, and acceptance of criticism and suggestions. This combination of ideas causes the sentence to lack focus, making it difficult to understand as a unified piece of information. The sentence can be improved by separating each idea into different sentences to make the information clearer, such as making one sentence for acknowledging limitations, one sentence for apologizing, and one sentence for accepting criticism and suggestions.

Meanwhile, data point 4 found the inappropriate use of the conjunction "lalu" at the beginning of a sentence in scientific writing. This aligns with Maulana and Pratiwi (2024), who stated that conjunction use must be adapted to the context and language variety to ensure logical and systematic relationships between sentences. This sentence can be improved by replacing the conjunction "then" with a conjunction more appropriate for scientific writing, such as "besides that" or "besides that," to create a more cohesive relationship between the sentences. In general, errors in sentence effectiveness indicate that the rules of effective sentences have not been fully implemented. This contradicts Randi and Heny's (2017) opinion, which explains that effective sentences must meet six requirements: unity, cohesion, parallelism, accuracy, economy, and logic.

Sentence structure errors were found in data points 2, 3, and 5. In data point 2, the subject element was incomplete. The sentence begins with a time adverb, namely "since the beginning of the application of Pancasila as the foundation and philosophy of life of the Indonesian nation," then followed by the phrase "every time we want to formulate a regulation or law." However, this section does not indicate a clear subject as the actor of the action, so the basic sentence structure (SP) is not fully fulfilled. This sentence can be improved by adding a clear subject, for example "government" or "related institution", so that the sentence becomes more complete and easier to understand. This is in line with the opinion of Mardiah and Hermaliza (2024) who stated that sentences without subjects and predicates are incomplete sentences.

In data number 3, the sentence begins with the conjunction "and" so it cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. This sentence can be improved by removing the conjunction "and" at the beginning of the sentence and restructuring it to have a clear subject and predicate so that it can stand alone as a complete sentence. Meanwhile, in data point 5, the subject and predicate are separated in two different sentences, making it difficult to understand because the relationship between the sentence elements is not complete. This sentence can be improved by combining the two parts of the sentence into one complete sentence so that the relationship between the subject and predicate is clear and unbroken.

In general, the analysis results show that syntactic errors in student papers are dominated by inaccurate sentence structure, particularly incomplete sentence elements, and a lack of effective delivery of ideas. This indicates that students' ability to construct good scientific sentences still needs improvement.

Based on the analysis of Group 3's Religion paper, five types of syntactic errors were found, including ineffective sentences, word repetition, inappropriate conjunctions, punctuation errors, and incomplete sentences. The data obtained was processed and grouped based on the type of error, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Syntactic Error Analysis in Group 3's Religion Paper

No	Wrong sentence	Type of error
1	Menurut pandangan sains modern, dijelaskan bahwa proses kejadian manusia terjadi dalam tiga fase.	Kalimat tidak efektif
2	Proses kejadian manusia juga terjadi dalam tiga fase yaitu fase zigot yaitu sejak konsepsi hingga akhir minggu ke-2.	Pengulangan kata
3	Dan pada umur 4 bulan, ruh telah di tiup kan ke dalam janin tersebut.	Ketidaktepatan penggunaan konjungsi
4	Ayat di atas menunjukan bahwa, seorang manusia diciptakan dalam tubuh ibunya melalui tiga tahapan yang berbeda.	Kesalahan penggunaan tanda baca
5	Manusia merupakan ciptaan Allah SWT. Yang memiliki derajat yang paling sempurna dibandingkan dengan makhluk lainnya.	Kalimat tidak lengkap

As far as can be identified from this study, the types of syntactic errors found in students' writing can be grouped into several main categories. These results indicate that writers still experience difficulties in applying Indonesian grammar correctly, especially in the aspects of creating effective sentences and their completeness. One issue that is quite striking is the use of two information source markers in the same sentence. For example, the phrase "based on the perspective of modern science" followed by "explained that" results in a waste of words, so that information cannot be conveyed efficiently. In line with Chaer's opinion (2015), an effective sentence should have elements of economy and clarity so that readers can easily understand the message.

Word repetition is also an issue that deserves more attention. In one section, the word "that is" is used twice in a single sentence, making the presentation feel long-winded. There was also an error in the use of conjunctions, where "and" was placed at the beginning of a new sentence. This example demonstrates that understanding the function of conjunctions as interclausal connectors is still inadequate.

In terms of punctuation, the placement of a comma after "that" is actually irrelevant because it separates the subordinating conjunction from the following clause. Furthermore, there are situations where "that" appears as the opening clause of a sentence without a clear main clause, which results in an incomplete structure and unclear meaning.

The findings of this study align with those of Heryani (2019), who also showed that errors in effective sentences are still frequently found in students' scientific papers. Furthermore, research conducted by Hasanudin and Praptiningsih (2019) revealed that errors in punctuation and sentence structure are the most common types of syntactic problems in academic writing. All of this emphasizes that students' skills in understanding syntactic rules still require improvement to improve the quality of their scientific papers.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that syntactic errors are still frequently found in student papers, particularly in aspects of sentence effectiveness and sentence structure. The analysis of papers in Religion and Civics courses shows that errors in sentence effectiveness are characterized by word wasting and inappropriate use of conjunctions, while errors in sentence structure are characterized by unclear subjects and incomplete sentence elements.

These findings indicate that students' understanding of syntactic rules still needs to be improved to produce effective, clear, and structurally correct sentences. Therefore, ongoing writing practice and evaluations focused on sentence effectiveness and structure are necessary to improve the quality of students' scientific writing.

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