



SENTENCE PROBLEMS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY FACED BY THE SECOND SEMESTER ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the types of sentence problems commonly found in argumentative essays written by second-semester students in an English Language Education study program. As writing is a fundamental skill in academic communication, identifying sentence-level issues is crucial for improving students' writing proficiency. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected from 30 students' final argumentative essay assignments. The analysis draws on the sentence problem framework proposed by Oshima & Hogue (2006), including sentence fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, choppy sentences, and stringy sentences. To analyze the data, interactive model from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing was utilized. The findings show that there are 47 data of sentence problems such as fragments (49%), comma splices (30%), stringy sentences (11%), run-on sentences (9%), and choppy sentences (2%). These recurring problems highlight the need for more focused instruction on sentence-level writing. The study concludes by recommending specific pedagogical interventions aimed at enhancing students' grammatical awareness and sentence structuring skills to support the development of clearer and more effective academic writing.

Keywords: Academic writing, Argumentative essay, Sentence problems, Writing proficiency

A. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing plays a crucial role in developing students' language proficiency, particularly in English Language Education programs, where clarity, coherence, and accuracy are essential for effective communication. One important aspect of academic writing is the ability to construct grammatically correct and meaningful sentences. Poor sentence construction can obscure meaning, disrupt logical flow, and reduce the overall quality of written texts. Oshima & Hogue (2006) argue that sentence problems often occur when learners fail to distinguish between independent and dependent clauses, resulting in incomplete or poorly connected ideas.

In the context of higher education in Indonesia, many EFL students continue to experience difficulties in producing well-formed sentences in academic writing. This challenge is particularly evident in essay writing, which requires students to organize ideas logically while maintaining grammatical accuracy. Some grammatical errors are often found in students' essay

writing, which are classified into omission, addition, mis-formation and mis-ordering (Rosida et al., 2024).

Other types of error were also identified by some previous studies under the concept of sentence problems. Sentence problems, such as sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices, are among the most frequently reported difficulties in students' written work (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). It is crucial for the lecturers or instructors to pay attention on this issue because sentence problems are related to the mastery of syntactic structure which may affect the readability of the produced text (Shen, 2017). Furthermore, grammatical inaccuracies related to sentence construction have been found to reduce students' ability to produce effective academic essays (Toba et al., 2019).

Among various forms of academic writing, argumentative essays present additional challenges for EFL learners. Argumentative writing requires students not only to demonstrate grammatical accuracy but also to construct logical claims, provide supporting evidence, and organize ideas persuasively. According to (Ananda et al., 2024), students must think critically, arrange ideas coherently, and support arguments with relevant evidence when composing argumentative essays. In addition to developing arguments, students must pay close attention to sentence construction because grammatical accuracy contributes significantly to the clarity and effectiveness of written arguments. Consequently, weaknesses in sentence construction may reduce the persuasiveness and overall quality of argumentative essays.

Several previous studies have investigated sentence problems in students' writing. (Solikhah, 2017) reported that syntactic problems were dominant in students' essay writing, particularly in sentence construction, tense usage, and agreement. Hendrawati (2018) found that university students frequently experienced difficulties in constructing simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. Similarly, Lioni et al. (2022) identified sentence fragments and run-on sentences as common problems in students' writing. Lestari et al. (2022) found sentence fragments to be the most dominant sentence-level error in descriptive writing, while Damayanti (2022) reported the frequent occurrence of choppy and stringy sentences in recount texts. Amirudin & Ningtyas (2023) also found that sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, and stringy sentences commonly appeared in students' essays. More recently, Merrita et al. (2025) reported that students often struggled to distinguish between dependent and independent clauses and frequently experienced subject–verb agreement problems.

Although previous studies have investigated sentence problems in various forms of EFL writing, including paragraph writing, descriptive texts, recount texts, and general academic essays, limited attention has been given to argumentative essays written by novice university-level EFL learners. Argumentative writing requires greater syntactic complexity because students must simultaneously develop arguments, present evidence, and maintain grammatical accuracy. Furthermore, little is known about how sentence problems manifest among second-semester English Language Education students who are still developing their academic writing competence. Therefore, investigating sentence problems in argumentative essays can provide a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by novice EFL writers during the early stages of academic writing development.

Preliminary observations conducted in an argumentative writing class in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta revealed that many second-



semester students experienced difficulties in constructing coherent and grammatically accurate sentences. Their essay drafts frequently contained sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences, which affected the clarity and effectiveness of their arguments. Although the students had previously completed grammar-related courses, many still struggled to apply grammatical knowledge effectively in extended writing tasks. These observations highlight the need for a more systematic investigation of sentence-level problems in students' argumentative writing.

Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the types of sentence problems found in argumentative essays written by second-semester students in an English Language Education program. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on EFL writing and provide pedagogical insights for improving academic writing instruction, particularly in the area of sentence construction and grammatical accuracy.

B. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate sentence problems found in students' argumentative essays. A descriptive qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena occurring in students' written texts. The focus of the study was to identify the types of sentence problems and examine their occurrence in students' argumentative writing. Meanwhile, the data source in this study is argumentative essays written by second-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta as part of their final examination. Since the study focused on written documents as the primary source of data, students' essays were examined systematically to identify sentence problems based on the framework proposed by Oshima & Hogue (2006), namely sentence fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, stringy sentences, and choppy sentences.

Respondents

The study involved 30 second-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on two criteria: (1) they were enrolled in the second semester of the program, and (2) they were taking the Argumentative Writing course at the time of the study. The data were obtained from one class selected from three parallel classes within the same cohort. This class was deliberately chosen based on the researcher's teaching experience and preliminary observations during the assessment of students' argumentative essay assignments. Compared with the other classes, students in this class demonstrated a higher frequency of sentence-level problems, making it a suitable source of data for the purposes of this study. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. To ensure participants' confidentiality and privacy, all student identities were anonymized and replaced with codes in the presentation and analysis of the data.



Instruments

The key instrument of this research is the researchers themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researchers collected, identified, and interpreted the data through direct engagement with the students' texts. In addition to the main instrument, the supporting instrument was used to collect the data, namely the instruction given to the students in the final exam of Argumentative Writing course. The instruction guides the students to write a five-paragraph argumentative essay individually in the class with the topic they already prepared at home. In addition, they should follow the structure of the essay which include introduction, body of the essay (explanation of ideas, counterargument and refutation), and conclusion. Prior to the examination, the students had received instruction and practice of writing an argumentative essay, including activities related to topic selection, thesis statement, drafting and revision through classroom assignments and feedback.

Procedures

The research began by collecting the documents of the students' essay written in an on-the-spot final exam of Argumentative Writing course. After collecting the data, the researcher conducted data analysis. The data analysis procedure followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher carefully read the students' essays, identified sentences containing sentence problems, and coded them according to the predetermined categories adapted from Oshima & Hogue (2006). The identified data were then organized and displayed in tables to facilitate classification and interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified by examining recurring patterns and frequencies of sentence problems across the students' argumentative essays. This process enabled the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the sentence problems encountered by students in their argumentative essay writing.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The essays were analyzed to identify five types of sentence problems based on the framework by Oshima & Hogue (2006): sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, stringy sentences, and choppy sentences. Each error instance was identified, categorized, and examined for frequency and recurring patterns. The analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three key components: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. This model enabled the researcher to systematically organize and interpret the data, leading to meaningful findings.

Findings

In this study, several recurring sentence problems were identified in the argumentative essays of second-semester students in the English Education program. The analysis of 30 student essays revealed that there are 47 data of sentence problems. The two dominant error types are

sentence fragments (SF) and comma splices (COS). Other types of sentence problems in a smaller percentage are Stringy Sentences (SS), Run on Sentences (ROS), and Choppy Sentences (CHS). The result of categorization and the percentage of each error can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Percentage of Sentence Problems

No	Kinds of Sentence Level Problems	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Sentence Fragment	23	49%
2	Comma Splice	14	30%
3	Stringy Sentence	5	11%
4	Run on Sentence	4	9%
5	Choppy Sentence	1	2%
The total number of data		47	100%

Sentence Fragment

A sentence fragment is an incomplete part of a sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or both. Readers may become confused by sentence fragments since they do not convey a whole idea. For every phrase to be grammatically correct, a subject and a verb must be present. The sentence's meaning could be unclear or confusing without these crucial components. The following are samples that the researcher collected and analyzed to represent the sentence fragment problem.

Table 2. Sentence Fragment

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
1	“...By [attending] music concerts. People can learn about the history and culture of different society.	(SF/E/2D)
2	Online learning has become a crucial part of education during thee Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges associated with the use of technology in education.	(SF/NA/2D)
3	Herbal ingredients come from nature, not from synthetics or chemical materials. For example mint leaves can treat digestive problems, or ginger to relieve inflammation.	(SF/HS/2D)
4	We have to [pay] attention [to] our future. Furthermore to our [ancestors].	(SF/NFNM/2D)
5	We have to think to face the globalization in this world. Many negative [impacts] from the globalization.	(SF/NFNM)
6	By games, proofing that all teenagers are following the modern era.	(SF/AHAK/2D)
7	Cannot be denied that the Mobile Legend (ML) game has a negative impact on elementary school students’ learning motivation.	(SF/P5/AHAK/2D)
8	Thirdly, significant issues of potential negative impacts on teenagers mental health.	(SF/P4/M/2D)
9	One of the increasingly popular education alternative is homeschooling. which offers a different approach in providing education to children.	(SF/P1/SNH/2D)
10	Although homeschooling protects children from some harmful social elements, such as violence in school. There are also concern about	(SF/SNH/2D)

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
	the lack of social interaction with peers that can affect children's social development.	
11	Therefore, parents must be able to instill good and correct character [education] from early age. Because the strong foundation of character that is instilled from childhood will be carried over to adulthood.	(SF/P2/SKA/2D)
12	Of course [it is] important [for] us to enjoy the movie, beside the benefit we can get.	(SF/P6/Mo/2D)
13	Technology in education encourages students to play active role in their education. For example through APPs Duolingo and Google Classroom.	(SF/P3/CI/2D)
14	While some worry about the cons like cyber attacks and censor bugs. All that problems can be fix[ed] with [continuous] advancement.	(SF/P7/GFB/2D)
15	Although it can lead to job losses in the driving sectors, it also opens opportunity in the new field. For example software engineers and producing the vehicles.	(SF/ P6/GFB/2D)
16	Despite the challenges associated with the technology in education. It is important.	(SF/P3/NA/2D)
17	When the Covid-19 hit and the learning was replaced by online learning. The new system make student inevitab[l]y must have digital communication in order to join the learning process.	(SF/P2/ASSR/2D)
18	In the realm of literature, although not directly related, can help students appreciate literary text in English better.	(SF/P2/FAL/2D)
19	These diseases can spread to family members and the community through shared needles. Deterio[rat]ing health conditions reduce the quality of life and increase the burden on healthcare facilities.	(SF/P2/MBP/2D)
20	The paradigm shift in professional development, emphasizing the importance of practical engagement and the development of soft skills in academic and professional contexts.	(SF/P1/SF/2D)
21	Indicate a shift from traditional approaches to professional development towards more practical and community-based engagement.	(SF/P1/SF/2D)
22	Relates personal experience to broader theoretical concepts and practices within the TESOL field.	(SF/P2/SF/2D)
23	Many negative impac[t]s from the globalization.	(SF/NFNM/2D)

In the essay, there are some sentence fragments that have been identified. Students frequently utilize periods incorrectly when their ideas are still incomplete, which results in these fragments. Because of this, their sentences lack of the elements required to create a logical and grammatically correct statement. An example from the student's writing below can illustrate a sentence fragment.

“Although homeschooling protects children from some harmful social elements, such as violence in school. There are also [concerns] about the lack of social interaction with peers that can affect children's social development.”
(datum 10)

A long clause above actually can be divided into two clauses. The first clause, "Although homeschooling protects children from some harmful social elements, such as violence in school," is a dependent clause. It cannot stand alone because it begins with the subordinating conjunction "Although." It leaves the reader expecting the main idea to follow. The second clause, "There are also concerns about the lack of social interaction with peers that can affect children's social development," is an independent clause, meaning it could stand alone as a complete sentence. However, it is incorrectly separated from the first clause by a period, creating a sentence fragment rather than a complete thought. Another example of sentence fragment occurs on the data with the sentence below.

"In the realm of literature, although not directly related, can help students appreciate literary text in English better due to a stronger and richer understanding of vocabulary." (datum 18)

The sentence is categorized as a sentence fragment because it lacks a clear subject for the verb phrase "can help." The phrase "although not directly related" is a subordinate clause that introduces additional information, but without a subject like "it" before the verb, the sentence remains incomplete. This kind of fragment can confuse readers because it leaves the main idea unfinished and grammatically flawed. To correct this, a simple addition of a subject can complete the sentence. A possible revision would be:

"In the realm of literature, although not directly related, it can help students appreciate literary texts in English better due to a stronger and richer understanding of vocabulary."

By inserting "it" as the subject, the sentence becomes grammatically complete and conveys a clear idea. This revision helps maintain fluency and clarity in academic writing, which is essential in argumentative essays.

Comma Splices

A comma splice is a grammatical error that occurs when two or more independent clauses (complete sentences) are joined only by a comma, without using an appropriate coordinating conjunction (such as and, but, so) or correct punctuation (such as a period or semicolon). This error often leads to run-on sentences, making the writing confusing or difficult to follow.

Table 3. Comma Splices

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
1	The campus is place to study, smoking is not a good thing to do there.	(COS/AFH/2D)
2	First, online learning allows student[s] to [continue] their education without being in physical classroom, it provides wider [education access].	(COS/NA/2D)
3	First, reading book can enrich knowledge and information, book provide in depth information on various topics when we read [deeply].	(COS/KSW/2D)
4	Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility,	(COS/SNF/2D)

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
	by engaging PE in classes students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life.	
5	Secondly, PE [speed ups] social and emotional development through team sports and cooperation activities, student learn important life skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership.	(COS/ SNF/2D)
6	A study found that kids who use media for three hours a day have a weaker cortisol response in the morning (cortisol is a hormone linked to stress) which is not good for their development, this weak response can lead to other health problem.	(COS/FNR/2D)
7	Variation of the games also [shows] someone's characters, different game shows different teenagers attractiveness.	(COS/AHAK/2D)
8	Variation of games also [shows] someone's characters, different game shows different teenagers' attractiveness.	(COS/P1/AHAK/2D)
9	The family is the smallest unit of environment, each member of family has a reciprocal obligation and main function toward children .	(COS/P1/KA/2D)
10	The campus is place to study, smoking is not a good thing to do there .	(COS/P2/AFH/2D)
11	When conducting online learning, there are limitations in internet accessibility, hardware and software as well as financing are often obstacles in maximizing online learning.	(COS/P3/ASSR/2D)
12	Teenagers' marriage has been subjected of debated in recent years, some argue that marriage at young age is acceptable, and some argue that it is harmful and prohibited because [it has] significant negative impact to couples and society.	(COS/P1/MS/2D)
13	It has a long-term consequence to couple's future, young marriage can limit educational and career opportunities as well as hinder growth mindset...	(COS/P3/MS/2D)
14	So, I reiterate that sex education in schools is very important because sex education in schools helps reduce teenage pregnancy rates, sex education in schools can help reduce stigma and discrimination related to sexuality, some people may oppose sex education in schools on the ground that it goes against religious and moral values.	(COS/P8/AF/2D)

The sentence below is an example of a comma splice:

“Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility, by engaging PE in classes students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic [diseases] later in life.” (datum 4)

This sentence illustrates a comma splice, which occurs when two independent clauses are joined by a comma without the appropriate coordinating conjunction or correct punctuation. In this case, the first independent clause is:



Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility.

The second independent clause is:

By engaging in PE in classes, students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life.

Since both clauses can stand alone as complete sentences, they should not be joined by a comma alone. To correct this error, the writer can revise the sentence in several ways. First, the writer can use a period to separate the clauses. The revision of the sentences will be:

Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility. By engaging in PE in classes, students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life.

This revised version corrects the comma splice by clearly separating the two independent clauses into distinct sentences. The use of a period provides a full stop, allowing each idea to stand alone and be fully processed by the reader. This not only enhances grammatical accuracy but also improves clarity and readability, ensuring that the relationship between the two ideas is maintained without causing confusion. Another way to correct this sentence problem is by using a semicolon. The revised sentences will be:

Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility; by engaging in PE in classes, students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life.

This revised version appropriately uses a semicolon to join two closely related independent clauses. The semicolon signals a strong connection between the ideas without using a conjunction. It effectively maintains the flow of thought while correcting the original comma splice. This option is particularly useful in academic writing when the writer wants to show a clear relationship between two complete sentences without breaking them into separate thoughts. Furthermore, the writer can also use a coordinating conjunction to avoid the comma splice problem.

Regular physical activity helps prevent obesity, improves cardiovascular health, and enhances muscle strength and flexibility, and by engaging in PE in classes, students develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime, reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life.

This revision resolves the comma splice by adding the coordinating conjunction “and” after the comma, which correctly links the two independent clauses. The conjunction clarifies the grammatical relationship between the ideas and allows the sentence to flow smoothly.

Stringy Sentences

A stringy sentence is a grammatical issue that occurs when too many independent clauses or ideas are joined together in a single sentence, usually by using coordinating conjunctions such as and, but, or so. This results in a sentence that feels overly long, disorganized, and difficult to follow. Stringy sentences often lack clarity and conciseness, making the writing sound monotonous or tiresome to the reader. Effective writing requires breaking these long strings into shorter, more focused sentences.

Table 4. Stringy Sentences

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
1	By student's capability, they also follows any competition and some extracurricul[a]r to improve their hobby or their capability out of the class, it is still add by their society, their job at home as the son helps his parents, do homework, etc.	(SS/P2/AHAK/2D)
2	First, today's elementary school age children are more technologically literate, not left behind with other nations, second, mobile legend helps the development of motoric movement in children of this age, and the another impact is adding new vocabulary in a foreign language.	(SS/P3/AHAK/2D)
3	The people outside the country is mining for years in Indonesia and they produce in their own country and sell again in Indonesia with the high price.	(SS/P2/Mo/2D)
4	Smoking according to them can be calming themselves and smoking is a hobby for them. They cannot live without smoking.	(SS/P2/AFH/2D)
5	An elementary school era is the [busiest] time to study. Student[s] have to study and master[s] all [subjects] [the best] they can do. [.....] They also [follow] [some] competition[s] and extracurricular [activities] to [develop] their hobby or their capability out of the class, it is still add[ed] by their society, their job at home as the son helps his parents, do homework, etc.	(SS/P2/AHAK/2D)

One example of a stringy sentence produced by the students is as follows.

“By student's capability, they also follows any competition and some extracurricular to improve their hobby or their capability out of the class, it is still add by their society, their job at home as the son helps his parents, do homework, etc.” (datum 1)

In the sample above, the writer attempts to convey multiple ideas in a single sentence by loosely connecting clauses using commas and conjunctions without appropriate punctuation or syntactic clarity. The sentence lacks clear boundaries between independent clauses, resulting in a long, monotonous construction that overwhelms the reader and diminishes coherence. Instead of developing each idea separately, the writer strings together topics such as students' participation in competitions, extracurricular activities, home responsibilities, and social expectations in a disorganized manner. This not only burdens the reader's comprehension but also compromises grammatical accuracy and logical flow.

To address the issue of stringy sentences, it is advisable to divide the original sentence into several shorter and more focused statements, each expressing a distinct and coherent idea. A possible revision is as follows.

Students participate in competitions and engage in extracurricular activities to enhance their hobbies and skills beyond the classroom. Moreover, they are shaped by societal expectations and domestic responsibilities, such as assisting their parents and completing homework.

This revision is expected to enhance clarity, reinforce logical progression, and ensure that each component of the sentence contributes purposefully to the overall meaning.

Run On Sentences

A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined together improperly without appropriate punctuation or conjunction. This often leads to confusion and a lack of clarity in academic writing, which requires precision and coherence.

Table 5. Run On Sentence

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
1	Cigarettes are banned because it is danger for many people, not only for smokers but also non-smokers who inhale cigarette smoke will be affected by the danger.	(ROS/AFH/2D)
2	Regular exercise improves focus, memory and problem-solving skills leading to better academic outcomes by incorporating PE into the schools day, students can experience improved concentration and academic achievement.	(ROS/ SNF/2D)
3	Young marriage can limit educational and career opportunities as well as hinder growth mindset it can lead to financial instability and social mobility.	(ROS/P3/MS/2D)
4	However, there are concerns about the lack of social interaction that is essential for a [child] development the decision to [implements] homeschooling should be carefully considered taking into account the child's overall educational and social needs.	(ROS/P6/SNH/2D)

One clear example of a run-on sentence appears in the following student's writing:

However, there are concerns about the lack of social interaction that is essential for a [childs] development the decision to [implements] homeschooling should be carefully considered taking into account the child's overall educational and social needs. (datum 4)

This sentence contains two independent clauses. The first independent clause is "However, there are concerns about the lack of social interaction that is essential for a child's development" and the second independent clause is "The decision to implement homeschooling should be carefully considered, taking into account the child's overall educational and social needs." These two clauses are placed side by side without appropriate punctuation or a coordinating conjunction, resulting in a run-on sentence. This lack of clarity can hinder comprehension and

weaken the persuasiveness of the argument. To revise this sentence, the writer can separate it into two sentences, or add a transition word as seen in the following sentences:

- (1) However, there are concerns about the lack of social interaction that is essential for a child's development. The decision to implement homeschooling should be carefully considered, taking into account the child's overall educational and social needs." (by separating into two sentences)
- (2) However, there are concerns about the lack of social interaction that is essential for a child's development. Therefore, the decision to implement homeschooling should be carefully considered, taking into account the child's overall educational and social needs. (by adding a transition words)

By applying proper punctuation and connectors, the sentence becomes clearer and more aligned with the expectations of academic writing.

Choppy Sentences

Choppy sentences are short, disconnected, and often repetitive, leading to a lack of fluidity and coherence in writing. This writing issue can make the text difficult to read and understand, as the ideas do not flow smoothly from one to another. One example of choppy sentence found from the data is as follows.

Tabel 5. Choppy Sentence

NO	SENTENCE	CODING
1	However, on the other hand, mobile legend will not only brings positive effects. The negative impact is greater. Students not being able to study at home, being dependent on ML game, being in different to lessons, not able to study at home, not focus, decrease in subject grades, damage to the eyes, reduce social feelings, and more emotional.	(CHS/P4/AHAK/2D)

The sentence above is considered as a choppy sentence because there are some short and disconnected ideas. It is in the sentence that lists some negative effects: "students not being able to study at home, being dependent on ML game, being indifferent to lessons, not able to study at home, not focus, decrease in subject grades, damage to the eyes, reduce social feelings, and more emotional." This clause is written as a series of short, unconnected phrases. This makes the text feel abrupt and fragmented. In addition, there is a repetition on the use of the word "being" in the phrase "students not being able to study at home, being dependent on ML game, etc". This phrase is repeated unnecessarily, contributing to redundancy and disrupting the flow.

Furthermore, the writer overuses listing technique without structure. Listing too many ideas in one sentence without proper grouping or phrasing can overwhelm the reader. The revision might be done by connecting ideas, eliminating repetition, structuring the information more cohesively (also involving cohesive devices like the word "and" and "additionally"). So, the result will be as follows.

However, on the other hand, Mobile Legends does not only bring positive effects; its negative impacts can be significant. These include students struggling to focus on studying at home, becoming overly dependent on the

game, showing indifference to lessons, experiencing a decline in academic performance, and suffering from health issues such as eye strain. Additionally, playing the game excessively may reduce social interactions and increase emotional instability.

Discussion

This study set out to investigate the sentence problems commonly found in the argumentative essays of second-semester students in an English Education program. The findings revealed a consistent pattern of sentence-level issues, particularly sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, choppy sentences, and stringy sentences. These problems are not isolated but rather reflect a broader challenge that students face in mastering English academic writing conventions.

The frequent occurrence of sentence fragments, for instance, supports the observations of Alfaruqy et al. (2022) who found that sentence fragment is one of the most frequent kinds of sentence problem occur in the students' essays. Such fragments disrupted the clarity and fluency of students' ideas, making it difficult for readers to follow the logical progression of their essays. This indicates a pressing need to reinforce the teaching of sentence boundaries and clause structures, particularly in the early stages of writing instruction.

Similarly, the presence of run-on sentences and comma splices shows that students are not yet adept at using punctuation to organize ideas effectively. These errors suggest limited awareness of how punctuation supports meaning and coherence in academic writing. Meanwhile, Nugraha & Fiftinova (2026) stated that punctuation plays a significant role in the organization and readability of writing. Similarly, Izzati et al. (2025) stated that the proper use of punctuation creates a logical flow, enhances coherence, and clarifies the main ideas in a text. Without this understanding, students risk producing dense and confusing sentences that obscures meaning and weakens argumentation.

Meanwhile, choppy and stringy sentences represent two ends of the same continuum: over-simplification and over-extension. Choppy sentences reveal a lack of syntactic variety, leading to monotonous and fragmented writing, while stringy sentences mirror spoken discourse patterns, where students string together multiple ideas without adequate structuring. These findings align with Bram (1995) argument that many EFL students write in a manner influenced by their spoken or first-language discourse patterns, resulting in writing that conveys ideas but does not meet the formal expectations of academic English.

The analysis also uncovered more complex cases where multiple sentence problems occurred within a single sentence. These included redundancy, misused modifiers, awkward diction, and confusion over word classes, all of which further reduced overall coherence. Such errors indicate deeper linguistic challenges, namely the lack of integration between grammatical knowledge, vocabulary control, and syntactic awareness. This finding supports a finding by Ramzan et al. (2023) that some issues still hinder students from effective academic writing such as problems related to coherence, diction, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage and punctuation. In addition, essay is one kind of written academic text which most of the time requires students develop complex sentences to express argument. As a result, learners are more likely to encounter various linguistic difficulties. These difficulties may stem from limited mastery of academic grammar and vocabulary, which can hinder their ability to produce coherent, precise, and contextually appropriate academic texts (Aldayel et al., 2026). In addition, Sari (2019) mentioned some possible factors of grammatical difficulties. They are

first-language interference, carelessness, and translation from the learners' native language into English. Therefore, it can be inferred that some non-linguistic factors may also affect students' grammatical difficulties in writing.

The findings of this study have important implications for academic writing instruction in higher education. Mastery of sentence structure is not merely a matter of grammatical accuracy; it is also a fundamental component of effective academic writing and persuasive argumentation. The results indicate that many EFL students continue to experience sentence-level problems, including sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, stringy sentences, and choppy sentences. These difficulties may be attributed to limited grammatical competence, the cognitive demands of expressing complex ideas in English, and insufficient opportunities to receive focused practice and feedback on sentence construction in paragraph and essay writing.

As discussed earlier, traces of first-language (L1) interference were evident in several student essays and may have contributed to the occurrence of sentence-level problems. The findings indicate that some students relied on literal translation from Bahasa Indonesia or produced sentence patterns that resembled spoken discourse rather than conventional academic writing. This finding is consistent with previous studies in EFL writing, which have identified L1 transfer as a persistent source of grammatical and rhetorical difficulties. In addition, many students appeared to struggle with paraphrasing ideas and selecting appropriate vocabulary, resulting in awkward, unclear, or structurally inappropriate sentences. Hyland (2003) further argues that interlanguage interference, in which learners move between informal and formal language conventions, can contribute to linguistic inconsistencies and reduce the overall effectiveness of academic writing.

Taken together, these findings carry several pedagogical implications. Beside focusing on building ideas, writing courses for early-semester students should place greater emphasis on sentence accuracy, with targeted instruction focusing on fragments, run-ons, and other common sentence problems. Consistent guidance and stimulation by the instructors are needed for an effective improvement Anaktototy et al. (2023). Students need guided practice in punctuation use and sentence variety to improve fluency and cohesion. Incorporating contrastive analysis into writing instruction may also help learners understand how English structures differ from their first language, thus reducing the negative transfer of L1 patterns. Furthermore, explicit and timely feedback from instructors is crucial. Feedback should not only correct errors but also explain why certain structures are problematic. Practical strategies such as peer review, sentence-combining tasks, and editing checklists can encourage learners to become more aware of sentence construction and to revise actively for clarity and coherence. However, those pedagogical approaches cannot be done separately without considering other factors of effective writing, contextual aspects of writing, such as psychological and environmental factors (Chuquin & Lizaldes-E, 2025). Continuous encouragement, constructive feedback and supportive learning atmosphere need to be established during the pedagogical intervention to solve the students' sentence problems in writing.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on EFL writing by focusing specifically on second-semester students who are in the early stages of developing academic writing competence. The findings underscore the importance of writing instruction that is developmentally appropriate and responsive to learners' specific challenges as they transition from informal writing practices to more formal academic discourse. In essence, the sentence problems identified in this study reflect broader linguistic and cognitive challenges related to grammatical competence, discourse awareness, and first-language influence. Addressing these difficulties requires a more scaffolded and integrated approach to writing instruction, one that



not only strengthens students' grammatical knowledge but also develops their rhetorical awareness and ability to construct clear, logical, and persuasive academic texts. Providing explicit instruction and guided practice in sentence construction during the early stages of university education may better prepare students for more advanced academic writing tasks, such as writing research reports, literature reviews, undergraduate theses, and journal articles. Future research could build on these findings by examining the effectiveness of targeted instructional interventions in improving students' sentence accuracy over time. Longitudinal studies may also explore how sentence-level writing competence develops across different stages of academic study, from novice to advanced EFL writers. In addition, comparative studies involving students from different academic levels, institutions, or disciplinary backgrounds could provide a broader understanding of how sentence problems vary across contexts. Furthermore, qualitative investigations into students' writing processes, grammatical awareness, and perceptions of sentence construction may offer deeper insights into the cognitive and linguistic factors underlying sentence-level difficulties in academic writing.

D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the sentence problems identified in this study, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, stringy sentences, run on sentences, and choppy sentences, are common issues that hinder the effectiveness of argumentative essays written by second-semester English Language Education students. These problems not only affect the clarity and coherence of the students' writing but also highlight the need for more focused instruction on sentence structure and punctuation. By addressing these issues through explicit feedback and targeted teaching strategies, both students and lecturers can work together to improve the quality of academic writing and enhance students' ability to communicate their ideas effectively.

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