

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Writing is an essential skill in academic contexts because it enables learners to communicate complex ideas, organize arguments logically, and demonstrate critical thinking through structured text production. Academic writing goes beyond mere sentence formation it requires both syntactic accuracy and textual complexity so that the content is not only grammatically correct but also academically meaningful. In second language (L2) contexts such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, mastery of grammatical structures plays a crucial role in determining the quality of students' written texts, especially in academic essays or research-based assignments.

A significant aspect of academic writing competence is the ability to construct complex sentences, which consist of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. These structures enable writers to express relationships between ideas, including cause–effect, condition, contrast, and elaboration, in a single sentence. Research in L2 writing indicates that the use of complex sentences is associated with higher levels of syntactic complexity and can correlate positively with writing quality when used accurately. For instance, Subekti (2024) found that although students produced a relatively large number of complex sentences in their essays,

their mastery was generally low, indicating gaps in grammatical competence that may affect overall writing proficiency.

Recent changes in how academic writing is taught highlight the significance of using complex sentence structures as a sign of strong writing skills. Students who can create more complex sentences usually show better academic reading and writing skills because they can explain how ideas are connected in a clearer way. Many EFL learners still depend a lot on basic sentence structures because they don't have a strong grasp of grammar and don't get enough practice writing. This situation often leads to essays that don't flow well, have weak connections between ideas, and lack the refined quality expected in academic writing.

Despite its importance, constructing complex sentences remains a persistent challenge for many L2 learners. Studies have shown that students often produce errors when combining clauses, misapply subordinate connectors, or fail to maintain grammatical accuracy, which subsequently leads to unclear or ungrammatical sentences. For example, research by Pratiwi et al. (2025) revealed that a significant proportion of tertiary students had difficulties combining independent clauses with adjective, adverbial, and noun clauses, particularly in the correct use of subordinate connectors such as *who*, *after*, *if*, and *what*. Similarly, in a study analyzing EFL learners' usage of complex sentences, Mora (2024) reported that learners committed various types of errors in subordinate clause structures, including

misformation, omission, and addition, which impeded accurate clause integration.

The challenges in writing complex sentences also extend to broader academic writing practices. A comparative study on sentence building found that novice writers tend to rely heavily on simple sentences to avoid errors, whereas more advanced writers use complex sentences more frequently, suggesting a link between syntactic complexity and writing proficiency. This study further identified writing process complexity, anxiety, grammar, and vocabulary limitations as common obstacles in sentence construction. Moreover, error analysis research on compound-complex sentence production showed that students frequently make fusion errors, missing subjects or verbs, and comma splices when attempting to generate multi-clause structures, highlighting persistent difficulties in sentence integration even at higher levels of writing instruction.

This issue is in line with what happened to fourth semester students at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang in academic year 2025, most of them are still unable to construct complex sentences correctly. Based on the results of an interview with one of the lecturers in the essay writing class, the difficulty experienced by students in writing sentences is not able to distinguish independent and dependent clauses. Some of them are also less able to place the correct connecting words to connect the independent clause with the dependent clause. Also, some of them are still confused about how to write main clauses and subordinate clauses correctly, how to place conjunctions

correctly, and they do not even know when to use punctuation properly. Therefore, I became interested in conducting research related to complex sentences and exploring them further.

Subekti (2018), in her research journal entitled *Error Analysis in Complex Sentences Written by Indonesian Students from the English Education Department*, said that in her research, there were many mistakes made by students in constructing complex sentences. Subekti divides errors in constructing complex sentences into five types: lack of consistency, error of omission, error of addition, incorrect verb formation, and a combination of the above errors. In the results of the research conducted by Subekti, it appears that the errors most commonly made by students in constructing complex sentences are a combination of the above errors. It was concluded that many of the students studied by Subekti were unable to form complex sentences correctly.

In a study conducted by Agustina Ramadhianti et al., entitled "*An Error Analysis in Generating Compound Complex Sentences in Student Writing*," it was found that students also make common mistakes in constructing compound sentences. There is a slight difference between complex sentences and compound complex sentences, in that complex sentences have only one main clause, while compound sentences have two main clauses. Agustina et al. divided the errors in compound sentence formation into five categories: missing subject, missing verb, fused sentence, and comma splice. The results showed that the most common error made by

students in forming compound complex sentences was fused sentences. A fused sentence is when the conjunction or punctuation in constructing the compound sentence is missing or incorrect. The results of their research indicate that this is commonly done by students.

The results of the analysis conducted by Aulia Faradiba (2019) and others in an analysis entitled *Students' Errors in Constructing Complex Sentences*. In the analysis, Aulia Faradiba argues that there are four types of errors in constructing complex sentences. These four types are omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Omission is where an element is missing in a sentence, be it the subject, verb, or auxiliary. Addition is adding unnecessary or irrelevant elements to a sentence. Misinformation is when students use incorrect forms of words, such as incorrect tense, incorrect verbs, or incorrect use of to be. Misordering is when students arrange words in the wrong order, which often occurs when students use question patterns in noun clauses. In an analysis conducted by Aulia Faradiba, she found that among the students' work she analyzed, misinformation was the most common error she found, while misordering was the least common. Aulia said that misinformation was the highest because many students did not understand how to construct complex sentences, did not understand main clause adjustment, subordinate conjunctions and subordinate clauses, and also because differences in language patterns affected their writing in constructing complex sentences.

In an analysis entitled *An Error Analysis on the Complex Sentences in Students' Writing* analyzed by Qur'ani et al (2020), similar errors were also found. Dliya'ul used the same types of errors as previous researcher, namely omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. As a result, of the 74 errors found in complex sentences, misinformation was also the most common error made by students.

There was also a researcher who analyzed complex sentences and obtained slightly different results. Fadilah Prachan (2018) analyzed 58 high school students in her analysis with the title is *Error Analysis in Writing Complex Sentences at the First Semester of Eleventh Grade of SMK PGRI 4 Bandar Lampung in 2018/2019 Academic*. Using the same type of errors as the previous researcher, Fadilah found more errors in omissions when constructing complex sentences. Fadila said that these errors were found more often because many students had a limited vocabulary, resulting in many elements being omitted when constructing complex sentences.

Based on the research journal above, the research has the same objective as the research I was conduct, which is to find errors in complex sentences made by students. However, there is a slight difference with the research above. The research above focuses on errors in the type of errors they studied, while this research was look for errors in the existing error types and also look for errors outside the existing error types.

Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher is interested to conduct the research entitled: **“ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS’ ERROR IN CONSTRUCTING COMPLEX SENTENCE IN ESSAY WRITING OF FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS AT UIN IMAM BONJOL PADANG”**

B. Limitation of the Problem

This study focuses on analyzing the structure of students' writing related to the material of complex sentences. The subjects analyzed were 4th semester students who had studied complex sentences located at the State Islamic University of Imam Bonjol Padang.

C. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problem formulation of this study is as follow: What are the common mistakes in constructing complex sentences in student essays found in comparative essays?

D. Purpose of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the purpose of this study are; (1) to identify common errors in the creation or use of complex sentences.

E. Significant of the Study

This study is significant as it provides insights into how students construct complex sentences in academic writing. It helps educators understand the extent to which learners can apply grammatical knowledge in real essay contexts. The findings may guide teachers in designing more

targeted writing instruction that strengthens students' syntactic skills and improves overall writing quality.

F. Defenition of Key Term

1. Complex Sentence: complex sentence as a grammatical structure composed of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. This structure allows writers to present one main idea and one or more supporting ideas in a single sentence. (Oshima and hogue, 2006).
2. Essay: structured written text in academic format (introduction, body, conclusion) which aims to convey arguments or opinions.
3. Error Analysis: the process of identifying, classifying, and analyzing grammatical or structural errors in language use by learners.

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