



ONLINE ENGLISH SENTENCE CONSTRUCTIONS BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, NUSA CENDANA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT: This research aimed at finding out: 1. kinds of sentences constructed by semester VI undergraduate students of the English Education Department, School of Teachers Training and Educational Sciences, Nusa Cendana University; 2. their strengths and weaknesses in constructing those sentences; and, 3. solutions to their weaknesses in constructing English sentences. To achieve those aims, this research used descriptive-qualitative research paradigm. The phenomenon to be investigated is how students joining TEFL course constructed certain sentences in communicating with their lecturer or in doing their tasks. The research was done at the English Department of Nusa Cendana University from March 2021 to October, 2021. The instruments used to collect the data were students' online documents and interviews. The data were analysed descriptively based on English grammatical accuracy. It was found that, first, kinds of sentences the students constructed were simple, complex, compound and compound-complex sentences including sentences which are discursive on their own, that is, sentences as complete discourses themselves like "Thank you, Sir!". Second, the students' strengths varied: they used various sentence patterns with various words, tenses, structures, and mechanics. Third, their weaknesses were sentence structures, tenses, vocabulary, and mechanics which were not always correctly used. Some sentences, for example, had no subjects or verbs. Fourth, to solve their weaknesses, they say, for example, that they must study harder, memorize English structure, and be more active in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English.

Keywords: *constructing, simple/complex/compound sentences, strengths, weaknesses, and problem-solving.*

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 Pandemic has been around for more than one year now. It has created a lot of problems, one of which is that we can no longer physically stay closer to one another like what we usually did before the pandemic. This is why educational centers from early childhood education levels to tertiary ones, including the English Education Department (EED) of Nusa Cendana University (Undana) in Kupang, Indonesia, have to do their teaching and learning activities online. Such online teaching and learning activities bring, of course, both advantages and disadvantages that, for the time being, have not been known yet, that is, we have not known yet the advantages or disadvantages those teaching and learning centers have in conducting their online teaching and learning activities. It is, therefore, interesting to find out how such teaching and learning centers as the Undergraduate EED of Undana has conducted their online activities. Our focus is on the sentences constructed by the students of the Undergraduate EED of Undana, that is: what kinds of sentences they use to communicate with their lecturers; how they use those sentences; and, what needs to be done to overcome their weaknesses in using English sentences. It is acknowledged that there have been some studies on sentence constructions by students

learning English as a foreign language like those by Pressey (2021), Balal (2015), Diana (2017), Din & Ghani (2017), Furey (2017), Malaca-Sistoza (2016), Ask Scientific (2014), Tans (1999a/b; 2007; 2010; and, 2012), Edelsky (1982), Diaz-Chamacho et al. (1995) and Odell (1977) concerning writing in which sentence construction is of great importance, but studies that focus on the research subjects' sentence constructions in English that we have studied with are not available yet. This is why we have tried to focus our study on such an issue

For the researchers, the problem is important to be investigated for the following reasons. First, online teaching and learning activities which are total are relatively new for teachers and their students themselves, not only in Indonesia, but also around the world because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is, therefore, crucial for teachers/lecturers and students to know how it works. Such an evaluation will eventually improve their knowledge, skills, and character which are crucial for their future (see, for example, Freire, 1972; Illich, 1976; Paturusi, 2012; Tans, 2011a/b).

Second, mastering the art of using any sentence effectively is necessary to have good communication and relationship among the

communicating parties. The first one is academic, whereas the second social. This is crucial because when people are excellent in terms of knowledge and skills, but their characters are poor, they could fail. On the other hand, those who may not be so smart or skillful, but they can be very successful if their characters are good (D’Cruz & Hannah, 1979; Rogers, 1983; Neville, 2005).

Third, studying this topic is essentially good for everyone because everyone does use any sentence in his/her communication. Since everyone uses it, it is, therefore, important for everyone to understand it well and to use it appropriately in its right contexts so that their communication aims can be well-achieved. This is also important because using a language, any sentence in this case, in a wrong context with wrong people could be detrimental or vice versa (Aman, 2014).

Fourth, for the research subjects who are prospective teachers themselves, this is a good topic to be investigated because it could help them master the art of using effective sentences in their communication with their students later. This, in turn, would help the students become good communicators that create harmony in their life wherever they live (Neville, 2005).

Fifth, this study is to be done in the context of learning or teaching English as a foreign language that could make learning very difficult. Yet, this study could help the students and others learning English in the same context be more prepared to master English. In this sense, doing some research on this topic is crucial.

Sixth, this study is also important because it is in English. This will help the participants and those who will read the results of this research understand better the nature of studying English as a foreign language. By understanding it, they can then be more successful in studying it and they, in turn, can use it to enrich their knowledge, skills and characters by reading or listening to any references in English that they understand.

Based on such reasons, the researcher, therefore, believes that this study entitled “An Analysis of Online English Sentence Constructions by Semester VI Undergraduate Students of the English Education Department of Nusa Cendana University” is worth doing with the aims of answering the following research questions:

1. What kinds of sentences are constructed by semester VI undergraduate students of the English Department of Nusa Cendana University?
2. What are their strengths and weaknesses in constructing those sentences?

3. How can they improve their ability to construct English sentences?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Word Choice in Communication

In verbal communication between/among individuals in which one or two or more messages are to be sent from an individual or some individuals to others, people usually use some words that are tied together into a sentence or some sentences as in the following dialogue.

Dialogue I

John : Good morning, Peter! How are you?

Peter : I am fine, John. Thank you! How are you?

In that dialogue, such words like “good”, “morning”, “Peter”, “how”, “are” and “you” (line 1) are used by “John” to greet “Peter.” In return, “Peter” used “I”, “am”, “fine”, “John”, “thank”, and “you” to respond to John’s greeting.

It is quite common though that each individual involved in a conversation uses one single word representing a single sentence as in the following dialogue between John and Peter.

Dialogue II

John : Hi!

Peter : Hi!

In Dialogue II above, both John and Peter simply use the word “Hi” and it is sufficient for them to have a very good communication.

It is, therefore, crucial to notice that what is more important in a verbal communication is that those involved in a conversation utter some meaningful words to create an understanding between or among them. They may use more or less words depending on the message(s) they want to convey. The more complex the message(s) they want to send, the more words they use or vice versa.

In English, the words used are generally classified into the following categories, that is: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, articles, prepositions, determiners, and conjunctions. When they are used in sentences, it is essential that the words are used effectively so that they can be understood by listeners in terms of speaking or by readers in writing as the speaker or writer wants them to (Tans, 2014:16-25) as in the following example by Yule (1990: 70):

The lucky boys saw the clowns at
article adjective noun verb article noun preposition

<i>the</i>	<i>circus</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>cheered</i>	<i>loudly.</i>
article	noun	conjunction	pronoun	verb	adverb

In order to use those words effectively in communication, i.e. writing and speaking, it is, therefore, crucial that both speakers and listeners or writers and readers understand how the words are correctly and properly used and formed. Those words, Yule (1990:51-58) states, can be formed through such processes as “coinage,” “borrowing,” “compounding,” “blending,” “clipping,” “backformation,” “conversion,” “acronyms,” “derrivation,” “prefixes,” “suffixes,” “infixes,” and “multiple processes”.

In addition, knowing how they are formed in singular or plural forms for nouns, for example, is also important because it will influence how such words are used in sentences to be described below. Plural nouns, for example, need plural verbs, namely, verbs without “-s/es,” whereas singular nouns need singular verbs, that is, verbs without “-s/es” as in the following text.

Text 1

Peter and John buy some books every month;
Peter buys books on politics, but John buys books
on education.

Text 1 shows that the verb “buy” is used in line 1 of the text because its subject is “Peter and John”, whereas “buys” (plus -s) in line 2 because both clauses have singular subjects, i.e., “Peter” and “John” respectively.

Sentence Patterns

In speaking and in writing, the words mentioned above are usually used in sentences. In other words, they are not used in isolation; they are used in their contexts with such functions as subjects, predicates, and objects. In general, nouns and pronouns can be both subjects and objects of sentences with some form modifications for pronouns, whereas verbs are used as predicates, while adjectives are used to modify nouns, and adverbs are used to modify verbs and adjectives as in the following Text 2.

Text 2

Peter Bot has met Mery Ros. He met her yesterday.

In Text 1, “Peter Bot” and “Mery Ros” are noun phrases, whereas “has met” and “met” are verbs, the words “He” and “her” are pronouns, and the word “yesterday” is an adverb of time. So, if we analyze Text 1, we find out that “Peter Bot” is the subject of sentence 1, and “He” of sentence 2, whereas “has

met” and “met” are predicates of sentences 1 and 2 respectively, “Mery Ros” and “her” as objects of sentences 1 and 2 respectively, and “yesterday” as an adverb of time. It is shown there that the word “her” is a modification of the word “she” referring to “Mery Ros”. The word “her” has to be used there because it is an object of the sentence; “she” cannot be used there because “she” is a pronoun functioning as a subject.

There are some patterns of sentences based on the verbs(s) used, that is, transitive and intransitive verbs plus those with phrases or adverbs, verbs that cannot be used in passive forms, transitive verbs with two objects, linking verbs, verbs used with “that” clauses, verbs with infinitive phrases, verbs with direct speech, verbs in various patterns, and phrasal verbs as in the following examples (Hornby, 1948: 36-41):

1. A large dog **appeared** (intransitive verb used alone);
2. A group of swans **loated by** (intransitive verb plus adverb/preposition);
3. Jill’s behaviour **annoyed me** (transitive verb plus noun phrase/pronoun);
4. He **kicked the ball into the net** (transitive verb plus noun phrase plus adverb);
5. I **gave Sue the book** (transitive verb with two objects, namely, noun phrase + noun phrase);
6. His voice **sounds hoarse** (linking verb plus adjective);
7. Elena became a doctor (linking verb plus a noun phrase);
8. She **considered herself lucky** (linking verb plus noun phrase plus adjective);
9. They **elected him president** (linking verb plus noun phrase plus noun phrase);
10. He **said that** he would walk (intransitive verb with clause or phrases);
11. Can you **remind me that** I need to buy some milk? (transitive verb plus noun phrase and **that** clause);
12. I **wonder what** the job will be like (intransitive verb plus wh-clause);
13. I **asked him where** the hall was (transitive verb plus noun phrase plus **wh**-clause);
14. I want **to leave** now (transitive verb plus **to** infinitive);
15. I **forced him to go** with me (transitive verb plus noun phrase **to** infinitive);
16. Did you **hear the phone ring**? (transitive verb plus noun phrase plus infinitive without **to**);
17. She never **stops talking** (intransitive verb plus **- ing** phrase);
18. His comments **set me thinking** (intransitive verb plus noun phrase plus **- ing** phrase);

19. “It’s snowing,” she **said** (intransitive verb plus direct speech); and,
20. “Tom’s coming too,” she **told him** (Transitive verb plus noun phrase plus direct speech).

It is important that language users use such patterns correctly in order to create what Yule (1990: 86) calls ‘grammatical sentences’ as shown below:

1. The girl followed the boy.
2. A boy helped the horse.
3. The horse saw a girl.
4. Myrna helped George recently.
5. George saw a horse yesterday.
6. A small horse followed Myrna.
7. The small boy saw George with a crazy horse recently.

Yule (1990: 86) adds that a failure to use any grammatical sentences results in some sentence forms that are not grammatical as in:

1. Boy the Myrna saw.
2. Helped a girl.
3. Small horse with girl

The Nature of Teaching Grammar

This research-based article is basically related to the teaching and learning of English words (morphology) and sentences (syntax). This is why understanding how morphology, that is, “forms in language” (Yule, 1990: 60), and syntax, namely, “the structure and ordering of components within a sentence” (Yule, 1990: 80) are taught and learned in English, is, therefore, crucial.

As a general concept, grammar of any language in general, of EFL in the context of this study, should be taught contextually depending on the people who join “the grammar class.” If its participants are children, grammar may not be formally taught; it may be acquired along the process of learning as children usually acquire their native language (L-1), that is, there is no grammar teaching and/or learning at all, but they can relatively master their L-1 relatively quickly and well within five or six years of age. For adults, however, the teaching of English grammar is important because their L-1 grammatical knowledge could help them master their L-2 (second or foreign language). In that sense, adults are able to compare what they have already known in their L-1 to what they are learning in L-2. This is why people say that in learning a foreign language, children are faster than adults, but adults are better than children.

When grammar is taught, however, its teaching and learning should start from simple topics to more challenging ones. This has been applied, for example, in the teaching and learning of EFL in

Indonesian contexts: most English textbooks start with “greetings” for lower grades up to more challenging topics in upper grades in primary and/or secondary education contexts like writing “long functional texts” with relatively complex generic structures (see, for example, Alisjahbana, 1990; Naylor & Hagger, 1992; Polette, 2008; Fauziati et al., 2011; Tans, 2014).

In addition to such a principle, in teaching EFL in particular, any foreign or second language in general, teachers usually use such methods as grammar translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, and communicative method (Yule, 1990: 152-155) as well as a combination of them, that is, an eclectic method (Brown, 2008; Polette, 2008).

Those methods are usually applied by EFL teachers in relation to their teaching and learning syllabi that they design based on their understanding of their students’ learning needs, talents, and environmental contexts. In other words, teachers have to design their teaching and learning syllabi that contain teaching materials which should be “relevant, various, integrated, sustainable, and holistic (Fauziati et al., 2011: 73).

In that context, Rajan (2003 in Fauziati et al., 2001: 73-74) adds, good teaching materials are those that do not merely inform some pieces of information, but facilitate and motivate them to learn as MAGIC, namely, “motivating and meaningful; authentic and appropriate; graphic and graded; interesting, interactive, and integrated; contextual and creative”.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive. As a descriptive research, its major aim is to objectively describe a phenomenon (Borg & Gall, 1989; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this research, the phenomenon to be investigated is online English sentence construction by undergraduate students, that is, those who joined TEFL (Teaching English as A Foreign Language) course last semester at the Undergraduate English Education Department of Nusa Cendana University in Kupang, Indonesia.

For this research, our research subjects were students who joined TEFL Course that is, Class F (37 students) and Class G (42 students). So, there were 79 students altogether. In this sense, the research subjects were purposively chosen. This research was done from March (research preparation) to December, 2021 (Research results report writing and publication of this academic article based on this study).

To collect its research data, the researcher has used certain research instruments as indicated by, among others, Borg dan Gall (1989: 393), that is, written interviews that were distributed online and students' documents, that is, the tasks and/or communications they made are also submitted online.

The major aim of interviewing the students online is to know what they should do to improve their ability to construct effective sentences in English when they do their tasks of TEFL or when they have to communicate with their lecturer(s) online. In the context of this research, the question that the students had to answer was this: "What do they do to improve their English (sentences) or to overcome their problems in learning English (sentences)?"

In addition, we also obtained our data from the documents that we got from our research, namely, students' tasks for TEFL courses and any discourses they could make when they communicated with their lecturer. Both documents were obtained online and printed for data analysis purposes.

Our technique to collect our data was by allowing our students to have a communication with their TEFL lecturer that was done through "Online Google Classroom" due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This means of online communications was regarded as our research data. This was also the case for our interviews. We had written down in great details our research subjects' responses to the question stated above. Their answers to the questions lead us to the facts which they usually went through to improve their understanding of English, that is, the main subject they had to master during their studying.

In addition to allowing them to have communication with their lecturer, the students were also asked to do some tasks like writing a summary of the teaching materials they had learned/studied or writing their comments on the videos they had watched. Our focuses were to find out whether their sentence constructions were good/effective or not.

The data (coded "D" in this article) were classified based on the research questions, namely: kinds of sentences constructed by semester VI undergraduate students of the Undergraduate English Education Department of Nusa Cendana University; their strengths and weaknesses in constructing those sentences; and, how they could improve their ability to construct English sentences.

Those data were used as they were originally written by their writers. This is why such sentences as "Thank you , sir" (D.4), "Alright, thankyou sir" (D.5); and, "Good Morning, Sir." (D.6) were

written as they were without any revision (see p. 24).

Theories on sentence patterns in English (e.g. Hornby's sentence patterns) have been the basis for our analysis of the research data so that we can describe them in great details.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kinds of Sentences Constructed

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence consists of one independent clause with one subject and one predicate, and it is complete as an idea. In this research, however, we also include "sentences" which do not literally have a subject and a predicate, but they are ideally complete. Therefore, such sentences as follows, written in their original forms, are included as simple sentences:

1. Alright, Sir (D.1);
2. Thank you very much! (D.2);
3. Thank you, Sir. (D.3);
4. Thank you , sir (D.4);
5. Alright, thankyou sir (D.5);
6. Good Morning, Sir. (D.6);
7. All right, Sir, Thank you (D.7).

The sentences above show that they do not have subjects and predicates, but they have complete meanings. Therefore, each is called a simple sentence.

In addition, the research subjects also use simple sentences that have just one single subject and one single predicate plus other relevant words as shown below:

1. The third video is more theoretical (D.8., lines 10-11);
2. Then in next video, it is about Teaching English in China (D.9, lines 12-13);
3. Another video is about language Teaching Methods: Communicative Approach (D.10, lines 16-17);
4. In teaching, it is really necessary to give an opportunity to the students to discuss any particular topic (D.11, lines 17-18);
5. The next one is about Theories - Methods & Techniques of Teaching English (D. 12, lines 20-21); and,
6. And the last video is about teaching strategy mainly about TPR (D.13, lines 23-24).

Each sentence above shows that each has one single subject and predicate. So, in sentence 1, its subject is "The third video", the second "it", the third "Another video", the fourth "it", the fifth "The

next one”, and the sixth “the last video.” They all have the same predicate, that is, “is.”

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence is a sentence that consists of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The independent clause is connected with its dependent clause(s) by subordinating conjunctions, namely, *after, although, as, because, before, how, if, once, since, then, though, till, until, when, where, whether, and while*, or by relative pronouns, that is, *that, which, who, whom, and whose*.

Based on the criteria, the following sentences are complex sentences by our research subjects:

1. I would like to jot down the lessons that I learned right after I watched the videos above about Foreign Language Teaching Method (D.14, lines 1-3)
2. The main focus of teaching students a language is so students could be able to communicate the language learned (D. 15, lines 5-7) 2.
3. It discusses about a book written by Jack C. Richards which mainly contains the Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (D. 16, lines 11-13)
4. In that video, I could see that an enjoyable class is very fundamental in teaching. (D.17, lines 14-15).
5. This video discusses important points in methods and techniques used in teaching English (D.18, lines 21-22).
6. So, these are the points that I conclude based on the video listed above (D. 19, line 26).

In sentence one, its independent clause is “*I would like to jot down the lessons*” and it has two dependent clauses, that is, “*that I learned*” and “*right after I watched the videos above about Foreign Language Teaching Method*”. In sentence two, its independent clause is “*The main focus of teaching students a language is,*” whereas its dependent clause is “*so students could be able to communicate the language learned.*” Sentence three has one independent clause, that is, “*It discusses about a book,*” and two dependent clauses, namely: 1. “*written by Jack C. Richards;*” and, 2) “*which mainly contains the Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.*” Sentence four has one independent clause and one dependent clause, namely, “*In that video, I could see*” and “*that an enjoyable class is very fundamental in teaching*” successively. Sentence five has one

independent clause, that is, “*This video discusses important points in methods and techniques,*” while its dependent clause is “*used in teaching English*” which is an elliptical form of “*which is in ...*”. Sentence six has one independent clause, that is, “*these are the points,*” and it has three dependent clauses, namely, “*that I conclude,*” “*based on the video*” and “*listed above*”. The last two clauses are elliptical forms of “*which is based ...*” and “*which is listed ...*”.

So, based on the independent and dependent clauses found on those sentences, it is known that all the sentences are included in complex sentences. In other words, the sentences are called complex sentences because each of them has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses as explained above.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is a sentence that has at least two independent clauses connected by such coordinating conjunctions as *and, but, or, nor, for, yet, and so* or a semicolon (;) as in the following data:

1. So, right after the class or lecture, teachers should choose a topic or more so the students could discuss and train their ability in communicating their ideas (D. 19, lines 18-20);
2. Students have different learning styles but teachers should focus on teaching them the objectives and build their understanding of the lesson (D. 20, lines 23-24).

Each sentence above consists of two independent clauses. In the first, both independent clauses have been connected by the coordinating conjunction “so” and in the second by the word “but”. In both contexts, the independent clauses can be main sentences of their own. In other words, both can be changed into the following sentences with, more or less, the same meanings, namely:

1. Right after the class or lecture, teachers should choose a topic or more;
2. The students could discuss and train their ability in communicating their ideas;
3. Students have different learning styles; and,
4. Teachers should focus on teaching them the objectives and build their understanding of the lesson.

As sentences of their own, they have their own subjects, namely, “teacher” in the first sentence, “the student” in the second, “students” in the third, and “teachers” in the fourth. They also have their own predicates, namely, “should choose” in the

second, “could discuss and train” in the second, “have” in the third, and “should focus” in the fourth. Those subjects and predicates make them independent sentences.

Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence consists of at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Like compound sentences, the independent clauses are united by coordinating conjunctions as in the following sentence written by a research subject:

The next video is about learning how to teach English and from this video I learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching (D. 21, lines 6-8).

The sentence shows that it has two independent clauses, that is: 1. *The next video is about learning*; and, 2. *from this video I learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching*. Both clauses are joined by the coordinating conjunction “and”; what makes them a compound-complex sentence is that an independent clause in the sentence has its own dependent clause, that is, “*how to teach English*” for the independent clause “*The next video is about learning*.”

Students’ Strengths in Constructing English Sentences

The data show that the students as subjects of this research have various strengths in constructing English sentences. First, they have managed to use mostly all kinds of English sentence structures in their writing as shown by the example above (Point 4.1). Secondly, their sentence constructions are not only effective, that is, they are grammatically correct and, therefore, their meanings are clear, but also various in terms of the sentence patterns, vocabulary, and mechanics they use as in the following examples:

1. Thank you very much! (D.2);
2. Thank you, Sir. (D.3);
3. The third video is more theoretical (D.8., lines 10-11);
4. In teaching, it is really necessary to give an opportunity to the students to discuss any particular topic (D.11, lines 17-18);
5. And the last video is about teaching strategy mainly about TPR (D.13, lines 23-24).
6. In that video, I could see that an enjoyable class is very fundamental in teaching. (D.17, lines 14-15);

7. This video discusses important points in methods and techniques used in teaching English (D.18, lines 21-22);
8. So, these are the points that I conclude based on the video listed above (D. 19, line 26); and,
9. The next video is about learning how to teach English and from this video I learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching (D. 21, lines 6-8).

The sentences above show some research subjects’ strengths in constructing English sentences in terms of the contents/messages they want to express through the sentences they use, the sentence structures they construct, and the mechanics they use in their sentences. As seen in the sentences above, the messages/contents they create in the sentences var. Sentences 1 and 2, for example, express what is called “saying thanks” in relation to “interpersonal text” (see, Fauziaty et al.: 2011), others are statements in which some ideas are presented in very clear sentence structures like subject(s), predicates, and/or complements as well as other pieces of information like adverb of time and place in simple sentence, but also in compound sentence forms.

Sentences 3-5 are simple sentences that the student writers use perfectly, in terms of their subjects and predicates which are in singular in each sentence. The third sentence, namely, “The third video is more theoretical,” (D.8., lines 10-11), for example, is a simple sentence, that is, its subject is “The third video” and its predicate is “is more theoretical.” In terms of its grammatical pattern, it is correct because its subject is in agreement with its predicate, “is more theoretical.” It is also correct in terms of the tense used, that is, simple present tense to show the nature of the video, that is, “more theoretical” which is true for the past, present and future conditions.

The data also show that the students are also competent in using complex sentences, namely, sentences 6-8 of the examples shown above. These are complex sentences because each of the sentence has one independent clause and one dependent clause as described in the following table.

Table 4.1: Classification of Independent and Dependent Clauses

No.	Independent Clause	Dependent Clause
1.	In that video, I could see	that an enjoyable class is very fundamental in teaching. (D.17, lines 14-15);

2.	This video discusses important points in methods and techniques	(that/which are) used in teaching English (D.18, lines 21-22);
3.	So, these are the points	That I conclude based on the video listed above (D.19, line 26)

As a clause, each independent clause and dependent clause have their own subject, that is, *I*, *This video*, and *these* as the subjects for the independent clauses and *could see*, *discusses important points in methods and techniques*, and *are the points* are the predicates and their complements (i.e. objects etc.) for the independent clause. Whereas for the dependent clauses, its subjects are “an enjoyable class” for sentence 1, (methods and techniques which/that) for sentence 2, and “I” for sentence three; its predicates are “is very fundamental in teaching” for sentence 1, “are used in teaching English” for sentence 2, and “conclude based on the video listed above” for sentence 3.

It is important to state here, however, that sentence three above has three dependent clauses, namely: 1. that I conclude; 2. (that/which is) based on the video; and, 3. (that/which is) listed above. In that sense, the subject of each dependent clause is as follows: I for dependent clause 1, (the points) for dependent clause 2, and the video for the dependent clause 3; their predicates are “conclude” for dependent clause 1, (is) based on the video for dependent clause 2, and “is listed above” for dependent clause 3. It is clear here that what is used in dependent clauses 2 and 3 are elliptical forms so that their subjects are not literally written but they are understood well in the context, so that their subjects are as clear as crystal by those whose English is of advanced level.

Sentence 9 (p. 28), that is, “The next video is about learning how to teach English and from this video I learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching” (D. 21, lines 6-8) is a compound sentence, that is, the first independent clause is “The next video is about learning how to teach English” and the second is “from this video I learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching”. As an independent clause, each has its own subject and predicates. The subject of the first is “The next video” and its predicate is “is about learning how to teach English.” For the second, its subject is “I” and its predicate is “learned that about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching.”

The sentences above are all well-structured and, therefore, they can be understood without any difficulty. This is why these sentences show the student writers’ strengths in sentence construction. In sentence 9, however, the use of the word “that” is misleading. So, to make the sentence more effective, it should not be used so that the sentence would be like this: “The next video is about learning how to teach English and from this video I learned about the importance of applying a good methodology in teaching” (D. 21, lines 6-8). Yet, if that has to be used in that sentence, some modifications should be made so that it could be like this: “The next video is about learning how to teach English and from this video I learned that it is important to apply a good methodology in teaching.” What sentence should be used depends, of course, on the writer him/herself, that is, what he/she really means. However, it is still regarded as a strength of the writer because the use of the word “that” in that sentence does not really ruin the whole meaning of the sentence. In other words, the sentence is still effective despite the use of the word “that”. This is why this sentence is still regarded as a strength of the students in writing good sentence in English.

In addition, the research students’ good competences in constructing English sentences can also be seen by their use of mechanics in constructing their sentences. Sentences 1-9 above have been written without errors in punctuation and spelling.

Such strengths as contents, structures, and mechanics can also be seen in the following sentences: 1. I've been watching the video upstairs (D.22); and, 2. I'd like to comment on it (D.23). Those two sentences also show that the student can indeed write the sentences whose contents, structures, and mechanics are all well-done.

Students’ Weaknesses in Constructing English Sentences

Acknowledging that the students have some strengths in constructing English sentences as stated above (Point 4.2) does not mean that the students have no mistakes or errors in constructing the sentences they use in communicating with their lecturers. Some examples of their errors and/or mistakes that indicate their weaknesses in constructing English sentences can be seen below:

1. Alright, Sir (D.24);
2. Thank you , sir (D.25);
3. Alright, thankyou sir (D.26);
4. Good Morning, Sir. (D.27);
5. All right, Sir, Thank you (D.28).

6. Then in next video, it is about Teaching English in China (D.29, lines 12-13);
7. Another video is about language Teaching Methods: Communicative Approach (D.30, lines 16-17);
8. The next one is about Theories - Methods & Techniques of Teaching English (D. 31, lines 20-21); and,
9. I would like to jot down the lessons that I learned right after I watched the videos above about Foreign Language Teaching Method (D.32, lines 1-3)
10. The main focus of teaching students a language is so students could be able to communicate the language learned (D. 33, lines 5-7) 2.
11. It discusses about a book written by Jack C. Richards which mainly contains the Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (D. 34, lines 11-13)
12. Good afternoon Sir, sorry i'm late sending assignments because the network here is not very supportive. Thank you very much sir. (D.35, lines 1-2).
13. Thank you very much sir. (D.36, line 2).

As seen from the sentences above, the student writers' weaknesses can be described as follows. Frist, in Sentence 1 (D.24) above, the writer fails to use punctuations like an exclamation mark and comma, spelling, and spaces in constructing a sentence. In sentence 1, for example, the sentence is without an exclamatory mark. So, it should be, "Alright, Sir!"

In Sentences 2-4, the writer fails to use a comma and spelling correctly. The sentence should be changed as follows to make them more effective:

1. Thank you, Sir!
2. Alright, thank you, Sir!
3. Good morning, Sir!

The modifications show that there should be no space after "you", that is, comma must be written right after "you" as in the modification above, and there should be an exclamatory to end the sentence. This is also the case for the second sentence: there should be a space between "thank" and "you" as well as an exclamatory mark to end the sentence. In Sentence 4, the word "Morning" may not be capitalized and an exclamatory mark be used to end the sentence as in the modification above.

Problems related to spelling can also be seen in Sentences 6-9 and Sentence 11. So, the sentences should be revised as follows:

1. Then in next video, it is about teaching English in China;
2. Another video is about language teaching methods: communicative approach;

3. The next one is about theories - ethods & Tetchniques of teaching English;
4. I would like to jot down the lessons that I learned right after I watched the videos above about foreign language teaching method.
5. It discusses about a book written by Jack C. Richards which mainly contains the approaches and methods in language teaching.

The second weakness is that the student writer fails to separate two sentences with two different ideas. In other words, they tend to unify two sentences into one single sentence, but the unification is not effective as in Sentence 5 above. To make it more effective, the sentence should be separated into two, that is: Alright, Sir! Thank you! (D.28).

This is the case for Sentence 12. The student writer fails to separate two main ideas into two different sentences. So, the sentence should be changed into two sentences, namely: Good afternoon, Sir! Sorry, I'm late sending (you my) assignments because the network here is not very supportive.

The third is that the students fail to use some words correctly. In other words, their problem is related the use of some vocabulary like "so" as in Sentence 10 above. To make it more effective, it should be like this: *The main focus of teaching students a language is that students could be able to communicate the language learned.* So, instead of using the word "so", the writer should use the word "that" in that context.

Some weaknesses, which have been underlined by the researchers, can also be seen in the following sentences constructed by the students:

1. In the first video about "natural approach/direct methods language teaching" i learned about the importance of developing communicative skills (D.37, lines 2-3).
2. The next video "language teaching methods : communicatif approach" taught me the importance of promoting conversation in class and supervising students' progress because there is no purpose in learning when you talk too much (D.38, lines 3-4).
3. The next video "learning how to teach english - esl methodology at the language house tefl" contains methods and ways used to teach language as teachers of foreign languages (D.39, lines 4-5)
4. The next video "theoris-methods & techniques of teaching english" contains information on English teaching techniques and is very important because it is so helpful for teachers to be better at teaching (D.40, lines 5-6).

5. The next video "Jack c. Richards - approaches and methods in language teaching" contains a different approach or textbook method for an English teacher, it also develops a knowledge of student and teacher consciousness (D.41, lines 6-7).
6. The last video "Teaching english in china" of teaching English in China in the video I saw that the atmosphere in the classroom was very cheerful where the teacher made the students enthusiastic about taking the lesson where it was good to avoid getting students bored (D.42, lines 10-12).

The sentences should be made more effective as follows:

1. In the first video about natural approach/direct methods language teaching, I learned about the importance of developing communicative skills (D.37, lines 2-3).
2. The next video, (namely), "Language Teaching Methods: Communicative Approach," taught me the importance of promoting conversation in class and supervising students' progress because there is no purpose in learning when you talk too much (D.38, lines 3-4).
3. The next video, "Learning How to Teach English - ESL methodology at the language house TEFL," contains methods and ways used to teach language as teachers of foreign languages (D.39, lines 4-5)
4. The next video, "Theories, Methods & Techniques of Teaching English," contains information on English teaching techniques and (it) is very important because it is so helpful for teachers to be better at teaching (D.40, lines 5-6).
5. The next video, "Jack C. Richards – Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching" contains a different approach or textbook method for an English teacher and it also develops a knowledge of student and teacher consciousness (D.41, lines 6-7).
6. The last video, "Teaching English in China," I saw that the atmosphere in the classroom was very cheerful where the teacher made the students enthusiastic about taking the lesson where it was good to avoid getting students bored (D.42, lines 10-12).

As seen from the modifications made to the sentences above, the students' weaknesses are mainly related to: 1. Spelling and punctuations (Sentences 1-6); and 2. compound sentence construction (Sentences 4-5).

Ways of Improving Students' Ability to Construct English Sentences

It was found that there are 11 ways or strategies to improve students' competence in constructing good/correct English sentences, namely: 1. Knowing what their problems are in learning English; 2. Knowing how to solve their problems in learning English; 3. Studying (English structure) harder to improve and/or to solve their learning problems; 4. Doing their best in learning English; 5. Being more disciplined in studying; 6. Being more determined to succeed; 7. Writing a lot; 8. Reading a lot; 9. Watching English programs more; 10. Practicing to talk/listen a lot in English; and, 11. Asking questions to relevant people like lecturers when in trouble.

Such strategies have been digested from the research subjects' ideas when communicating with their lecturers, namely: creating some steps in designing or planning school lessons; seeking additional information through social media and stories from teachers who already have more experience; keeping on studying harder to improve their English: speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and theories of teaching and learning in general, of language teaching and learning in particular, so that they can be winners in the future; learning to make interesting school lesson plans; discussing with a foreign language teachers; learning more about the principles of designing a syllabus; using language learning media because it is a tool used by students and teachers to facilitate their teaching and learning process and the tools used can be adapted to existing circumstances; reading in great details and, if a topic is not clear, reading it critically over and over again; learning to understand any language methods used; studying and examining what is difficult in English; using language teaching media that really helps them in learning English; interacting regularly with the media and understanding the relationship between language and media that makes it easy to study according to the practices they do; learning the methods and strategies that exist from such media as YouTube which becomes a medium to study TEFL; learning foreign languages using media as a good way or method for the development and assistance of good learning; trying and keeping on trying so that they understand what they can't; translating into Indonesian or from Indonesian when there are words that they don't understand; watching some interesting videos on successful teaching and learning of English; trying to motivate themselves so that they can be very creative and active in learning English; studying on their own

and looking for additional explanations from videos on YouTube and other sources; relearning any topic that they don't understand and looking for references to find any solutions to their learning problems; learning from any relevant videos about TEFL because those videos provide good knowledge and practices to be better in learning/understanding TEFL; studying/working independently or in a group to conceptualize, design, and launch their innovative products in front of classmates and community leaders; motivating themselves in learning English and using it in more communicative ways; learning and practicing consistently; downloading EnglishTV programs and movies, listening to the radio programs, and watching local news; keeping on listening to entertaining things and trying to get the gist of what's going on; relying on previous knowledge/learning; learning such materials as handouts on principles of designing English syllabus and steps in designing/planning English lessons; and, doing the following things: 1. analysis of audience needs; 2. determining learning goals; 3. recalling prior knowledge; 4. designing good/relevant learning contents; 5. developing learning contents; and, trying to read the teaching materials over and over again and to look up videos on YouTube for more understanding.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is worth stating here that most of the students joining this course on TEFL are competent in constructing correct and effective simple, complex, compound, and compound-complex sentences including sentences which are discursive on their own.

However, there are also some cases in which some of them fail to use correct and effective English sentences for their sentences contain some mistakes related to their structures, vocabulary, and mechanics. This problem, in turn, creates misunderstanding that makes it quite difficult for readers to see what they mean.

The students do acknowledge such problems and try to solve them by, for example, studying English harder and being more active in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English in general, in understanding TEFL in particular. It is believed, therefore, that as prospective English teachers they are on the right tract to "master" the language, including its sentence construction, theories, and its best practices related to the teaching and learning of English. This is excellent despite the fact that during this Covid-19 pandemic they mostly learn from home. So, learning from

home by using such media as the Internet like *YouTube* has improved their mastery of EFL, its theories, and the best practices of TEFL which are crucial for them as future teachers.

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