

# Syntactic Choices in Indonesian Research Articles from the Disciplines of History Education and Law: What do Authors Prefer?

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## Abstract

Syntactic studies within both spoken and written texts have been widely conducted. However, studies on this area within research articles are still receiving minor attention from academic scholars. Based on this limited attention, the present study intends to investigate syntactic choices within research articles from the disciplines of History Education and Law in Indonesian journals that receive the Science and Technology Index (SINTA 2). The reason for choosing these selected disciplines is that they have not been investigated to date. For the analysis, a syntactic framework from earlier studies was employed to identify whether research article authors employ simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. The results revealed that most authors from these two data sets tend to use simple sentences in all sections of research articles. The reason for this finding is discussed in the Finding and Discussion section of this paper.

**Keywords:** *Research articles, syntactic choices, the History Education and Law disciplines*

## Introduction

Studies on syntactic texts have been widely conducted and indicate importance in language studies, both in spoken and written texts. In the spoken texts, this study was conducted in President Jokowi's speeches (Kriyantono, 2019), Trump's inauguration address (Jegede, 2020), and English songs (Astuti, 2020; Fuad et al., 2022). The purpose may develop students' comprehension and ability to identify sentence complex matters.

In the spoken contexts, for example, a syntactic study has been carried out by analyzing conjunctions, adverbs, pronouns, sentence forms, modalities, and other syntactic elements employed in Donald Trump's inauguration address (Jegede, 2020). The results demonstrated that Trump utilized syntactic devices to improve his speech's effectiveness, logicity, accuracy, and conciseness as well as simple, complex, and compound phrases to attain succinctness. These syntactic devices are to convey Trump's intentions, goals, emotions, and expectations for the American people. However, complex sentences appear to be the most dominant in this finding.

A syntactic analysis of two terms also has been carried out using a computational corpus-based method (Kallini & Fellbaum, 2021). The corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which offers a substantial amount of corpus data, serves as the primary data source for the study. An additional source of data is the Penn Treebank (PTB). In this study, coordination phrases are extracted from the COCA and PTB datasets, and then constituency parses of the sentences in the texts are used to do a quantitative syntactic analysis. To investigate combinations of syntactic categories in English data and their frequency distribution, statistical approaches are used in the research, taking into account elements. A human rater manually evaluates a random sample of unlike coordinations as part of an evaluation plan. In order to fully comprehend coordination phrase syntax, which has not been

properly examined in previous studies using English corpora, this work employs computational corpus analysis. According to the study, noun phrases and clauses can both be classified as determiner phrases because they have comparable syntactic distributions. Additionally, it implies that a coordinating phrase's two conjuncts differ syntactically. The results provide credence to hypotheses that explain the structure of coordination through an antisymmetric lens.

In the written texts, syntactic studies have been also conducted in a novel (Kristianingsih et al., 2023), research articles (Lu et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2020), essay writings (van Rijt et al., 2021), teaching materials (Jin et al., 2020), Russian middle school textbooks (Vahrusheva et al., 2023), and many others. However, this study intends to investigate syntactic choices employed in research articles because understanding syntactic complexities in research papers is crucial to constructing convincing texts (Jagaiah et al., 2020). Concerning this intention, a contrastive study on syntactic complexity between 30 RAs in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (written by Finnish, Czech, French, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Swedish, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian authors) and 30 RAs in American English (AmE) (written by American scholars) (Wu et al., 2020). These RAs belong to four disciplines: natural science, medicine, agriculture and forestry, social science, humanities, and behavioral science. The results reveal that the RAs in the ELF group have 181.29 mean lengths of sentences, while the RAs in the AmE have 113.71 mean lengths. The ELF authors also tend to include coordinate nouns and coordinate adjectives more than the AmE authors and tend to lengthen the sentences at the phrasal level rather than at the clausal level. As a result, the RAs in the ELF group have longer sentences than those written by the AmE authors. Their purpose is to provide more information about the knowledge involved.

Besides, the relationship between syntactic complexity and rhetorical moves using Swales' (2004) CARS model (Lu et al., 2020). The analysis uses 600 RAIs in anthropology, applied linguistics, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology, published from 2012 to 2016 in high-impact factor journals. The average word numbers of the corpora are 856 words per RAI and 25.91 words per sentence. However, they do not reveal the authors' language background, and they also do not mention the sentence numbers per RAI. The results also show that complex sentences make minor appearances in the RAIs. The complex sentences mostly only appear in M1\_S2, M3\_S5, and M1\_S3 (only one step in each move), while the other moves and steps have low numbers of complex sentences. These findings mean that the authors tend to communicate their rhetorical moves more often in simple ways than in complex ways. Thus, the relationship between the syntactic structure and rhetorical moves shows that the authors tend to employ simple sentences to communicate their rhetorical moves in their RAIs, which is their way of applying linguistic realizations to achieve their communicative purposes.

However, although syntactic studies have been conducted in research articles, none of them investigated syntactic choices in the Indonesian context. Based on this missing literature, this study intends to analyze syntactic choices in Indonesian research articles from the disciplines of History Education and Law because these two disciplinary research articles have been hardly found in the literature.

## **Method**

### ***Data sets***

In total, 30 Indonesian RAs were analyzed in this study, 15 of which were from the history education and the other 15 were from the law discipline. This was done because the study

examined every major section of the RAs, including the introduction, method, result, and discussion, rather than just focusing on one short section. Concerning corpus studies, the researcher believes that thirty RAs have been adequate. All these articles were published in Science and Technology Index (SINTA) 2 journals because journals receiving this accreditation level were considered to have qualified and consistent writing patterns.

### **Data analysis procedures**

The notion of syntactic forms from Verspoor and Sauter (2000) was used to analyze the syntactic level by determining whether a sentence is in simple, complex, compound, or compound-complex form. This paradigm was used because it offers a precise description for classifying the sentence levels, meaning that applying it might yield real-world outcomes.

The following is how the syntactic level was classified. Firstly, every sentence with just one independent clause, one subject, and one verb is considered simple. While some basic sentences have an object or objects, some do not. The only required components in simple sentences are a subject and a verb. Secondly, any sentence consisting of two or more clauses is considered complicated since it should have one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The opposite of an independent clause is a dependent clause, which is a clause that is unable to stand alone. A dependent clause is the reverse of an independent clause in that it is a clause that cannot stand alone. An independent clause can stand alone, such as a simple statement. A complex sentence consists of an independent clause and a dependent clause. The author needs a connector in this instance, such as when, before, after, because, while, who, that, which, if, and so forth, to combine them.

Thirdly, any sentence with two or more independent clauses is considered a compound sentence. The writers must employ one conjunction—either and, or, but, or so—to join the two independent clauses to form a compound sentence. Finally, a compound-complex sentence consists of numerous clauses, at least two independent clauses, and at least one dependent clause. As a result, the writers must use the conjunction as well as the connector, as previously indicated. Consequently, the compound-complex phrase has the potential to be the longest and most complex text based on this idea. The criteria for the inquiry in the RA parts and the communicative gestures were these four-sentence levels. Knowledge of the syntactic level could reveal whether the writers often use simple or complicated language to achieve their communication goals.

## **Results**

The analysis results revealed that both data sets (research articles in History Education and Law disciplines) are also distributed within four syntactic levels: simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences, and compound-complex sentences. However, while the History Education discipline tends to employ simple sentences, the Law discipline prefers to employ complex sentences more than the other sentence types. More details of the findings are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 in the below.

*Table 1 Result of the Syntactic Analysis in the IHRAs*

<b>Sections in the IHRAs</b>	<b>Sentence levels in the IHRAs</b>				<b>Total number of sentences</b>
	<b>Simple sentences</b>	<b>Complex sentences</b>	<b>Compound sentences</b>	<b>Compound complex sentences</b>	
<i>Introduction</i>	442	232	38	21	733
<i>Method</i>	93	51	5	3	152
<i>Result and Discussion</i>	1579	838	176	75	2668

<b>Total sentences</b>	<b>2114 (59.50%)</b>	<b>1121 (31.55%)</b>	<b>219 (6.16%)</b>	<b>99 (2.79%)</b>	<b>3553 (100%)</b>
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As presented in Table 1, there are 3553 sentences in the IHRAs, and the majority of them (59.50%) are simple sentences. The next most frequently employed sentence is the complex sentence (31.55%) and then the compound sentence (6.16%). The least employed form is the compound-complex sentence (2.79%). These findings mean that the simple sentence is the most employed syntactic level in realizing RA sections, followed by complex sentences, compound sentences, and compound-complex sentences.

Table 2 Result of the Syntactic Analysis in the ILRAs

Sections in the ILRAs	Sentence levels in the ILRAs				Total number of sentences
	Simple sentences	Complex sentences	Compound sentences	Compound-complex sentences	
Introduction	169	234	25	22	450
Method	34	23	1	0	58
Results and discussion	863	889	113	112	1977
<b>Total sentences</b>	<b>1066</b>	<b>1146</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>2485</b>
<b>Percentages</b>	<b>42.90%</b>	<b>46.12%</b>	<b>5.60%</b>	<b>5.38%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As presented in Table 2, the majority of the sentences are in complex form (46.12% of the total sentences), followed by simple sentences (42.90%), compound sentences (5.60%), and compound-complex sentences (5.39%). These findings mean that the complex sentence appears the most in the ILRAs in realizing their RA sections because the authors tend to employ it more than the other sentence types. More details about the syntactic levels found in the ILRAs are described below.

### Simple sentences

Unlike the IHRAs, the data analyses show that the simple sentence in the ILRAs is the second most frequently used, with 1066 (42.90%) appearances. Some examples of the simple sentences found in the ILRAs are:

Example 1: *Penguasa tidak dapat bertindak sewenang-wenang.* LW06

[The power men cannot act arbitrarily.]

Example 2: *Agama menetralsir (melenyapkan efek) perbedaan stratifikasi sosial, budaya, suku, bangsa, dan ras.* LW08

[The religion neutralises (eliminates the effects of) differences in social, cultural, ethnic, national, and racial stratification.]

Example 3: *Hal ini dipelopori oleh Bung Hatta sebagai inspirator dalam perumusan pasal tersebut.* LW09

[This was pioneered by Bung Hatta as the inspirator in the formulation of the article.]

The three examples above are simple sentences. Example 1 has one subject, *penguasa* (the ruler, power holder), and one verb, *tidak dapat bertindak* (cannot act). This sentence indicates a simple form. The following two examples are also simple sentences as each of them has only one subject and one verb, without any connector and conjunction in them. As presented earlier in the methodology chapter, any sentence that has one subject and one verb is a simple sentence. Based on this criterion, therefore, all the examples above are in the simple form.

### Complex sentences

As stated in the methodology chapter, a complex sentence is any sentence that has two clauses. In this regard, one is independent clause and another one is dependent clause. To combine those clauses, the author uses a connector. By considering this criterion for the

analysis, the results reveal that the complex sentence is the most frequently used (46.12% of the total clauses) in the ILRAs. Some examples are:

Example 4: *Hal tersebut menunjukkan **bahwa** dinamika kehidupan sosial masyarakat harus tetap menyesuaikan dengan nilai-nilai hukum Islam **karena** karakteristik hukum Islam dikenal dengan cakupan kesempurnaan, universal, ta'abbudi-ta'aqquli, elastis-dinamis, dan sistematis* (Khallaf, 1987: 53). LW01

[It shows **that** the dynamics of the community social life must continue to adapt to the Islamic values **because** the characteristics of Islamic teaching are known as perfect, universal, ta'abbudi-ta'aqquli, elastic-dynamic, and systematic (Khallaf, 1987: 53).]

Example 5: *Pemasyarakatan di Indonesia dapat dianggap sebagai salah satu sistem pemerintahan yang telah melewati beberapa momen sejarah dan perubahan rezim, secara khusus **apabila** ditelusuri kembali sejak zaman penjajahan kolonial Belanda hingga era 'post' reformasi saat ini.* LW07

[The penitentiary in Indonesia can be considered as one of the governance systems that has passed several historical moments and regime changes, accurately **if** it is traced back from the Dutch colonial era to the current 'post' reform era.]

Example 6: *Agama merupakan landasan dalam menentukan sah atau tidaknya suatu perkawinan, **karena** perkawinan bukan merupakan hubungan perdata semata sebagaimana dengan perikatan keperdataan lainnya.* LW08

[A religion is a basis for determining whether a marriage is valid or not **because** a marriage is not just a civil relationship as other civil agreements.]

The four examples above are complex sentences. In Example 4, there are three clauses that the author combines using two connectors, *bahwa* (that) and *karena* (because). Example 5 uses the connector *apabila* (if) to merge two clauses. In this context, the first clause, "Penitentiary in Indonesia can be considered as one of the governance systems that has passed several historical moments and regime changes, accurately" is independent, and the second clause, "it is traced back since the Dutch colonial era to the current 'post' reform era" is dependent. Example 6 also employs the connector *karena* (because), and the last example uses the connector *yang/bahwa* (which) to connect the two clauses. The function of all those connectors in the four examples is to merge clauses into one sentence. Therefore, all the examples above are complex sentences.

### Compound sentences

As stated in the methodology chapter, a compound sentence is any sentence that has at least two independent clauses, and therefore it needs one conjunction. However, rarely do the ILRA authors employ this sentence type. It only appears in 5.60% of the total sentences. The examples of the compound sentences in the ILRAs are:

Example 7: *Bagi negara Indonesia yang berdasarkan Pancasila, **pemikiran-pemikiran baru mengenai fungsi pemidanaan yang tidak lagi sekedar penjeraan tetapi juga merupakan suatu usaha rehabilitasi dan reintegrasi sosial** Warga Binaan Pemasyarakatan telah melahirkan suatu sistem pembinaan yang sejak lebih dari tiga puluh tahun yang lalu dikenal dan dinamakan sistem pemasyarakatan.* LW07

[For the Indonesian state that is based on the Pancasila, **new thoughts about a criminal conviction, which define it not only as a deterrence but also as an effort for rehabilitation and the reintegration of the prisoners into the community, has created a reformed system that has been known more than thirty years ago and called as a socialization system.**]

Example 8: *Diantaranya, pendapat Muhammad Hatta yang merumuskan penguasaan negara itu tidak berarti negara sendiri yang menjadi pengusaha, **namun** negara membuat peraturan untuk menjalankan perekonomian nasional dan mengatur agar pemilik modal tidak memeras yang lebih lemah.* LW09

[One of them is Muhammad Hatta's opinion that does not define state (economic) control in the sense that the state should be an entrepreneur, **but** it should make a regulation to manage the national economy and rule that capitalists do not (unfairly) exploit the weaker parties.]

Example 9: *Kelima, secara resmi, perundang-undangan adalah sumber hukum yang utama; sehingga yurisprudensi dan adat kebiasaan tidak boleh bertentangan dengan perundang-undangan.* LW10

[Fifth, officially, legislation is the primary source of law, so the jurisprudence and customs may not conflict contrary to the law.]

The three examples above indicate compound sentences. In Example 7, the author merges two independent clauses using the conjunction *dan* (and). Example 8 also incorporates two independent clauses using *tetapi* (but) as a conjunction. Example 9 employs the conjunction *sehingga* (so, hence) to affiliate two independent clauses. As each example above contains two independent clauses and employs conjunctions in between the two independent clauses, they are all compound sentences.

### Compound-complex sentences

The compound-complex sentence appears the least in the ILRAs as it appears in 134 sentences (5.38% of the total sentences). Usually, this sentence type is very long because it has at least three clauses, using one conjunction and one connector. Some examples of compound-complex sentences as found in the data analysis are:

Example 10: *Ayat tersebut dijadikan sebagai landasan naqli sebagaimana yang disampaikan Imam Syafi'i bahwa apapun yang dinyatakan manusia dari sebuah kebenaran adalah representasi pola hidup Rasulullah saw. dan segala sesuatu yang disampaikan Rasulullah saw. merupakan penjelasan yang terdapat dalam Alquran* (Ibrahim, 2002: 3). LW01

[The verse (of the Holy Qur'an) is used as the scriptural reason as expressed by Imam Shafi'i that whatever is stated by humans as truth is a representation of the life pattern of the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad SAW), and everything conveyed by the Prophet is the explanation of the contents of the Qur'an (Ibrahim, 2002: 3).]

Example 11: *Poligami oleh sebagian teologis adalah sebagai perintah Tuhan, namun disisi lain poligami hanya dianggap sebagai salah cara untuk mengatasi masalah sosial dimana ketika ayat tentang poligami poligami diwahyukan terjadi banyak janda-janda karena suaminya mati ditinggal perang karena membela agama Allah.* LW04

[(On the one hand) Polygamy, according to some theologians, is a command of God, but on the other hand, it was just a way of overcoming the social problems due to the emergence of many widows who had lost their husbands in the war when fighting for the Islam.]

Example 12: *Walaupun telah diadakan berbagai perbaikan mengenai tatanan (stelsel) pemidanaan seperti pranata pidana bersyarat (Pasal 14 a KUHP), pelepasan bersyarat (Pasal 15 KUHP), dan pranata khusus penuntutan serta penghukuman terhadap anak (Pasal 45, 46, dan 47 KUHP), namun pada dasarnya sifat pemidanaan masih bertolak dari asas dan sistem pemenjaraan, sistem pemenjaraan sangat menekankan pada unsur balas dendam dan penjaraan, sehingga institusi yang dipergunakan sebagai tempat pembinaan adalah rumah penjara bagi Narapidana dan rumah pendidikan negara bagi anak yang bersalah.* LW07

[Although there have been various improvements regarding the punishment methods for crimes such as conditional criminal punishments (Article 14 a, of the KUHP - the Indonesian criminal code), conditional release (Article 15 of the KUHP), and specialized institutions for the prosecution and the punishment for children (Articles 45, 46 and 47 of the KUHP), however, basically the nature of the punishment still based on the principle and system of imprisonment, which the imprisonment system which strongly emphasizes on the elements of revenge and repentance, so the institution used as a place of rehabilitation is a prison house for convicts and a state re-educational center for the convicted children.]

The three examples above are compound-complex sentences for the following reasons. In Example 10, the author uses the connector *bahwa* (that) and one conjunction, *dan* (and), to merge three clauses. Example 11 also utilizes one conjunction, *namun/ tetapi* (but), and one connector, *ketika* (when), to merge three clauses. Then, Example 12 employs the connector *walaupun/meskipun* (although) and one conjunction, *sehingga/maka* (so, hence), to connect three clauses. As each of the three examples above employ a connector and conjunction at the same time, they are all compound-complex sentences.

## Discussion

The IHRA and ILRA authors have different syntactic levels in realising their sections. The IHRA authors tend to employ simple sentences, as they appear in 59.50% of the total sentences. In contrast, the ILRA authors tend to write complex sentences more than the other sentence types, with complex sentences in 46.12%, simple sentences in 42.90%, compound sentences in 5.60%, and compound-complex sentences in 5.38% of the total sentences. Therefore, the IHRA authors tend to employ simple sentences, while the ILRA authors favour complex sentences when realising their RA sections.

The analyses reveal that a different syntactic level is used to realize the RA sections. In this regard, while the IHRA authors tend to employ simple sentences in realizing their communicative moves, the ILRA authors tend to communicate their sections using complex sentences. The reason for this difference may be that IHRA authors aim to present their texts simply to accommodate all readers' understanding. On the other hand, authors from the Law discipline may be required to communicate complex issues in their fields, and thus, this matter may suggest them to use more complex sentences.

This finding confirms the findings of the earlier study in Indonesian and international journals, which discovered that applied linguistic RA abstracts mostly use simple sentences to realize their communicative moves (Andika et al., 2018). It seems similar to those in English social science research article introductions (RAIs) (Lu et al., 2020), Thai research article abstracts (RAAs) (Loan, 2018) because they also tend to realize their communicative moves using simple sentences. Thus, these comparisons indicate that most article authors incline to employ simple sentences to realize their ideas in their research articles. The reason is possibly to make readers more easily comprehend their research papers. By thus, their writing may attract readers' attentions and encourage readers to read it further.

## Conclusion

The present finding is evidence that authors in both data sets tend to employ simple sentences in their research articles, and it has been similar to most of the previous literature. It indicates that considering readers' understanding when writing research papers is very pivotal. Thus, writing research papers for publication is recommended using simple sentences, simple ways, and simple language to ensure understanding for our readers. However, this study is only limited to syntactic types in the research article section and has limited scope. Thus, further studies on syntactic types in broader scopes, different disciplines, and different purposes are suggested to contribute syntactic analysis within literature.

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