

## Run-On Sentence Errors in Indonesian EFL Learners' Writing

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### ABSTRACT

Menulis merupakan keterampilan yang kompleks bagi pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), terutama dalam hal ketepatan tata bahasa. Salah satu masalah tata bahasa yang umum ditemukan dalam tulisan siswa adalah adanya kesalahan kalimat yang berlanjut (run-on sentence errors), yang mengurangi kejelasan dan koherensi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis kesalahan kalimat yang berlanjut yang dihasilkan oleh pembelajar EFL Indonesia dan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana kesalahankesalahan tersebut dapat direkonstruksi menjadi kalimat Bahasa Inggris yang baik dan benar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif yang melibatkan siswa kelas VIII SMP yang dipilih melalui sampling purposif. Data dikumpulkan dari paragraf deskriptif yang ditulis tangan oleh siswa dan dianalisis dengan mengidentifikasi kesalahan kalimat yang terlalu panjang, mengklasifikasikannya ke dalam jenis-jenis, serta merekonstruksi kalimat yang salah menggunakan tanda baca yang tepat dan konjungsi koordinatif. Temuan menunjukkan dua jenis utama kesalahan kalimat yang terlalu panjang: kalimat yang menyatu dan kalimat yang dihubungkan dengan koma, dengan kalimat yang menyatu terjadi lebih sering. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam mengenali batas kalimat dan menerapkan tanda baca yang benar dalam bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa instruksi eksplisit yang berfokus pada struktur kalimat dan hubungan klausa sangat penting untuk mengurangi kesalahan kalimat yang terlalu panjang dalam penulisan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).

*Writing is a complex skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in terms of grammatical accuracy. One common grammatical problem found in students' writing is the occurrence of run-on sentence errors, which reduce clarity and coherence. This study aimed to analyze the types of run-on sentence errors produced by Indonesian EFL learners and to examine how these errors can be reconstructed into well-formed English sentences. The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design involving eighthgrade junior high school students selected through purposive sampling. The data were collected from students' handwritten descriptive paragraphs and analyzed by identifying run-on sentence errors, classifying them into types, and reconstructing the incorrect sentences using appropriate punctuation and coordinating conjunctions. The findings revealed two main types of run-on sentence errors: fused sentences and comma splices, with fused sentences occurring more frequently. The results indicate that learners experience difficulties in recognizing sentence boundaries and applying correct punctuation in English. The study suggests that explicit instruction focusing on sentence structure and clause relationships is essential to reduce run-on sentence errors in EFL writing.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it allows students to express ideas clearly and accurately. However, many Indonesian EFL learners still experience difficulties in producing grammatically correct sentences. One of the most common problems found in students' writing is the occurrence of run-on sentences, which negatively affect the clarity and coherence of their texts.

Run-on sentence errors occur when two or more independent clauses are joined without appropriate punctuation or conjunctions. This type of error is frequently found in the writing of nonnative English learners who have limited understanding of English sentence boundaries and syntactic rules. Indonesian students, in particular, tend to combine ideas in one long sentence without proper connectors, resulting in fused sentences or missing conjunctions that confuse readers.

Previous studies have reported that grammatical problems remain a major challenge in Indonesian EFL learners' writing. Tambunan et al. (2022) found that sentence structure errors, including run-on sentences, significantly reduce the quality of students' written work. These errors indicate learners' lack of awareness of punctuation rules and clause relationships in English.

With the development of technology, automated writing evaluation tools such as Grammarly and AI-based models like ChatGPT have been used to identify grammatical errors in EFL writing. These tools are helpful in detecting surface-level errors, including run-on sentences. However, as noted by Algaady and Mahyoob (2023), automated tools cannot replace the role of teachers in providing deeper explanations and contextual feedback. Therefore, understanding the types and frequency of run-on sentence errors remains essential for designing effective instructional strategies.

Based on these issues, this study focuses on analyzing run-on sentence errors in Indonesian EFL learners' writing. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to better teaching practices and improved writing instruction for Indonesian EFL learners. The research is guided by the following research questions:

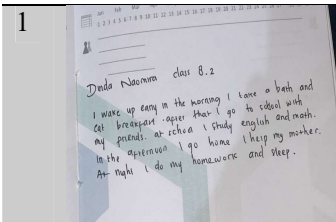
1. What types of run-on sentence errors are found in Indonesian EFL learners' writing?
2. How can the run-on sentences produced by Indonesian EFL learners be reconstructed into wellformed English sentences?

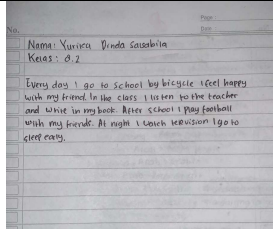
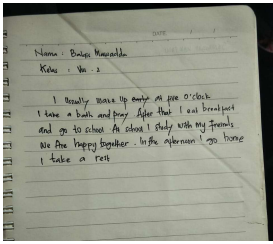
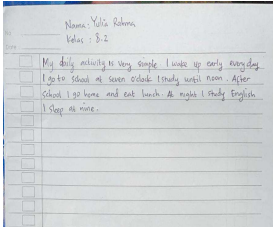
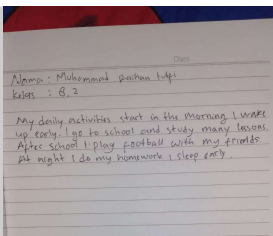
## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze run-on sentence errors in the writing of Indonesian EFL learners. The participants were eighth-grade junior high school students selected through purposive sampling based on their difficulties in writing English sentences. The students were asked to write a short descriptive paragraph about their daily activities in their notebooks without using dictionaries or digital devices. The handwritten texts were photographed and transcribed verbatim to ensure data authenticity. The data consisted of sentences containing run-on sentence errors, which were identified based on the presence of at least two independent clauses improperly connected, representing either fused sentences or comma splices. The data were analyzed by identifying the errors, classifying them into types, and reconstructing the incorrect sentences into well-formed English sentences using appropriate punctuation and coordinating conjunctions.

## RESULTKS AND DISCUSSION

Tabel 1. Types of Run-on Sentences Errors and Their Corrections

No	Pictures	Incorrect Sentence (Student Writing)	Type of Error	Correct Sentence
1		I wake up early in the morning I take a bath and eat breakfast.	Fused sentence	I wake up early in the morning, and I take a bath and eat breakfast

2		a. Every day I go to school by bicycle I feel happy with my friends.	Comma splice	Every day I go to school by bicycle. I feel happy with my friends
		b. At night I watch television I go to sleep early.	Fused sentence	At night, I watch television and go to sleep early.
3		a. I usually wake up at five o'clock I take a bath and pray.	Fused sentence	I usually wake up at five o'clock, then I take a bath and pray.
		b. At school I study with my <i>freinds</i> we are happy together.	Comma splice	At school I study with my friends, and we are happy together.
		freinds	typo	friends
		c. In the afternoon I go home I take a rest.	Fused sentence	In the afternoon, I go home and take a rest.
4		a. My daily activity is very simple, I wake up early every day.	Comma splice	My daily activity is very simple, and I wake up early every day.
		b. I go to school at seven o'clock I study until noon.	Fused sentence	I go to school at seven o'clock, and I study until noon.
		c. At night I study English I sleep at nine.	Fused sentence	At night, I study English, and I sleep at nine.
5		a. My daily activities start in the morning, I wake up early.	Comma splice	My daily activities start in the morning, so I wake up early.
		b. At night I do my homework I sleep early.	Fused sentence	At night, I do my homework, and I sleep early.

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that Indonesian eighth-grade EFL learners produced two main types of run-on sentence errors, namely fused sentences and comma splices. A fused sentence occurs when two independent clauses are combined without any punctuation or coordinating conjunction, while a comma splice refers to the incorrect connection of independent clauses using only a comma. The occurrence of these two error types reflects learners' difficulties in recognizing sentence boundaries in English writing.

The analysis shows that fused sentences occurred more frequently than comma splices. This suggests that learners often combined multiple actions into a single sentence without applying appropriate grammatical markers. In sentences such as "I wake up early in the morning I take a bath and eat breakfast" and "In the afternoon I go home I take a rest", the clauses are placed side by side, indicating that students focused on expressing meaning rather than observing grammatical accuracy. This tendency is consistent with previous findings that EFL learners tend to prioritize content over form, particularly at early stages of writing development.

Comma splice errors were also identified in the data, although with lower frequency. Examples such as "My daily activity is very simple, I wake up early every day" demonstrate that learners attempted to separate clauses by using a comma. This indicates partial awareness of sentence separation; however, the absence of a coordinating conjunction or appropriate punctuation shows that learners have not yet fully mastered the rules governing clause connection in English.

These findings suggest that run-on sentence errors mainly result from limited grammatical awareness, particularly in identifying independent clauses and applying correct punctuation and

conjunctions. This problem may also be influenced by first-language transfer, as Indonesian writing conventions allow longer sentences with fewer explicit sentence boundaries than those required in English.

The reconstruction of the erroneous sentences shows that the identified run-on sentences can be corrected through relatively simple grammatical adjustments, such as inserting coordinating conjunctions (and, so), adding appropriate punctuation, or separating clauses into independent sentences.

This indicates that learners' difficulties lie in sentence-level accuracy rather than in idea development. Explicit instruction focusing on sentence boundaries and clause relationships is therefore essential in EFL writing instruction. AI-based writing tools such as Grammarly or ChatGPT may support learners in identifying run-on sentence errors; however, teacher feedback remains crucial in helping learners understand the underlying grammatical principles and apply them effectively in future writing tasks.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Indonesian eighth-grade EFL learners commonly produce run-on sentence errors, primarily in the forms of fused sentences and comma splices. Among these two types, fused sentences occur more frequently, indicating that learners experience significant difficulty in recognizing sentence boundaries and distinguishing independent clauses in English writing. This tendency suggests that students prioritize conveying meaning over applying correct grammatical structures, particularly at the sentence level.

The presence of comma splice errors, although less frequent, demonstrates learners' partial awareness of sentence separation. However, the incorrect use of commas without appropriate conjunctions or punctuation indicates an incomplete understanding of clause connection rules in English. These errors reflect limited grammatical awareness and may also be influenced by first-language transfer, as Indonesian writing conventions permit longer and less explicitly segmented sentence structures.

The findings further reveal that most run-on sentence errors can be resolved through simple grammatical revisions, such as adding coordinating conjunctions, using proper punctuation, or separating clauses into independent sentences. This indicates that learners' challenges lie more in sentence-level accuracy than in idea generation or content development.

Therefore, explicit instruction on sentence boundaries, clause relationships, and punctuation use is essential in EFL writing pedagogy. While AI-based writing tools can assist learners in identifying run-on sentence errors, teacher-guided feedback remains crucial to ensure learners understand the underlying grammatical principles and are able to apply them independently in future writing tasks.

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