

Article

Analyzing Sentence Fragmentation in Undergraduate Final Project Abstracts

Anke Ulsalis Prima¹¹Universitas PGRI Semarang, Semarang, Indonesiaulsalis.ankeprima90@gmail.com¹

CITATION

Authors. (2026). Title. Journal of Linguistics and Technology, 2(1), 11-23

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 8 November 2025

Accepted: 27 Januari 2026

Available online: 31 May 2026

COPYRIGHT



Copyright © 2026 by author(s).

Journal of Linguistics and Technology is published by PT. Greatword Linked Centre.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract. This study examines sentence fragments in English-language abstracts of undergraduate final projects written by students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Semarang. The study reworks an earlier final-project analysis into a journal-style report while retaining its original documentary dataset. Twenty abstracts from the 2018/2019 academic year were examined through qualitative document analysis. Fragments were identified, classified, quantified, and interpreted according to their structural characteristics. Ten fragment instances were identified in six of the twenty abstracts. Four categories occurred: missing-subject fragments, missing-verb fragments, incomplete-verb fragments, and dependent-word fragments.

Missing-subject fragments were the most frequent, accounting for 40% of the identified fragments, followed by missing-verb fragments (30%), incomplete-verb fragments (20%), and dependent-word fragments (10%). The findings indicate that although fragments were relatively infrequent across the complete corpus, they were concentrated in a small group of abstracts and primarily involved omitted or incomplete core sentence elements. The analysis also suggests that careful revision, especially checking subjects, finite verbs, verb complements, and dependent clauses, is important in producing clear academic abstracts. The study contributes a focused description of sentence-fragment patterns in undergraduate thesis abstracts and provides practical targets for academic-writing instruction.

Keywords: academic writing; English as a foreign language; error analysis; sentence fragments; thesis abstracts. The abstract includes the introduction, objective of the papers, method, results and discussion, and conclusion including novelty of the research.

Keywords: academic writing; English as a foreign language; error analysis; sentence fragments; thesis abstracts. The abstract includes the introduction, objective of the papers, method, results and discussion, and conclusion including novelty of the research.

Introduction

Academic writing requires learners to communicate research ideas accurately, concisely, and coherently. For university students writing in English as a foreign language (EFL), this requirement can be difficult because academic texts demand control of sentence structure in addition to content and organization. Recent studies of Indonesian EFL writing continue to report grammatical and syntactic problems in student texts, including thesis abstracts and other academic genres (Mubarok & Budiono, 2022; Sujarwati & Hamidah, 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2024).

An abstract is particularly important because it condenses the main information of a longer academic work. Errors in an abstract can therefore affect the clarity with which readers understand the research purpose, method, findings, and conclusion. Studies of Indonesian university writing have identified a range of grammatical difficulties in abstracts, including word choice, word order, verb agreement, tense, and incomplete structures (Febrianti & Said,

2022; Putri Utami, 2024; Noviyanti, 2025). These findings support the need to examine not only broad grammatical errors but also specific structural problems that can make an academic sentence incomplete.

A sentence fragment is an incomplete structure presented as though it were a complete sentence. In formal academic writing, fragments commonly result from a missing subject, missing main verb, incomplete verb construction, or a dependent clause standing alone. Such problems can reduce clarity because the reader has to reconstruct information that should have been explicitly expressed. Writing-support resources similarly identify missing subjects or verbs and unattached dependent clauses as common fragment patterns in academic writing (Fordham University, n.d.; Monash University, 2022).

Error analysis is useful for identifying recurring problems in learner writing and for connecting those problems with instructional needs. Research on Indonesian EFL writing has used document analysis and error classification to show that student errors can be systematically identified and quantified (Mubarok & Budiono, 2022; Isma et al., 2023; Irawansyah, 2024). Research specifically addressing fragments has likewise shown that incomplete sentence structures may occur alongside other grammatical problems and can be associated with omission, translation, or limited control of English sentence structure (Sriyatni, 2019; Putri et al., 2022).

The present article focuses more narrowly on fragments in undergraduate final-project abstracts. It is based on a dataset previously analyzed in a 2019 final project at Universitas PGRI Semarang. Rather than introducing new data, this manuscript reorganizes the original analysis into the structure required by the Journal of Linguistics and Technology template and places the original findings in conversation with more recent literature. This distinction is important for research transparency: the dataset and principal findings are derived from the original final project, while the present manuscript is a new journal-style presentation and synthesis.

Previous studies have examined grammatical errors in thesis abstracts and academic writing, but their classifications and contexts vary. For example, Rafiqa and De Vega (2021) analyzed grammatical errors in a large collection of thesis abstracts, while Febrianti and Said (2022) focused on word order and subject-verb agreement. Putri et al. (2022) examined sentence fragments in academic writing tasks, and Villavicencio and Argudo (2021) demonstrated that focused feedback can improve learners' performance on fragment-related errors. The present study complements this literature by describing the specific fragment categories found in a corpus of English Education students' final-project abstracts at one Indonesian university.

Accordingly, this study has two objectives: (1) to identify the types of sentence fragments found in undergraduate final-project abstracts written by students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Semarang in the 2018/2019 academic year; and (2) to determine the distribution and dominant pattern of the identified fragments.

Materials (if any) and Methodology

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design using document analysis. The object of analysis consisted of English-language final-project abstracts written by students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Semarang. Twenty abstracts from the 2018/2019 academic year were selected randomly from the university library. The original study treated the researcher as the principal instrument for identifying, classifying, interpreting, and correcting the sentence fragments.

Data collection followed three main steps. First, twenty final-project abstracts were selected. Second, each abstract was read carefully to identify incomplete sentence structures. Third, the identified fragments were grouped according to their structural characteristics. The analysis distinguished six

possible fragment categories in the original framework: missing subject, missing verb, incomplete verb, dependent word, added detail, and -ing fragments. Only four categories occurred in the analyzed data.

Data analysis followed the general sequence of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing described in the original study. The identified fragments were condensed into relevant examples, displayed in classification tables, and interpreted according to their frequency. Frequency percentages were calculated using the number of fragments in each category divided by the total number of identified fragments. The analysis also considered how each fragment could be repaired by supplying the missing element, completing the verb construction, or joining a dependent clause to an appropriate independent clause.

The analysis is documentary and retrospective. No new participant recruitment or intervention was conducted for this journal manuscript. Because the dataset comes from the original final project, the findings reported below are presented as a faithful synthesis of that work rather than as newly collected evidence.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of sentence fragments

The analysis of twenty final-project abstracts identified ten fragment instances distributed across six abstracts. Fourteen abstracts contained no identified fragments. The original analysis reported an average of approximately thirteen sentences per abstract and a fragment proportion of approximately 0.5% when fragments were considered against the broader sentence corpus. Thus, fragments were relatively infrequent overall, but they were concentrated in a subset of abstracts.

Table 1 summarizes the four categories that occurred. Missing-subject fragments were the dominant category, with four instances (40%). Missing-verb fragments occurred three times (30%), incomplete-verb fragments twice (20%), and dependent-word fragments once (10%). No added-detail or -ing fragment was identified in the twenty abstracts.

Fragment category	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Missing subject	4	40%	Most frequent pattern
Missing verb	3	30%	Second most frequent pattern
Incomplete verb	2	20%	Verb construction requires completion
Dependent word	1	10%	Dependent clause stands alone
Total	10	100%	Four categories identified

Table 1. Distribution of sentence fragments in the twenty final-project abstracts

Source: Reworked from the original final-project analysis.

Missing-subject fragments

Missing-subject fragments were the most common pattern. The original examples show clauses in which the action or proposition is present but the grammatical subject is absent. In one example, the writer describes identifying and understanding culture shock but does not state who performs the actions. In another, the phrase describing the administration of a test does not explicitly identify the researcher as the agent. The original corrections supplied an

appropriate subject, such as “the researcher,” to make the proposition structurally complete.

This pattern is consistent with the broader role of omission in EFL writing. Recent research on Indonesian learners has repeatedly identified omission or incomplete structures as important sources of writing errors (Febrianti & Said, 2022; Mubarak & Budiono, 2022). However, the present dataset is distinctive in showing that subject omission was the single most frequent fragment type within this small corpus. Pedagogically, this suggests that writers should check every independent clause for an explicit subject before finalizing an abstract.

Missing-verb fragments

Missing-verb fragments accounted for 30% of the identified cases. One example combined the phrase “the characters and characterization” with a list of characters but did not provide a complete predicate. The original correction inserted the verb “are” and a subject construction so that the sentence could express a complete proposition. Another example contained a first clause without a finite verb before moving to information about the pre-test and the researcher’s mean score.

The prominence of missing verbs is important because academic abstracts frequently use clauses to summarize procedures and findings. A clause that contains a noun phrase but lacks a finite verb can make the relationship between the research object and its claim unclear. The finding also corresponds with the broader observation that sentence structure remains a major challenge for Indonesian EFL writers (Pasaribu et al., 2024).

Incomplete-verb fragments

Two incomplete-verb fragments were identified, representing 20% of the total. In one example, the writer used “method analyze” where an infinitive marker was needed before the base verb. The correction supplied “to” before “analyze.” In another example, the passive construction “to analyzed” was incomplete because the auxiliary “be” was absent in the original analysis. These

cases show that a sentence may contain a recognizable verb form while still failing to form a complete grammatical construction.

These findings complement research showing that Indonesian EFL learners experience persistent problems with verb forms and syntactic structure in academic writing (Sujarwati & Hamidah, 2022; Irawansyah, 2024). The pedagogical implication is that revision should not stop at locating a verb. Writers need to check whether the verb form agrees with the grammatical pattern required by the construction, including infinitives and passive structures.

Dependent-word fragments

One dependent-word fragment was identified, accounting for 10% of the total. The example began with “Which can be proved by the conversation of the actors.” Because “which” introduces a dependent relative clause, the clause could not function independently. The original correction attached it to a preceding independent clause so that the relative clause modified an already established noun phrase.

Dependent-clause problems are especially relevant in academic writing because writers often use subordinating words and relative pronouns to connect complex information. Research on EFL university students has noted difficulties in constructing complex sentences involving dependent clauses (Princess & Syarif, 2021). The present finding reinforces the importance of teaching students to distinguish between independent and dependent clauses when revising abstracts.

Repair strategies and instructional implications

The original analysis repaired fragments through four broad strategies: adding a missing subject, adding or completing a verb, completing an incomplete verb construction, and combining a dependent clause with an independent clause. These strategies correspond to the structural nature of the errors and provide a practical revision checklist for students.

Recent research also supports focused attention to error feedback. Villavicencio and Argudo (2021) found that direct focused feedback produced significant improvement in students' performance on sentence fragments and related errors. Budianto et al. (2020) similarly showed that corrective-feedback approaches can influence university EFL writing proficiency. For the context represented in the present dataset, feedback can therefore be made more efficient by targeting sentence completeness rather than treating all grammatical problems as one undifferentiated category.

The study also reported translation and carelessness as two possible reasons for the occurrence of fragments. These explanations should be interpreted cautiously because the original dataset was documentary and did not include interviews designed specifically to establish causal relationships. Nevertheless, translation-related difficulties and limited attention to grammatical structure are plausible instructional concerns in Indonesian EFL contexts. Recent work continues to identify linguistic transfer, grammar knowledge, and academic-writing demands as relevant challenges for Indonesian EFL learners (Pasaribu et al., 2024; Suhono et al., 2025).

Conclusion and Recommendation (Heiti SC12)

This study identified ten sentence-fragment instances in twenty undergraduate final-project abstracts written by English Education students at Universitas PGRI Semarang during the 2018/2019 academic year. The fragments occurred in six abstracts, while fourteen abstracts contained no identified fragments. Four fragment categories were found: missing subject, missing verb, incomplete verb, and dependent word. Missing-subject fragments were dominant at 40%, followed by missing-verb fragments at 30%, incomplete-verb fragments at 20%, and dependent-word fragments at 10%.

The findings show that fragment errors were not widespread across the corpus, but when they occurred, they were concentrated around missing or incomplete core sentence elements. The study therefore advances a focused view of academic-writing accuracy: even a relatively small number of incomplete structures can be targeted systematically through revision practices that check subjects, finite verbs, verb complements, and clause dependency.

For English learners, the main recommendation is to use a sentence-completeness checklist when revising an abstract. Each sentence should be checked for a clear subject and a complete finite verb, followed by a check of infinitive and passive constructions and dependent clauses. For writing instructors and supervisors, fragment patterns can be incorporated into short editing exercises based on authentic student writing. Future research should examine larger and more recent datasets, include multiple institutions, and, where possible, use interviews or learner reflections to test explanations such as translation and carelessness rather than treating them as established causes.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the academic context and documentary materials underlying the original final project. The present manuscript is a journal-style reworking of that prior academic work.

References

Aknouch, L., & Bouthiche, H. (2022). Types and sources of Moroccan EFL students' errors in writing: A study of error analysis. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(4), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no4.5>

- Budianto, S., Sulisty, T., Widiastuti, O., Heriyawati, D. F., & Marhaban, S. (2020). Written corrective feedback across different levels of EFL students' academic writing proficiency: Outcomes and implications. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i2.16569>
- Febrianti, I., & Said, M. (2022). Errors in word order and subject-verb agreement in the undergraduate thesis abstracts. *Inference: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(1).
- Fordham University. (n.d.). Sentence fragments. Writing Center.
- Irawansyah, I. (2024). An error analysis of students' writing as EFL: A descriptive qualitative research. *Lingual: Journal of Language and Culture*, 17(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.24843/LJLC.2024.v17.i01.p02>
- Isma, A., Rasmin, L. O., & Samsudin, S. (2023). Decoding the challenges: A study of English writing errors among EFL students. *GLENS: Global English Insights Journal*, 1(1).
- Mertosono, S. R., & Erniwati, E. (2023). Error analysis: Types and causes of EFL learners' errors in writing analytical exposition text. *Eralingua*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.26858/eralingua.v7i1.37875>
- Monash University. (2022). Common sentence structure mistakes. Student Academic Success.
- Mubarok, Y., & Budiono, T. (2022). An error analysis on EFL students' writing. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 9(2), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v9i2.11386>

- Noviyanti, S. D. (2025). An analysis of grammatical errors in thesis abstracts and strategies for improvement. *JETAL: Journal of English Teaching & Applied Linguistic*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36655/jetal.v6i2.1804>
- Pasaribu, A. N., Pasaribu, T. K., Siahaan, R. B., & Sitompul, D. S. (2024). Challenges for Indonesian EFL students in English academic writing. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i2.9780>
- Princess, P., & Syarif, H. (2021). EFL university students' errors in constructing complex sentences in academic writing. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on English Language and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210914.007>
- Putri, D. M., Christina, D., & Amna, S. (2022). Analysis of sentence fragments in students' academic writing task of English Department. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v6i2.4106>
- Putri Utami, N. P. C. (2024). Investigating grammatical errors in English Literature students' abstract writing: A qualitative study at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. *Proceedings: Linguistics, Literature, Culture and Arts International Seminar (LITERATES)*.
- Rafiq, S., & De Vega, N. (2021). Grammatical errors analysis in the thesis abstracts made by the students of Borneo University Tarakan. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Improving Education*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211219.045>

- Ramadhianti, A. (2024). Error analysis of generating compound sentence on Indonesian EFL students. *BRIGHT: A Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*, 7(1).
- Sriyatni. (2019). An analysis of sentence fragments found in students' writing on essay. Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta.
- Sujarwati, I., & Hamidah, M. (2022). Grammatical mistakes of Indonesian-English translation on students' thesis abstracts. *Jurnal Pendidikan Edutama*, 9(2), 175. <https://doi.org/10.30734/jpe.v9i2.2212>
- Suhono, S., Cahyono, B. Y., & Ndruru, F. (2025). An error analysis of writing products made by Indonesian Islamic university students. *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v10i1.5808>
- Villavicencio, J., & Argudo, J. (2021). Effects of direct focused feedback and no feedback on run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement errors of EFL tertiary students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(14). <https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/12-14-03>