

## AN ERROR ANALYSIS IN GENERATING COMPOUND COMPLEX SENTENCE ON STUDENTS' WRITING

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### ABSTRACT

*Since compound-complex sentences combine two distinct sentences, many students face difficulties to generate the type of sentence. This research aims to analyze the students' error in writing compound-complex sentence. The research applied the descriptive qualitative research design. The participants of the research are English education department students taking basic writing course. The data was taken from student's writing task and analyzed classifying them into different type of sentence error based on Hacker and Sommers (2011). The result shows that the error made by students are fused sentence 35.6 %, missing verb 28%, missing subject 20%, comma splices 13,3% and missing subject and verb 2,2%. It is advised that the lecturers in writing classes provide more tasks in addition to demonstrating more frequent errors and examples of compound-compound complex phrases taken from real-world texts.*

**Keyword:** compound complex sentence, students' writing, error analysis

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing in university level especially in English Education program has more challenge since the students are required to master all types of sentences. They must be able to generate well-formed sentences. In English writing, according to Hacker and Diana (2011) structurally there are four types of sentences: simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentence.

In addition, Oshima and Hogue (2006) stated that these types of sentences are determined by the type of clauses used to form the sentence. First, a simple sentence consists of an independent clause;

it is a sentence that has one subject and predicate. For example, "English grammar is easy". Second is a compound sentence which is two independent clauses join together with coordinator, conjunctive adverb, and semicolon.

The third is complex sentence which has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. We place more important idea as independent clause, and the less important idea as dependent clause. There are three kinds of dependent clauses that construct a complex sentence such as adverb clause, adjective clause and noun clause.

The last type is compound complex sentence. It has two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. For example: Because grammar is easy, I learned it quickly, but it took me several years to master writing.

Furthermore, Hacker and Sommers (2011) stated that compound complex sentence is a sentence that contains at least two independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause. The following example is a compound complex sentence that has two independent clauses, and each contains a subordinate clause.

Example:

“Tell the doctor how you feel, **and** she will decide **whether you can go home.**”

A compound complex sentence is a sentence which combines a compound sentence and complex sentence (Brannan, 2009).

From all those types of sentences, the compound complex sentence is the most complicated sentence and become the most difficult type of sentence that students should master. Charpentier-Jiménez (2020) on his research found that from 370 sentences that students wrote; only three sentences which were written in compound complex type. In contrast, the combination of sentence maybe is the most common kind of sentence which developed in the

text book (Oshima et al., 2007). Take into account this thing; students must be able to write this type of sentence properly.

Since compound complex sentence is the most complicated one, the EFL students often made some sentence errors in writing process. According to Hacker and Sommers (2011), there are some sentence errors namely sentence fragment and run on sentence.

Sentence fragment is divided into missing subject, missing verb, missing subject and verb, and dependent clause. For example, the sentence that an EFL student wrote is “Children playing in the yard” instead of “Children are playing in the yard”. This error is called missing verb, and it happened because there is different sentence structure between source language and English as a target language.

Meanwhile, run on sentence has two subcategories; they are fused sentence and comma splice. As an illustration, the sentence “The girl reads in the living room she reads *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen” is a fused sentence. The sentence is lacking of a conjunction and a punctuation to join the two sentences together.

In learning English as a foreign language, teachers and students face several problems. As Khansir & Shahhoseiny (2013) stated that English teachers face a large amount of Iranian EFL students who

made some errors in the pre-university level. This situation has made the English teacher to conceive the problems in a scientifically way.

Brannan (2009) stated that recent study consider the sentence error such as fragments, comma splices, and fused sentence must be avoided by the students in writing. This sentence error in students' writing may cause misinterpretation to the reader. Sermsook et al. (2017) focused on sentence errors construction of Thai EFL students can possibly cause miscommunication.

Considering that writing is an elaborating process especially writing in foreign language, many researchers have deliberated recognizing the common errors made by the students (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). As a result, there have been increasing issues of research in the error analysis field.

Even though Slinker as cited in Zheng & Park (2013) argued that the theory of error analysis may already out-fangled, since it was initiated in 1960, the error analysis theory is up to the present time very helpful. Many teachers have used this to identify the students' writing errors, and to analyze the causes for those errors then put forward a plausible improvement.

Error Analysis gives some proofs on factual testified matter thus it can form the

well-planned fundamental in pedagogical approach construction (Khansir, 2012). It also provides a response whether the target language acquisition process is similar to the source language acquisition process. Presada and Bradea (2014) cited in Burhanuddin (2020) explained that the number of errors of their students could decrease by doing error analysis.

Based on the previous explanation, this study aimed to identify sentence error compound complex sentence in students' writing.

## METHOD

This research applied qualitative descriptive design. According to Corder 1967, cited in (Zheng & Park, 2013), there are five steps in error analysis. The first is collecting the samples from language learners; the second is identifying the learner's error; the third is making the description of the learner's error, the fourth is explaining the learner's error and the last is evaluating the learner's error. The participants were 80 English department students of a private university in South Jakarta taking the basic writing class in the second year. The data were collected from the writing assignment which the students instructed to generate some sentences with the compound complex structure based on the picture given.

As the data collected, there were about 40 sentences that have errors out of 160 sentences written by the students. These 40 sentences were analyzed by classifying them into different type of sentence error based on Hacker and Sommers (2011), namely sentence fragment and run on sentence. After these sentences were classified based on their type of errors, the types of errors were measured in percentage to know the frequency of common error that students made.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research found some errors made by students regarding to missing subject, missing verb, and missing both subject and verb as the sentence fragment type of error; furthermore, sentence fused and comma splice as the run on sentence type of error.

**Table 1. Students' Writing Error in Generating Compound Complex Sentence**

No	Types of Error	f	%
1	Sentence Fragment		
	Missing Subject	9	20
	Missing Verb	13	28.9
	Missing Subject and Verb	1	2.2
2	Run On Sentence		
	Fused Sentence	16	35.6
	Comma Splice	6	13.3
	Total Error	45	100

The table shows the highest percentage of errors is fused sentence with 35.6%, whereas the lowest percentage of error is missing subject and verb in sentence fragment with 2,2%. the details of error in each sentence are explained in the following:

### 1. Sentence Fragment

#### a. Missing Subject.

Based on the table 1, it found that there are nine errors of missing subject. The students often omit the subject in one of those clauses in a sentence. For example, "When we get assignments, our parents are willing to teach us, and always support us." This sentence does not fulfill as compound complex sentence since it lacks one independent clause. The clause 'always support us' has no subject to be considered as an independent clause. To fix this error, it needs a subject that is agreeable to the former independent clause (our parents are willing to teach). So, the possible suggestion is "When we get assignment, our parents will teach us, and they will always support us." This missing subject error might occur because of the lacking of knowledge that students have in grasping the rule of compound complex sentence. In compound complex sentence structure there must

have at least two independent clauses and one dependent clause.

This missing subject error also has occurred in Thai EFL students, but it occurred because of different reasons. Sermsook et al (2017) explained that some omitting subject occurs because in Thai, the subject of the second can be omitted, but in English it brings the errors since it can cause a misleading to assert the complete meaning of a sentence.

#### b. Missing Verb.

According to the table 1, thirteen sentence errors were found in missing verb category. The students made this error in the form of omitting the verb 'to be'. For example, "Because they on holiday, they have time when their child learning, and they guiding." Look at to the words "they on holiday and they guiding", this group of words needs the word 'are' as a 'to be' to make the correct sentence. Thus, the possible revision is "Because the parents are on holiday, they have time for their children, and they are guiding them in learning. This error of omitting 'to be' might be happen because the Indonesian language does not have any element that has the similar function as be in English (Subekti, 2018).

This error of verb also occurs in Chinese EFL students; (LI, 2021) said that the error of 'serial verb construction' has occurred because this is widely used in Chinese.

#### c. Missing Subject and Verb

The table shows that there was only one error made by the student in the form of subject and verb omission. If a sentence does not have a subject and a verb, it cannot be regard as a sentence, for it does not have complete thought. The example of compound complex sentence that lack the subject and verb in one of its clauses is "Their parents were able to watch their children learning, but not all the time because they had something to do." This sentence does not have compound complex structure since it needs one more independent clause after the coordinating conjunction. If we pay attention to the word 'but not all the time', it is not a sentence because it does not have any subject and verb. To fix this error, it needs a subject and a verb after the conjunction 'but' in order to create a correct sentence. The possible correction of the compound complex sentence would be "Their parents were able to watch their children, but they could not do it all the time because they had something to do."

This absence of both a subject and a verb has been identified in students' writing based on the finding research that was done by Ananda et al. (2014). They revealed this fragmented-sentences are the most common errors made by the students.

## 2. Run-on Sentence

### a. Fused Sentence

Table 1 shows that the fused sentence is the most common error made by the students. There were 16 errors from total errors. This fused sentence occurred when the two independent clauses do not join by a conjunction or punctuation properly. This situation will lead a confusing for the reader to understand the meaning. The example of the sentence is "Even though they are busy they are still focus with their children." This sentence is not considered as a compound complex sentence, for it does not have a coordinating conjunction. In addition, error occurs because there is not any punctuation put in the sentence, so this is called as a fused sentence. To fix this fused sentence, we have to put a comma after the word 'busy' regarding as the rule of complex sentence. Furthermore, we must add one more independent sentence and a coordinating conjunction. This is a revised suggestion sentence:

"Even though they are busy, they are still focus with their children, so children can feel affection from their parents."

Another example is the sentence "Because mother and father busy help us we could not go to vacation and we need to reschedule." This sentence does not have punctuation at all that caused run-on. The solution for this sentence is by putting a comma after the word 'we' according to the complex sentence rule, and the word 'vacation' to form the correct compound complex sentence. The revised sentence is "Because mother and father were busy to help us, we could not go on vacation, so we need to reschedule."

According to Charpentier-Jiménez (2020), from about 63 sentences or 14.54 % of errors types (fragment, fused sentence, and comma splice), there is about 6,69% or around 29 sentences that categorized in fused sentence.

### b. Comma Splice.

This run-on sentence results from two independent clauses are joined with a comma. Based on the data, there were six errors of comma splice occurred.

The example sentence is "Parents who teach their kids everything, feels proud about it, they usually happy about it." This sentence joined two independent clauses without any

coordinating conjunction instead only a comma. To fix this comma splice error, we can put a coordinating conjunction before the word “they”. Moreover, we can omit a comma after the word “everything” to give the essential meaning to the parents. The suggested sentence revision is “Parents who teach their kids everything feels proud about it, and they are usually happy about it.”

Next, comma splice error occurred in the sentence “Each child has different talent, each parent must be able to understand his or her child’s intelligence, or else the child will feel rejected and have no purpose.” The two independent sentences are joined by only a comma. In addition, this sentence does not fit a compound complex sentence structure since it does not have a dependent clause. To revise this error, we can put a coordinating conjunction after the word ‘talent’ and it is preceded by a comma. Next revision is changing this sentence into a compound complex sentence, so we can put the coordinating conjunction before the subject ‘each child’, then we can substitute the word ‘or else’ by the word ‘unless’ to generate a dependent clause. After all, the sentence revision is “For each child has different talent, each parent must be able to understand his or her child’s

intelligence unless the child will feel rejected and has no purpose.”

These similar errors are in line with the result revealed by Telaumbanua et al. (2020) who said that Indonesian students just put a comma to join two independent clauses without the clear reason. In addition, they flunked in using conjunction to join the two independent clauses together.

Jabeen et al., (2015) argued that errors are not always a poor thing, but they are important things in the language learning process. Errors also give contribution to comprehend the foreign language better.

Predicting or analyzing the students’ error in language learning process can supply the meaningful information for teachers, researchers and students to know the problems those students may get (Mourssi, 2013).

Achieving for the best outcome in learning writing needs more efforts and it must be started from the early learning. This compound complex sentence is the most complicated sentence in academic writing. It is also proven from a research that was conducted by Charpentier-Jiménez (2020) who found that this compound complex sentence type is the least chosen by the students. Making some errors in learning process is very natural. From the



finding of this study, there are some sentences errors are committed by the second-year students at the university level which cover missing subject, missing verb, missing subject and verb, fused sentence, and comma splices. And the most common error that students made in constructing compound complex sentence is fused sentence with 35.6 % from total errors. This error occurred because students did not pay fully attention about the punctuation usage, especially a comma when they wrote a longer and complicated sentence. Other new findings were the error occurred in constructing a compound complex sentence that has dealt with the using of correct conjunction. By doing error analysis, both teacher and student can get more experience about what kind errors that common occur. Error analysis can help teacher to determine the appropriate strategies for the students in learning language (Phettongkam, 2013). It also can identify what lead the student from making the certain errors. In addition, Kotsyuk (2015) stated that teachers should have a mindful in figuring out what are the difficult things that students face in learning the foreign language, so the teacher can encourage students how to overcome it.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that error of compound complex sentence in students writing

mostly dominated in fused sentence with 35,6% due to the omission of a conjunction and punctuation. Then, the second dominant error is missing of verbs with 28,9% because of the omission of auxiliary verb in the nominal sentence. As synthesized with result of some previous studies that the errors are caused by the language system of students' mother tongue, the lecturer in writing class should give the students more examples from authentic material such as newspaper article. In addition, lecturer should give more exercises in the form of quiz and show various common mistakes in generating compound complex sentence.

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