A Syntactic Analysis of Sentence Patterns Made by the EFL Students of English Study Program

Muhammad Fitrah Kusnadi*, Sisca Bochari, Hastini, Sriati Usman
Universitas Tadulako
muhfitrahkusnadi@gmail.com*, siska.bochari@gmail.com, tini_firhansyah@yahoo.com,
sriati_endro@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The researchers discovered that students' ideas in written language are not organized structurally and adequately because of the lack of understanding of sentence patterns. Their sentences are not varied, meaningful, and effective. When the students construct a sentence, they tend to construct simple sentences consisting of subject, verb, and object. It means that they do not understand the variety of sentence patterns. This research was conducted to discover the variety of sentence patterns made by students, the most dominant sentence pattern in students' written work, and why students struggle to make sentences based on sentence patterns. This research method depends on quantitative descriptive data and statistical analysis. The population and sample of this research are the 4th-semester students of the English Education Study Program at one of universities in Celebes. The researchers found that 1.127 sentences produced by the students are in seven patterns. The most dominant sentence pattern in the students' written work is pattern SVA (subject + verb + adverb). The researchers also found that four variables make the students find difficulties in writing sentences: the students have problems in constructing affirmative and negative sentences, constructing sentences based on the rules, constructing sentence patterns because they have different understandings about sentence patterns, and because they cannot differentiate formal and informal sentences.

Keywords: syntax, sentence patterns, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

Communication is transmitting and receiving messages by verbal or nonverbal means, such as voice or oral and written communication. That statement is also supported by Prabavathi and Nagasubramani (2018), who say communication is closely related to every aspect of human life and is very important in living a meaningful life. Oral communication is the verbal exchange of ideas, information, and messages. Noviyenty (2023) says that speaking English can ignore grammar. It means people can express their ideas without following the rules when communicating with others. People must follow the rules when they want to write. The rules of language are called

grammar. Based on Haryono, Fitriati, and Suwandi (2023), grammar teaching helps students develop an intuitive understanding of grammar and improves their overall language skills. Therefore, we need rules called grammar to build sentences.

Grammar is a system of language rules that combine individual words to make complex meanings. It means that if we understand grammar well, it can be applied to make our writing more substantial, precise, and effective. Sari et al. (2024) say that writing becomes a difficult skill to master because writing requires writers to master some aspects, one of which is grammar. Most people, especially Indonesian students, do not know how to construct a good sentence because they do not see the function of the words in the sentence. Hidayat and Maryani (2020:49) add, "Many students get difficulties in learning English because English is considered as a foreign language in Indonesia and also it is known that most parts of English grammatical systems are different from Indonesian.". In English when studying grammar, we must know about linguistic branch which studies how a sentence is formed called syntax. Curme (1931:1) also argues that "syntax treats of the relations of words or groups of words to one another in sentences." It means that syntax is the arrangement and interrelation of words, phrases, and clauses, creating sentences or complex structures based on grammatical rules

The sentence pattern is a grouping of words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. According to Hidayah, Bochari, and Jamiluddin (2024), a sentence with different categories of words functioning as subject and verb indicates a fully formed thought or intellectual state. Moreover, the sentence pattern is an arrangement of words that requires the correct grammatical sequence to make a coherent phrase. It means that a sentence pattern is a group of words consisting of subject and verb based on some rules. In addition, one of the writing components is sentence pattern since they are related to how a sentence is created. The sentence pattern is essential because studying sentence patterns is vital in learning a language, especially in academic writing. Sari (2022) also states that sentence patterns are a necessary aspect of language that students must master if they want to translate or construct sentences. It means we must write grammatically correct and meaningful sentences when writing a paper. To make sentences meaningful and more effective, learners must learn to make grammatically correct sentences using different patterns. As mentioned by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985:721), there are seven sentence patterns in English, "they are subject+verb (intransitive), subject+verb (mono transitive)+object (direct object), subject+verb (copular)+complement (subject complement), subject+verb (copular)+adverbial (subject-related adverbial), subject+verb (ditransitive)+object (indirect object), subject+verb (complex-transitive)+object (direct object)+complement (object

complement), and subject+verb (complex-transitive)+object (direct object)+adverbial (object-related adverbial)." Students can identify subjects, verbs, objects, and adverbs to analyze and improve their writing style using various sentence patterns.

Some problems faced by students are that they have difficulty making a sentence because they do not understand word category, phrase category, phrase function, and sentence pattern. Famularsih and Helmy (2020) state that a lack of knowledge of grammar is a fundamental problem for students when writing correct sentences. Many students cannot write sentences into paragraphs because they do not understand grammar deeply. Another reason is also mentioned by Fitri (2017), who states that the problem faced by the students comes from the inability to implement the material given by the teacher. Lengkoan and Rombepajung (2024) add that one of the problems teachers have in teaching is when circumstances require learning to be done online; that situation makes learning ineffective. Muharani, Qamariah, and Sariakin (2021) also say that some students find it difficult to understand well regarding sentence patterns. For example, the students do not know how to identify transitive or intransitive verbs. Rosadi (2022) also supports that statement; he said that students do not understand parts of sentences. Therefore, the ideas they express in written language are not organized structurally and adequately because they lack knowledge of sentence patterns. When the students construct a sentence, they tend to construct simple sentences consisting of subject, verb, and object. It means they do not understand the variety of sentence patterns.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers are interested in conducting this study to determine the sentence patterns in students' written work. The researchers chose the students' work because it contains a few sentence patterns that can be analyzed syntactically to see their ability to construct sentences based on the phrase function. Moreover, the researchers could find students' difficulty constructing sentences based on their written work. In addition, the students' written work is chosen because it is expected that students can improve their writing by using a variety of sentence patterns. Based on research by Riyadi, Sari, and Setiawan (2017), peer-direct feedback is one method that can be used to overcome writing problems.

Some related studies have more or less the same analysis to support this study. The first study by Christianon (2018) is entitled "Syntactic Analysis on Sentence Patterns in John Denver's Song Lyrics". This study analyzed the sentence patterns in John Denver's song lyrics. The analysis showed that 8 out of 9 patterns were used in the song lyrics. The sentence pattern which was frequently used was pattern 3: S+Vt+Do. Twelve sentences used the pattern in John Denver's song lyrics. However, there was no sentence which used pattern 6: S+Vt+Io+dO. These findings suggest

that the result can help English learners improve their understanding of sentence patterns and phrase structure rules.

The second study by Andriani and Bram (2021) is entitled "Syntactic Analysis of Sentence Patterns and Types of BBC News Articles". This study analyzed the sentence patterns and types used in news articles. The analysis showed five sentence patterns used, namely S+V, S+LV+SC, S+V+O, S+V+DO+OC, and S+V+IO+DO. It was also found that four sentence types, namely simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, were used. Among the used sentence patterns, S+V+O was the most frequently used sentence pattern (42%), and the most frequently used sentence type was the complex sentence (52.6%).

The last study by Rahmawati and Rachmi (2022) is entitled "A Syntactic Analysis of the Sentence Pattern in Online News Article at The Jakarta Post's Website". This study analyzed the sentence patterns used in the news desk at The Jakarta Post's website and the construction of the sentence patterns in the news desk at the Jakarta Post's Website. The analysis showed that the sentence pattern in online news articles on The Jakarta Post's website is manifold. Nine sentence patterns were found; four of these 10 sentence patterns included the basic sentence pattern, for example, SPA and SPC, while others did not. The findings also showed that the constructions of the sentence patterns in the online news article The Jakarta Post Website were theoretically structured.

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that this research has similarities and differences with the previous research. The similarities include the analysis of sentence patterns and the students' writing as the object of the study. However, the four previous studies had documents as the research instruments, while the instruments of this research are tests and questionnaires. The data from previous studies is qualitative, while this research is quantitative.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research used a quantitative descriptive method. This research method depends on quantitative descriptive data and uses statistical analysis. Kothari (2007:30) states, "Quantitative research is based on measuring quantity or amount. It applies to phenomena that can be expressed in quantity". This research used a non-experimental design. This research aims to discover sentence patterns and the most dominant pattern in students' written work. The subject of this research was the 4th-semester students of the English education study program in one of universities in Celebes, consisting of 151 students from six parallel classes. The researchers chose fourth-semester students as samples in this study because fourth-semester students have a pre-

intermediate grammar level, where these students have been taught how to make sentences. Another reason is that they are also focused on making mini proposals. There were 243 students in semester 4, and the researchers only chose 151 students as samples because the researchers used the Slovin formula method to select samples. Darwin, Mamondol, Sormin, Nurhayati, Tambunan, Sylvia, Adnyana, Prasetiyo, Vianitati, and Gebang (2020) state that Slovin's formula is used to determine the minimum sample size in a study. This formula is used to calculate sample size based on population and/or determine population proportion. The following formula shows how researchers select samples.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n　　: the total of sample

N　　: the total of population

e　　: margin error

$$n = \frac{243}{1 + (243 \times 0,005^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{243}{1,6075}$$

$$n = 151,166$$

Researchers used two instruments: a test and a questionnaire. The researchers used the test to see what sentence patterns students can make and what sentence patterns are most dominantly used by students. The second instrument was a questionnaire, especially a closed questionnaire. This would determine any factors that influence students' knowledge in making sentences. Researchers took 25 days to collect data.

Researchers carried out the stages of distributing instruments offline. The following are the stages researchers go through when distributing instruments.

1. Test

   First, the researchers created a test that was given to students. The test was distributed to 151 students. Finally, the researchers collected the students' response sheets.

2. Questionnaire

First, the researchers found a theory about the influence of students' understanding in constructing English sentence patterns. The researchers then listed factors influencing students' knowledge of constructing English sentence patterns. Third, the researchers designed statements based on the theory through fishbone. Fourth, the researchers shared a link using a Google form with respondents to test the statement's validity using the SPSS program. Finally, the researchers revised the questionnaire based on validity and shared the link again.

Because the data will lead the researchers to scientific findings. There are some steps to analyze the data:

1. Analyzing the test

   In the first step, the researchers read the students' answers. Second, the researchers selected the correct answers to the students' sentence patterns. Third, the researchers listed the correct sentence patterns produced by the student's written work. In this case, it helped the researchers answer the first research questions. Fourth, the researchers classified the patterns based on the theory of sentence patterns. In the last step, the researchers counted the number of sentence patterns to find the most dominant sentence pattern using Ms. Excel program.

2. Analyzing the questionnaire

   The researchers first analyzed the responses from all the samples and analyzed them using the SPSS program to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. In the second phase, the researchers assigned a number to each option on the legitimate questionnaire the students filled out. Finally, the researchers computed the frequency of each item in the questionnaire variable

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of the data are based on the result of data analysis. The data result consists of two parts, which are from the test and questionnaire.
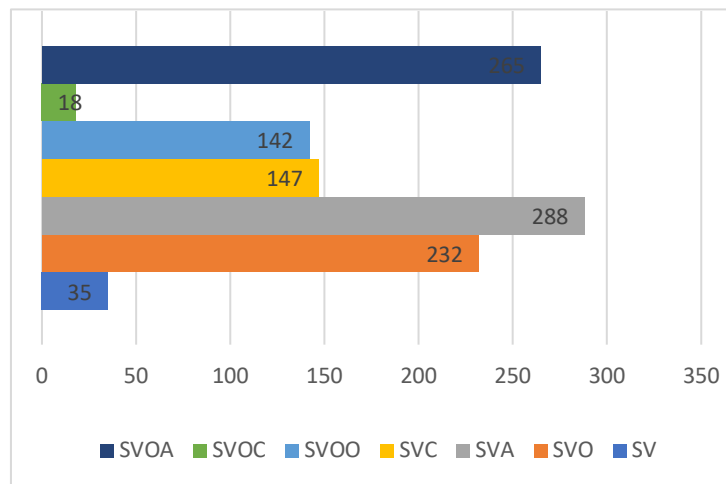
The Data Result Collected from the Test

To find out the sentence patterns and the students' most frequently used sentence patterns. The researchers take the data from the test.

Table 1. Sentence Patterns in Students' Written Work

No	SV	SVO	SVA	SVC	SVOO	SVOC	SVOA	Total Frequency
1	21	15	75	26	0	1	20	**158**
2	4	66	40	17	0	3	61	**191**
3	2	41	19	16	39	8	51	**176**
4	0	59	20	11	5	5	60	**160**
5	6	12	65	20	0	0	40	**143**
6	1	21	62	35	0	1	26	**146**
7	1	18	7	22	98	0	7	**153**
Total	**35**	**232**	**288**	**147**	**142**	**18**	**265**	**1127**

Table 1 shows the total frequency of the sentence patterns in students' written work. The patterns are SV (subject + verb) with 35 sentences, SVO (subject + verb + object) with 232 sentences, SVA (subject + verb + adverb) with 288 sentences, SVC (subject + verb + complement) with 147 sentences, SVOO (subject + verb + direct object + indirect object) with 142 sentences, SVOC (subject + verb + direct object + complement), and SVOA (subject + verb + direct object + adverb) with 265 sentences. The total frequency of sentence patterns in students' written work based on the table is 1127.

Figure 1. The Most Dominant Sentence Pattern

From Figure 1, researchers can conclude that students' most frequently used sentence pattern is pattern SVA (subject + verb + adverb), with a total frequency of 288 sentences. Meanwhile, the least frequently used pattern is SVOC (subject + verb + object + complement), with a total frequency of 18 sentences.

The Data Result Collected from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire answers the research question, which asks why the students have difficulty making sentences based on sentence patterns. Therefore, the researchers provide a table about the variables that become the factors influencing the students in making sentences based on sentence patterns below:

Table 2. The Variable Influencing Students Understanding in Making Sentence Patterns.

No	Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The students have difficulties constructing affirmative and negative sentences.	15% (88)	43% (258)	32% (196)	10% (62)
2	The students have difficulties constructing sentences based on the rules.	7% (42)	35% (210)	45% (275)	13% (77)
3	The students have difficulties constructing sentence patterns because of their first language.	4% (6)	35% (53)	40% (61)	21% (31)
4	The students have difficulties constructing sentence patterns because they have different understandings about sentence patterns.	14% (76)	54% (314)	27% (186)	5% (28)
5	The students have difficulties constructing sentence patterns because they do not know how to differentiate formal and informal sentences.	9% (26)	43% (130)	41% (125)	7% (21)
6	There is no motivation from the teacher to make students learn sentence patterns.	34% (155)	59% (266)	6% (27)	1% (5)
7	The teacher does not explain sentence patterns clearly.	53% (116)	40% (140)	3% (35)	4% (11)

Table 2 details seven statements influencing student's understanding of sentence patterns. The first variable is the students' struggle to construct affirmative and negative sentences. Two statements influence students' understanding to construct affirmative and negative sentences: statement one and three. Statement number one and three are negative statements. However, students responded with "strongly agree" and "agree" answers. It indicates that students have difficulty understanding the statement.

The second variable concerns the students having difficulties constructing sentences based on the rules. Only one statement from four influences students' understanding of constructing sentences based on the rules, which is statement two. The researchers made this statement negative. As we can see, table 2 illustrates the students' answers with "disagree" and "strongly disagree" options, which means the students choose the negative option. In conclusion, the students had difficulty constructing sentences based on the rules.

The third variable concerns students having difficulties constructing sentence patterns because of their first language. The negative statement means the students must answer with the option "disagree" or "strongly disagree". It can be seen in the table that most of the students answered "disagree" and "strongly disagree".

The following variable is variable four, which is about the students having difficulties constructing sentence patterns because they have different understandings of them. The researchers made a negative statement about this variable to assess the students' understanding of sentence patterns. Most students choose to "agree", while the statement must be answered with negative options, such as "disagree" or "strongly disagree". In this case, the students do not understand the statement.

Variable five explains the students' struggle to construct sentence patterns because they do not know how to use sentences that depend on formal and informal situations. In this variable, only one statement supports this variable: statement 5. This is a negative statement, so the students must answer with "disagree" or "strongly disagree". However, most students answered the statement with "strongly agree" and "agree" options. It means that this variable is becoming a factor that influences the students' understanding of sentence patterns

The following variable is variable six, which is about no motivation from lecturers or teachers for students to learn sentence patterns. It is a positive statement. Table 2 shows that the "strongly agree" and "agree" options are in high percentage, which means the students agree with the statement.

Variable seven is the last variable influencing the students' understanding of the sentence pattern. Most students answer this statement with "strongly agree" and "agree" options. It means the students understand the statement.

Discussion

In this part, the researchers describe the findings related to the research questions, the sentence patterns used by the students, the most dominant sentence pattern, and the reason for the student's difficulty in making sentence patterns.

Based on the first question, the sentence patterns used in students' written work, the researchers found 1.127 sentences produced by the students in their written work with seven patterns. The patterns are SV (subject + verb), SVO (subject + verb + object), SVA (subject + verb + adverb), SVC (subject + verb + complement), SVOO (subject + verb + direct object + indirect object), SVOC (subject + verb + direct object + complement), SVOA (subject + verb + direct object + adverb).

The finding for research question number one is similar to the research conducted by Christianto (2018) entitled Syntactic Analysis on Sentence Patterns in John Denver's Song Lyrics. The finding shows seven sentence patterns based on Greenbaum's theory (1985). The researchers also found another study that had the same finding about sentence patterns produced by the students. The research was conducted by Rahmawati & Rachmi (2022) and was entitled A Syntactic Analysis of the Sentence Pattern in Online News Article at The Jakarta Post's Website. Their research and this one have the same findings with different samples.

Figure 1 tells the most dominant sentence pattern in students' written work. The highest bar is pattern SVA (subject + verb + adverb). In this case, the students tend to use adverbs in their sentences. The forms of adverbs in their sentences are adverb phrases, prepositional phrases, and adverb clauses. The lowest bar is pattern SVOC. In this case, the students have difficulty making sentences based on that pattern.

The researchers found another study with the same finding in research question number two, which is the most dominant sentence pattern made by the students in their sentences. The research was conducted by Rahmawati and Rachmi (2022). Their research and this one have the same finding: SPA (subject + predicate + adverb).

The students find it challenging to make sentence patterns because of several statements in the questionnaire. Identification is carried out on each statement of each variable. Negative statements that should be responded to with positive options are one of the causes of students' difficulties in creating sentence patterns. Furthermore, there are four reasons the students have difficulty making sentence patterns: 1. The students have difficulties in constructing affirmative and negative sentences, 2. The students have difficulties in constructing sentences based on the rules; 3. The students struggle to construct sentence patterns because they have different understandings of sentence patterns; 4. The students have difficulties constructing sentence patterns because they do not know how to use sentences that depend on formal and informal situations. The researchers conclude that this result becomes the novelty of this research because there is no comparison from other research.

CONCLUSION

After conducting the research and data analysis, the researchers conclude that the students produced seven sentence patterns based on Greenbaum's theory, with a total frequency of 1.127 sentences with seven sentence patterns. The researchers found that the most dominant sentence pattern used by the students in their sentences is pattern SVA (subject + verb + adverb). The

students used 288 sentences in that pattern. Most students produced the other patterns but mostly used the SVA pattern (subject + verb + adverb). The researchers found that students do not understand the sentence patterns because of internal factors, namely the students do not understand the affirmative and negative sentences, do not understand the rules, have different understandings of sentence patterns, and do not know how to use sentences that depend on formal and informal situations.

In this research, the researchers analyze sentences based on the basic seven patterns. There are SV (subject + verb), SVO (subject + verb + object), SVA (subject + verb + adverb), SVC (subject + verb + complement), SVOO (subject + verb + direct object + indirect object), SVOC (subject + verb + direct object + complement), SVOA (subject + verb + direct object + adverb). After analyzing the students' answers, the researchers conclude that the students still do not know the variety of sentence patterns.

Significantly, this study will integrate the language skills the students use to learn and improve their writing skills. It will help them to understand how to construct sentences. Besides, this study will be integrated into writing skills used as teaching material in academic writing because lecturers will know the sentence patterns usually produced by students. For future researchers, it is helpful to those interested in studying syntactic analysis on sentence patterns by analyzing different objects.

REFERENCES

Andriani, E., & Bram, B. (2021). Syntactic Analysis of Sentence Patterns and Types of BBC News Articles. *LiNGUA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa Dan Sastra* 16(1):25–34. doi: 10.18860/ling.v16i1.10832.

Rosadi, R. (2022). An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Constructing English Sentences a Case Study At Second Grade Students of Sman 2 Wera in the Academic Year 2014/2015. *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Kebudayaan* 9(1):111–16. doi: 10.59050/jkk.v9i1.98.

Kothari. C. R. (2007) . *Research Methodology Method and Techniques* (Second Edition). Delhi, India: New Age International.

Christiano, D. (2018). Syntactic Analysis on Sentence Patterns in John Denver's Song Lyrics *Unpublish journal. Yogyakarta: Sanata Darma University.*

Curme, G. O. (1931). *A Grammar of the English Language: Syntax.* Japanese: D.C. Heath and Company.

Darwin, M., Mamondol, M. R., Sormin, S. A., Nurhayati, Y., Tambunan, H., Sylvia, D., Adnyana,

I. M. D. N., Prasetiyo, B., Vianitati, P., & Gebang, A. A. (2020). *Metode Penelitian Pendekatan Kuantitatif Kualitatif*. Bandung: CV. MEDIA SAINS INDONESIA

Famularsih, S., & Helmy, M. I. (2020). A Comparative Study of Sentence Building in Writing Ability Among Students in Indonesia. *Pedagogy : Journal of English Language Teaching* 8(2):89. doi: 10.32332/pedagogy.v8i2.2222.

Fitri, M. (2017). Improving Students' Understanding of English Sentences Through Understanding of Sentence Patterns. *Indonesian Journal of Integrated English Language Teaching* 3(1):65–82. doi: 10.24014/ijielt.v3i1.3969.

Haryono, T. A., Fitriati, S. W., & Suwandi, S. (2023). The Effectiveness of the Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching Online to Improve the Grammar Mastery. *English Education Journal* 13(4):476–85. doi: 10.15294/eej.v13i4.71000.

Hidayah, B., Bochari, S., & Jamiluddin, H. (2024). Analysis of Sentence Types in Affecting College Students ' Writing Skill. *Elsya : Journal of English Language Studies* 6(2):136–50. https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v6i2.19130

Hidayat, Nugraha, B., & Maryani, M. (2020). An Analysis of Students' Error in Writing Simple Sentences. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)* 3(1):49. doi: 10.22460/project.v3i1.p49-53.

Lengkoan, Fergina, Basri, M., Nur, S., Ali, N. N., & Maru. M. G. (2024). Higher Education Teachers' Perception and Use of Project-Based Learning in Teaching English. *Jurnal Lingua Idea* 15(1):1. doi: 10.20884/1.jli.2024.15.1.9698.

Noviyenty, L. (2023). Non-Native EFL Lecturers' Strategies in Building Their Pragmatics Competence. *Journal of English Education and Teaching* 7(2):376–95.

Prabavathi, R., & Nagasubramani, P. C. (2018). Effective Oral and Written Communication. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research* 3:S29–32. doi: 10.21839/jaar.2018.v3is1.164.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A COMPREHENSIVE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*. New York : Longman

Rahmawati, N, & Rachmi, S. (2021). Syntactic Analysis of the Sentence Pattern in Online News Article at The Jakarta Post's Website. *Asels_2021* 1(1):118–25. doi: 10.51773/asels2021.v1i1.21.

Muharani, D., Qamariah, H., & Sariakin. (2021). Students' Problem in Constructing English Sentence Patterns at Sma Negeri 12 Banda Aceh. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa* 2(1): 25-32

Riyadi, S., Sari, T., & Setiawan, K. (2017). Peer Direct Feedback Untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Menulis Akademik Mahasiswa Program Studi D3 Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Ilmu

Budaya Unsoed. *Jurnal Ilmiah Lingua Idea*, 7(2), 70-83. http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/jli

Sari, D. M. (2022). The Correlation Between Sentence Patterns Mastery And Translating Ability *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 8(16) :163–70. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7063700

Sari, L. I., Bochari, S. Usman, S., & Hastini (2024). A Syntactic Analysis of Constituent Structure in Sentences Written by EFL Students. *Jurnal Lingua Idea* 15(1):35. doi: 10.20884/1.jli.2024.15.1.9971.