

Reasoning Patterns and Sentence Construction Errors in Students' Scholarly Articles: A Content Analysis of Academic Writing in Padang City

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ABSTRACT

Effective sentences—characterized by unity, coherence, conciseness, clarity, and emphasis—are essential in scholarly writing. However, students often struggle to apply these principles consistently. This study investigates the reasoning patterns and sentence construction errors in students' scholarly articles in Padang City. This descriptive qualitative study analyzed final assignments written for a sociolinguistics course. Data were collected through an observation technique that involved systematically reading each article, identifying and marking errors in sentence effectiveness, and categorizing them based on predetermined criteria. The data were validated using theoretical triangulation, referencing Putrayasa's effective sentence framework. Data analysis employed content analysis and an interactive model. The findings reveal that while students commonly employed inductive and deductive reasoning patterns, their use was often flawed due to inadequate empirical support and weak analytical depth. Additionally, errors related to unity, conciseness, emphasis, and variety were prevalent, diminishing the clarity and professionalism of the writing. The study indicates a gap between students' theoretical understanding of sentence construction and their practical application. Their ineffective use of reasoning patterns and sentence structures hinders the development of coherent academic arguments. These findings underscore the need for targeted training to improve students' reasoning and writing skills. Structured guidance and practice can enhance their ability to produce clear, professional, and impactful scholarly articles.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization and digital information, academic writing has become an essential skill for students in higher education. Scholarly writing not only serves as a medium for

communicating research findings but also functions as a platform for engaging in academic discourse and contributing to the development of scientific knowledge (Ghufron, 2014). The quality of a student's academic writing can significantly influence their academic performance and future opportunities in both academic and professional contexts.

However, many students still struggle with producing clear, well-structured, and logically sound scholarly texts. Common issues include the use of ineffective sentences, lack of clarity, wordiness, and poor logical reasoning. For instance, Effendi et al. (2022) and Nurgiansah (2020) highlight that students often write sentences that are grammatically correct but fail to communicate ideas efficiently or persuasively (Afnita, 2022; Efrianto et al., 2024; Ulya & Jaya, 2015; Ulya et al., 2017). These issues reduce the readability and credibility of the students' work, making it less impactful.

These challenges are particularly evident among university students in Padang City. Preliminary observations conducted at Bung Hatta University revealed that many student research papers contain numerous errors related to sentence effectiveness. These include redundancy, ambiguity, and a lack of syntactic variety. In addition, many students exhibit weak reasoning patterns, such as using irrelevant analogies or presenting conclusions that are not supported by the data. Such problems not only affect the linguistic quality of the texts but also the logical integrity of the arguments presented.

Several previous studies have explored students' academic writing issues. Septafi (2021) identified frequent grammatical errors, while Kusuma et al. (2022) stressed the importance of mastering effective sentence construction. Mahsusi and Hudaa (2022), Ruspa (2020), and Tanjung and Arifudin (2023) also noted common problems in sentence structure and paragraph development. However, these studies primarily focus on surface-level grammatical aspects and rarely examine how students build arguments through logical reasoning. Thus, a gap remains in understanding how sentence effectiveness relates to reasoning quality in student writing.

Despite the growing body of international research on academic writing, most studies have treated sentence-level language features and reasoning as separate instructional domains. For example, Hyland (2016) extensively examined genre-based academic writing, emphasizing structure and audience awareness, while Wingate (2012) promoted the integration of academic literacy into discipline-specific instruction. However, both studies tend to focus on macro-level features such as text organization and genre conventions, with less attention given to micro-level sentence construction and logical coherence in student writing. This research aims to bridge that gap by showing how weaknesses in sentence effectiveness often correlate with flawed reasoning strategies, thus requiring a dual approach in writing instruction.

This study diverges from existing research by offering a diagnostic approach that treats sentence effectiveness not only as a matter of linguistic form but also as an indicator of cognitive performance. While earlier local studies such as Kusuma et al. (2022) or Septafi (2021) focused primarily on surface-level grammar errors, they rarely interrogated how such errors reflect deeper issues in reasoning. Similarly, although international research acknowledges the role of logic in persuasive writing (Andrews, 2009), there has been little empirical exploration of how undergraduate students in EFL contexts construct and sequence reasoning within the constraints of academic conventions. This study therefore makes a distinct contribution by empirically linking ineffective sentences to weak reasoning strategies within a specific socio-cultural setting.

By explicitly comparing local findings with international insights, this research underscores the unique challenges faced by students writing in a second or foreign language (Rachman et al., 2024; Asmawati et al., 2023; Aditiawarman et al., 2025; Ulya, 2024). Many EFL learners, including those in Indonesia, are taught grammar and vocabulary in isolation, with limited exposure to argument structure or rhetorical nuance (Stapleton & Wu, 2015; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Rizky, 2024). This gap

becomes evident in their writing, where even grammatically correct sentences often fail to advance a persuasive or coherent argument. Thus, this study does not merely document errors—it seeks to understand their cognitive and pedagogical roots, making a meaningful contribution to both applied linguistics and educational practice.

This study addresses that gap by offering a novel integrative approach. It examines both the linguistic elements of effective sentences—such as unity, conciseness, emphasis, and variation (Putrayasa, 2014)—and the reasoning patterns used in student academic texts, including generalizations, analogies, and arguments. In doing so, it responds to calls in international literature for greater emphasis on critical thinking and logic in academic writing instruction (Wingate, 2012). This research aims to answer the following questions: (1) What reasoning patterns do students use when writing academic papers? and (2) What types of errors do students make in constructing effective sentences? The findings are expected to contribute to the development of instructional strategies that simultaneously improve students' linguistic accuracy and logical coherence in academic writing.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at analyzing reasoning patterns and errors in the use of effective sentences in students' scholarly articles. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study focuses on interpreting textual data in depth, with the goal of describing how students construct arguments and structure sentences in their academic writing. Rather than relying on numerical data, this approach emphasizes meaning, context, and patterns emerging from written discourse.

The data sources consisted of scholarly articles written by students in Padang City as part of their final assignments in a sociolinguistics course. These papers were selected not only for accessibility but also because they are representative of broader academic writing trends among undergraduate students across language and education disciplines. Sociolinguistics, as a content-rich subject, typically requires students to present arguments, analyze data, and draw conclusions—making it suitable for examining both sentence construction and reasoning. The documentation method was employed to obtain data directly from these original texts, enabling researchers to work with authentic, naturally occurring academic discourse.

Data collection was conducted through textual observation. Each article was carefully read, and segments containing ineffective sentences or flawed reasoning were highlighted and categorized based on pre-established analytical frameworks. Sentence effectiveness was assessed using the four key characteristics proposed by Putrayasa (2014): emphasis, conciseness, unity, and variety. Reasoning patterns—such as generalizations, analogies, and causal argumentation—were identified to examine how students built their claims.

To ensure the validity of the findings, theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing the emergent patterns with relevant theoretical concepts on sentence construction and reasoning strategies (Putrayasa, 2014; Toulmin, 2003). In addition, multiple coders were involved in the data analysis process. Each coder independently analyzed a subset of the data, and coding results were then compared to assess consistency. Inter-rater reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa, which indicated a high level of agreement ($\kappa > 0.80$), thereby reinforcing the credibility of the interpretation.

Data were analyzed using content analysis and the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The process involved three stages: (1) data reduction—simplifying and organizing raw data into thematic categories; (2) data display—presenting findings through narrative summaries and

structured tables; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification—interpreting the patterns in relation to the study's objectives and ensuring alignment between data and theoretical frameworks.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Reasoning Patterns in Students' Scholarly Articles

This section analyzes reasoning patterns found in students' scholarly articles using a consistent analytical framework consisting of four components: (a) reasoning pattern, (b) example, (c) analysis, and (d) improvement suggestion. The analysis is further enriched by connecting the findings to broader theoretical concepts in argumentation and critical thinking.

3.1.1 General Conclusion Reasoning Pattern (Inductive)

In one article, the student examines slang usage among K-Pop EXO fans on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. The writer identifies four forms of slang—abbreviations, humorous mispronunciations, shortened forms, and interjections—and classifies their meanings and functions. The author concludes that slang serves as an effective communication tool to strengthen identity and social bonds within the fan community.

This is an example of inductive reasoning, where the student draws a general conclusion from specific linguistic data. The descriptive-qualitative method supports the inductive process, but the analysis remains surface-level. The author does not detail how each type of slang contributes to identity construction or social interaction. Additionally, the claim regarding slang's "effectiveness" lacks measurable parameters. To enhance analytical depth, the student could incorporate sociolinguistic frameworks on identity and community language and provide concrete interactions illustrating slang use in building group cohesion.

Another student analyzes code-mixing in Instagram comments on @claurakeihl's account, citing phrases such as "miss universe" and "good morning my love." From this, the student concludes that code-mixing reflects a slang trend aimed at creative self-expression. This use of inductive reasoning draws a general trend from a specific data set. However, the conclusion lacks nuance. The terminology "slang language" is vague, and the cultural or functional basis of code-mixing is not fully explained. Expanding the data set beyond a single Instagram account and utilizing theories of code-mixing in digital spaces would strengthen the argument.

3.1.2 Specific Conclusion Reasoning Pattern (Deductive)

One article starts with the general theory that language reflects social context and then concludes that language variation in Prabowo Subianto's Instagram captions reflects both formal and informal relations with his audience. This is deductive reasoning, where a general theoretical framework guides interpretation of a specific case. While the conclusion aligns with the theory, the absence of illustrative examples weakens the argument's persuasiveness. Incorporating actual caption excerpts and linking them to levels of formality or audience orientation would provide depth.

Another article references language variation theory to conclude that idiolects and dialects in Ujung Gading reflect the area's social diversity. Again, deductive logic is used, but the explanation remains general. There is little elaboration on how specific forms of language variation operate in everyday interaction. Providing examples from local conversations and discussing language use in specific sociocultural settings would improve clarity. Theoretical support could include sociolinguistic perspectives on variation and identity.

3.1.3 Analogy Reasoning Pattern

A student compares the Sundanese phrase "wilujeng wengi" to the Indonesian "selamat malam," concluding both function similarly as polite greetings. This analogy is relevant but overly simplistic. It overlooks sociocultural dimensions and pragmatic functions of the greetings. A deeper analysis could explore politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and how politeness varies across languages and cultural norms.

Another student equates code-mixing on Instagram with slang among teenagers, interpreting both as tools of self-expression. The analogy identifies a shared function but fails to contextualize code-mixing as a sociolinguistic strategy. The social dynamics and communicative goals of each phenomenon differ. Integrating theories of digital discourse and identity performance (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) would clarify distinctions and deepen interpretation.

3.1.4 Argumentation Reasoning Pattern

An article argues that language variation in OLX Marketplace ads reflects user diversity, justifying that spelling errors occur due to message prioritization. This is a basic argument with a plausible rationale. However, the absence of empirical evidence—such as actual ads or categorized error types—reduces its impact. Including concrete examples and referencing theories of audience design (Bell, 1984) would make the argument more compelling.

Another article contends that code-mixing in the SasnPeople group is used to adapt to modern trends and enhance appeal. The argument reflects an awareness of language and identity but lacks data and theoretical grounding. Supporting the claim with excerpts from group conversations and referencing theories on language and social identity (e.g., Gumperz, 1982) would increase analytical rigor.

3.1.5 Underlying Factors Behind Students' Reasoning Issues

Reasoning problems in students' academic writing cannot be separated from their educational backgrounds, curriculum design, and sociolinguistic influences. Many students have not received explicit instruction in argumentative logic within academic contexts. At the secondary education level, curricula often emphasize memorization of facts over the development of critical thinking or structured argumentation. As a result, students tend to write based on intuition without grounding their arguments in theoretical frameworks or systematic reasoning.

In addition, curriculum design at the university level often fails to integrate academic writing skills across disciplines. Academic writing is frequently taught as a technical skill—focusing on paragraph structure or grammar—without reinforcing the substance of argumentation or logical thinking. This leads to weak argumentative structures in student texts and underdeveloped reasoning patterns.

Sociolinguistic factors also play a significant role. Students from multilingual backgrounds often face challenges in aligning everyday language registers with the formal style required in academic discourse. As noted by Biber and Gray (2016), academic language is characterized by high syntactic complexity and dense informational content, which starkly contrasts with informal communication. This gap can hinder students' ability to construct coherent and well-structured arguments. Understanding these underlying factors enables educators and curriculum developers to design more holistic instructional approaches—ones that go beyond teaching technical writing mechanics and instead focus on cultivating students' critical thinking and logical reasoning skills within academic settings.

3.2 Errors in Effective Sentence Usage in Students' Scholarly Articles

This section analyzes errors related to effective sentence construction in students' academic writing. The analysis is grounded in Swales' genre theory and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, providing a critical lens to evaluate how sentence-level problems reflect deeper discourse-level issues. To enhance empirical depth, the analysis incorporates frequency data based on 25 analyzed student articles. Of these, unity errors appeared in 32% of sentences containing mistakes, conciseness errors in 28%, emphasis errors in 24%, and variety errors in 16%.

3.2.1 Unity Errors

Unity refers to the presence of a single, clear main idea in a sentence. Fragmented or mixed messages can lead to ambiguity and weakened arguments. According to Halliday's ideational metafunction, unity supports the logical development of experience in discourse. Moreover the following are the examples:

"This study aims to describe the forms of language variation and the functions of slogan language variation in Shopee online shopping advertisements, and the benefit of this study is to deepen knowledge about slogan language variation in Shopee advertisements."

This sentence combines a research aim and its benefit, causing a unity breakdown. The two ideas, though related, require distinct sentence treatment to maintain clarity. Split the sentence: (1) "This study aims to describe the forms and functions of slogan language variation in Shopee online shopping advertisements." (2) "The benefit of this study is to deepen knowledge about slogan language variation in Shopee advertisements." Moreover, the following is an example:

"The sentence used as data is an example of external code-mixing because it contains foreign vocabulary, namely Arabic, in the sentence. The word is 'ukhty,' which means 'my sister' in Arabic."

This sentence lacks cohesion between the reason and example. The discussion jumps from a structural explanation to semantic detail without a connective bridge. Rewrite for clarity: (1) "The sentence is an example of external code-mixing because it contains Arabic vocabulary." (2) "The word 'ukhty' means 'my sister' in Arabic."

3.2.2 Conciseness Errors

Conciseness entails delivering information efficiently without redundancy. Swales' notion of "information packaging" highlights how repetition can dilute rhetorical force. Moreover, the following are the examples of:

"The tweet used as data is an example of external code-mixing because it contains foreign vocabulary, namely English, in the tweet."

"The sentence used as data is an example of code-switching because it contains foreign vocabulary, namely English, in the sentence."

Both sentences contain unnecessary repetition and tautology. Improvement of both sentences are: "This tweet is an example of external code-mixing because it contains English vocabulary" and "This sentence is an example of code-switching because it contains English vocabulary."

3.2.3 Emphasis Errors

Emphasis highlights the most important information in a sentence. According to Halliday's textual metafunction, the thematic structure determines what receives focus. Poor emphasis can obscure key ideas. Moreover the following is an example:

"The word 'ngapain' is used as a substitute for the more formal phrase 'what are you doing.'"

The sentence minimizes the importance of formality distinction and buries the core message. The improvement of the sentence is that "The word 'ngapain' is an informal substitute for the phrase 'what are you doing,' reflecting a shift to casual register." Moreover, the following is the example of:

"The word 'Telkomnyet' is used to criticize unsatisfactory internet services."

This lacks an explanation of connotative meaning and social context. The sentence is improved by saying, "The word 'Telkomnyet' functions as a form of social criticism used to mock inadequate internet service providers, reflecting user frustration in digital discourse."

3.2.4 Variety Errors

Variety in sentence construction enhances readability and engagement. Swales (1990) emphasized variation as essential for genre competence, while Halliday noted its role in maintaining interpersonal meaning. Moreover the following are the examples:

"The swear word is 'Telkomnyet'."

"Language variation is 'aku'."

These simplistic "X is Y" structures lack stylistic variation and depth. Improvements of both sentences are: "The word 'Telkomnyet' exemplifies a profane expression often employed to voice user dissatisfaction with digital services" and "The term 'aku' represents a variant in personal pronoun usage commonly found in informal contexts, particularly in Pesisir Selatan." Overall, these sentence-level errors reflect not only linguistic gaps but also broader challenges in genre awareness and discourse structuring. Integrating writing pedagogy that foregrounds genre conventions and rhetorical effectiveness—especially through scaffolded practice and explicit instruction—can significantly enhance students' academic writing performance.

3.3 Discussion

This study reveals that the reasoning patterns in students' scholarly articles reflect diverse logical frameworks, ranging from inductive to deductive reasoning, as well as the use of analogies and argumentation. One of the main findings is the dominance of inductive reasoning in concluding language phenomena based on empirical data, as seen in the analysis of slang in K-pop fan communities and code-mixing in Instagram comment sections. Inductive reasoning allows authors to draw general conclusions from specific facts, but the findings show that generalizations are often inadequately supported by concrete data or in-depth analysis. This is consistent with Putrayasa's (2014) emphasis on empirical validation, and it confirms previous studies (Strobl et al., 2019) that highlight novice writers' tendency to generalize prematurely.

Deductive reasoning is also frequently used, particularly in the analysis of language variation. Authors begin with general theoretical statements and apply them to specific cases. While this strategy demonstrates awareness of linguistic theory, the findings suggest that the connection between theory and data often lacks depth. These results extend Kanwal et al.'s (2024) research, which emphasizes the

need to contextualize theory through grounded, localized data. Thus, deductive reasoning in student writing requires deeper elaboration and application of theory to observed phenomena.

Analogical reasoning is used to compare concepts and aid understanding, but the analysis shows that analogies are often superficial or lack cultural context. This finding confirms Lestari & Asia's (2024) argument that analogies, while helpful, require a nuanced explanation of both phenomena being compared. Without this, analogical reasoning risks oversimplifying complex issues. Argumentation-based reasoning is evident, where authors justify claims using logical reasons. However, weak empirical grounding and a lack of theoretical references make these arguments less persuasive. This finding supports Adil et al. (2023), who assert that effective academic arguments must be supported by both empirical evidence and appropriate frameworks. In sum, all four reasoning types reveal potential, but also highlight the need for more structured argument development.

The study also found that the use of effective sentences in students' scholarly articles often fails to meet key standards: unity, conciseness, emphasis, and variety. Unity errors show that students frequently combine multiple ideas without clear transitions, leading to ambiguity. This confirms Barroga & Matanguihan's (2021) findings on the importance of sentence focus in maintaining clarity.

Conciseness violations manifest through redundant phrasing, which aligns with Phillips Galloway et al. (2020), who underscore that excessive wordiness impairs readability. Emphasis errors show that students often fail to highlight key information. This supports Barasa's (2024) view that emphasis is essential for guiding reader interpretation. Meanwhile, lack of sentence variety echoes Hidi & Anderson's (2014) findings that variation in structure contributes to engagement and cognitive processing.

These findings have several implications for education and curriculum development. Instructors should explicitly teach reasoning strategies alongside linguistic form, integrating genre-based writing instruction (Swales, 1990) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978) into writing pedagogy. Writing centers can design workshops focused on developing reasoning frameworks and sentence-level skills simultaneously. Curriculum designers are encouraged to scaffold critical writing development across semesters, incorporating formative feedback and reflective revision practices. Additionally, analytical rubrics focusing on both reasoning and sentence effectiveness could improve assessment consistency.

The data was drawn exclusively from student papers in a sociolinguistics course, which may not represent reasoning patterns in other disciplines. The geographic scope was limited to Padang City, so findings may not generalize to broader academic contexts. Furthermore, although efforts were made to ensure coding validity through inter-rater reliability, qualitative analysis inherently involves subjectivity.

Despite these limitations, this study provides meaningful insight into students' reasoning and sentence construction practices. It confirms and extends prior research on academic writing challenges and highlights specific areas for instructional intervention. By linking micro-level sentence features with macro-level reasoning structures, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and linguistic dimensions of student writing. With ongoing instructional support, students can develop more precise, persuasive, and critically reasoned scholarly texts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students utilize various reasoning patterns: inductive, deductive, analogical, and argumentative in constructing arguments in their scholarly articles. However, their application remains suboptimal due to limited analytical depth, insufficient empirical support, and a lack of theoretical grounding. Inductive reasoning often leads to unsupported generalizations, while

deductive reasoning tends to lack specificity. These patterns suggest that although students grasp basic reasoning frameworks, targeted instructional support is necessary to enhance their critical and analytical thinking in academic writing.

Findings also show frequent violations of effective sentence principles, including unity, conciseness, emphasis, and variety. These issues manifest as fragmented or overly complex sentences, redundancy, insufficient focus on main ideas, and monotonous structure. Such weaknesses hinder clarity and reduce the persuasive impact of student writing. Improving sentence-level competence is therefore essential for elevating the overall quality and communicative power of academic texts.

To address these challenges, institutions should implement targeted interventions. First, academic writing courses should integrate modules on reasoning development, focusing on empirical support, argument coherence, and the strategic use of analogies. Instructors can design structured peer-review activities and guided revision exercises to reinforce these concepts. The development of detailed rubrics assessing both reasoning quality and sentence effectiveness would also improve feedback clarity and student outcomes. Second, universities should offer regular writing workshops focused on sentence construction skills—emphasizing unity, clarity, and syntactic variety—supported by examples and practice-based learning. Writing centers can employ text analysis tools that allow students to self-assess their drafts for verbosity, cohesion, and emphasis.

Future research should explore the effectiveness of such interventions through longitudinal studies, assessing how targeted instruction impacts students' writing over time. Cross-institutional comparisons could also provide insights into how contextual factors shape reasoning and writing patterns across different educational settings. Experimental studies testing the impact of digital tools or peer-feedback models on writing improvement would further contribute to the development of evidence-based writing instruction. In summary, the study highlights the dual need to enhance students' reasoning capabilities and sentence-level writing proficiency. Addressing both through integrated, practical, and sustained pedagogical efforts can significantly improve the quality of student scholarly writing and contribute to stronger academic communication in higher education.

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