

Maritime Students Meeting the Maritime Industry English Standards: An Analysis of Types of Sentences

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Abstract

A sentence is the highest unit of grammar. Thus, constructing error-free sentences in writing is one of the biggest challenges encountered by most non-native speakers, and even university students are not an exception to this reality. This study aims at investigating various types of sentences produced by tertiary-level maritime students in a Sri Lankan university. The study was based on a narrative writing activity in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) module. The students were provided forty-five minutes to produce the piece of writing as an in-class activity on a topic relevant to their field visit to a port. This is a descriptive study based on the analysis of a small corpus of essays written by twenty maritime students, and a structural analysis of sentences was employed to examine the students' writing. Different kinds of sentences and sentence errors were identified, and they were classified accordingly. The findings of the study revealed that the students favoured simple sentences over other sentence types. Approximately two-thirds of the sentences produced belonged to the simple sentence category. The compound-complex form was found to be the least utilized sentence type among the target group. The analysis of sentences was based on the elements of the clause structure explained in Quirk et al. (1985) and Oshima and Hough (2006). Interestingly, it was observed that there was no single common clause structural pattern used by the participants. Instead, they used subject-verb-object (SVO), subject-verb-complement (SVC) and subject-verb-adverbial (SVA) types very often when writing. Similarly, fragments and run-on sentences were recorded high among maritime learners' erroneous sentences in writing. The study findings have pedagogical implications for the teaching of English language grammar that subsumes essay writing in the EAP module.

Keywords: clause elements, EAP, ESP, Maritime English, sentence errors, sentence types

1. Introduction

A sentence is defined in different ways. Cambridge Dictionary (2022) defines it as a group of words, usually containing a verb, that expresses a thought, and Oshima and Hough define it as "a group of words that (a) contains at least one subject and one verb and (b) expresses a complete thought" (2007, p. 11). The latter mentions that every sentence is constructed from one or more clauses (Oshima and Hough, 2006).

Structurally, a sentence can be of simple, compound, complex or compound-complex types based on the clause/s in it. Whatever the structural type it may be, constructing error-free sentences in writing is a challenge to most non-native speakers. Though there are numerous studies on grammatical errors in English writing, such studies in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writings are limited. Previous error studies basically highlight the errors made by learners in word classes, word choice, mechanics of writing or word order in sentences (Gayo & Widodo, 2018; Jayasinghe, 2018; Nuruzzaman et al., 2018; Sermsook et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2017; Unar et al., 2017; Al-Shujairi & Tan, 2017; Fareed et al., 2016; Arachchi, 2016). However, research on types of sentence structures in EAP, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English as a Second Language (ESL) is rare.

The tree of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Hutchinson and Waters (1987) clearly demonstrates that ESP is a branch of ELT which in turn is branched to EAP such as Medicine, Engineering, Psychology and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) such as English for secretaries, technicians and teachers. Thus, Maritime English

is a typical example of EAP (in broader term, an ESP) with its unique and distinctive features. ESP generally assumes that learners possess some basic knowledge of the language systems (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Hence, it is not surprising if a majority of these learners attempt to produce a variety of sentences in their writing. However, the language used in the maritime field is mostly simple and straight forward.

By listing features of something which has structure, Burton-Roberts (2016) claims that language has structure. According to him, the following are the features of something that has *structure*:

- (a) divisible into parts (its constituents),
- (b) there are different categories of constituents,
- (c) the constituents are arranged in a certain way,
- (d) and each constituent has a specifiable function in the structure of the thing.

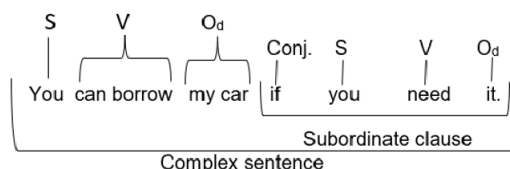
Structurally wrong sentences in writing may lead to ambiguity, and they eventually lead to misinterpretation and miscommunication between the writer and the reader (Eisa & Balal, 2015). Thus, it becomes necessary to identify the kinds of sentences that cause problem to learners, and the kinds of sentences they need most in their academic and occupational life.

Taking into consideration the gap in the previous studies on types of sentence structures and errors in ESL, ESP and EAP contexts, this study endeavours to examine the types of sentence structures, clause elements in sentence formation and types of sentence errors among twenty tertiary level maritime students in a Sri Lankan university.

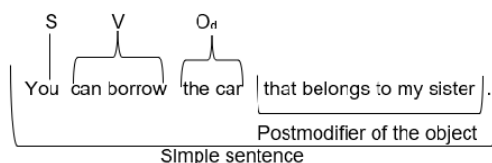
1.1 Types of Sentences

Sentences can be classified based on their functions and structure. Functional categories of sentences are declarative, exclamatory, interrogative, and imperative. Structural types of sentences are categorized by some researchers as simple, compound and complex (Hipwell, 2018; Burton-Roberts, 2016; Downing, 2015; Quirk et al., 1985) while others add compound-complex as the fourth type (Charpentier-Jiménez, 2020; Telaumbanua et al., 2020; Demirezen, 2019; Sari et al., 2018; Andersen, 2014; Oshima & Hough 2006, 2007). Those researchers who categorize the sentence structure as three consider the fourth type of other researchers as another form of complex sentences.

According to Quirk et al. (1985), a sentence can either be simple or multiple. A sentence which consists of only one clause (one subject and one verb phrase) is called a simple sentence (Altenberg & Vago, 2010). A multiple sentence is either a compound or a complex category. A simple sentence consists of an independent clause whereas a multiple sentence has one or more clauses as its immediate constituents. When there are two or more independent (co-ordinate) clauses in a sentence, it is called a compound sentence, while an independent clause which has one or more dependent clauses as its immediate constituent is called a complex sentence. The following examples from Quirk et al. (1985) show the difference between a simple and a complex sentence:



While “*You can borrow my car if you need it.*” is a complex sentence, “*You can borrow the car that belongs to my sister.*” is a simple sentence.



The clause “*that belongs to my sister*” is functioning in the given sentence as a post-modifier of the noun phrase (object) “*the car*”. In that case, the complexity is not at the level of the clause or sentence, but at the level of the phrase. Briefly, it can be said that, the term ‘simple sentence’ refers to an independent clause that does not contain another clause functioning as one of its elements.

1.1.1 Simple Sentences

In contrast to what most people think, Quirk et al. (1985) argue that a *simple sentence* does not necessarily need to be simple in a non-technical sense. In order to support their argument, they provide an example:

On the recommendation of the committee, the temporary chairman, who had previous experience of the medical issues concerned, made the decision that no further experiments on living animals should be conducted in circumstances that might lead to unfavourable press publicity (p. 720).

As mentioned previously, the complexity noted in the above simple sentence is at the level of its complex phrases. Therefore, the length is not a marker of the type of a sentence.

Oshima and Hough (2007) explain that a simple sentence has one subject-verb pair. While the subject informs who or what did something, the verb expresses the action (jump, work, think) or condition (is, was, seem). As claimed by these authors (Oshima and Hough, 2007), a simple sentence can have several possible ‘formulas’ as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Simple Sentence Formula

Simple sentence	Sentence formula
1. <u>The Star Wars movies</u> <u>were</u> international hits.	SV
2. <u>Young people</u> and <u>adults</u> <u>enjoyed</u> them.	SSV
3. <u>The films</u> <u>entertained</u> and <u>thrilled</u> audience everywhere.	SVV
4. <u>Luke Skywalker</u> and <u>his friends</u> <u>battled</u> evil and <u>made</u> us laugh at the same time.	SSVV

Note: Adapted from *Introduction to academic writing. Level 3* (3rd ed., p. 11) by A. Oshima and A. Hough, 2007, White Plans.

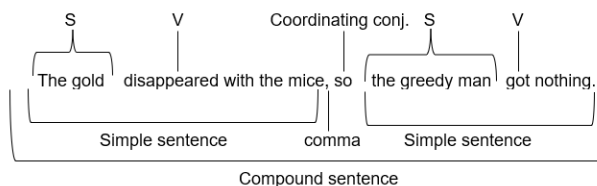
In Table 1, the subjects have been underlined with a single line, and the verbs with double lines. As suggested by Oshima and Hough (2007), a subject or verb may have one, two or more items; yet they are simple sentences as there is only one subject-verb pair. This definition of a simple sentence, and its formula (SV, SSV, SVV and SSVV) are also emphasised by many other researchers (Covey, 2012; Joshi, 2013; Barkley & Sandoval, 2014). When a subject or a verb has more than one item in them, these scholars refer to them as compound subject and compound verb in a simple sentence.

There are also simple sentences with extended phrasal modifiers, and these extensions can occur at various places of the sentence such as the beginning, in the middle and at the end (Demirezen, 2013). Many grammar books available in the market do not satisfactorily explain the structure of simple sentences. The following are examples of simple sentences with extended phrasal modifiers at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the sentence. Until the early 20th century, Istanbul was the capital of the large Ottoman Empire (Extension at the beginning). Sleeping Beauty, the main character in a fairy tale, is a princess living in a castle (Extension in middle). She turned away, hiding the fear in her eyes (Extension at the end). (Demirezen, 2013). The extensions can even be doubled, for example, During this period, called the Shogunate, the Emperor of Japan had no real governing power.

There is a disagreement with Alwi et al.’s view (2003, as cited in Analisti, 2016), and Oshima and Hogue’s (2007) view regarding simple sentences. The former consider that a simple sentence can only have one SV pair while the latter say that it can also have SSV, SVV or SSVV.

1.1.2 Compound Sentences

Unlike a simple sentence, a compound sentence is made up of at least two simple sentences, and they are generally joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. The ‘formula’ of a common compound sentence is shown in the example below:

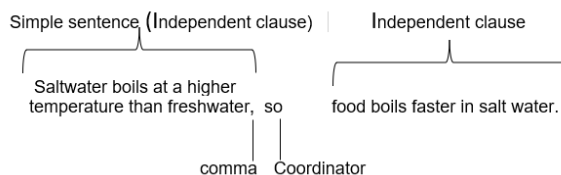


Oshima and Hough (2006) explain that there are three ways to join the clauses in a compound sentence:

(1) Using a coordinator

Independent clause + comma (,) + coordinator + independent clause.

Saltwater boils at a higher temperature than freshwater, so food cooks faster in salt water.



They mention that the coordinating conjunctions in English are seven, and these seven coordinators can easily be remembered by the phrase *FAN BOYS* (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). They further note that a comma should be used in a compound sentence before the coordinating conjunction, but it is not used to join two words or phrases in a simple sentence.

For example:

Yesterday we went shopping, but we didn't buy anything (a comma in a compound sentence). *Yesterday we went shopping but didn't buy anything* (no comma in a simple sentence) (Oshima & Hough, 2006; 2007). The seven coordinating conjunctions and an example sentence for each conjunction is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Coordinating Conjunctions

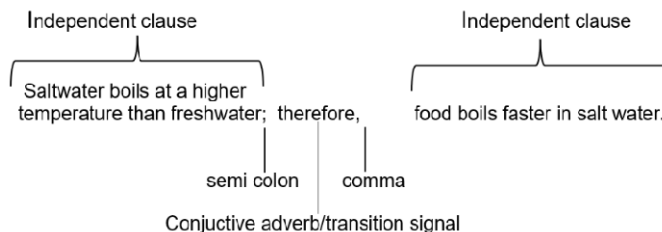
Coordinating conjunction	Example
1. 'and' joins sentences that are alike	He dropped a rice ball, and it rolled into a hole in the ground.
2. 'but' joins sentences that are opposite or show contrast	They were happy, but they were poor.
3. 'so' joins sentences when the second sentence expresses the result of something described in the first sentence	The greedy man wanted all the mice's gold, so he pretended to be a cat.
4. 'or' joins sentences that give choices or alternatives	He could choose a big box, or he could choose a small one.
5. 'yet' is almost a synonym for <i>but</i> . Use <i>yet</i> when the second part of the sentence says something unexpected or surprising.	I was scared, yet I was also curious about the old lady.
6. 'for' has the same meaning as <i>because</i> , use <i>for</i> to introduce a reason or cause.	It is not easy to get there, for you have to hike down a long, hot trail.
7. 'nor' means not this and not that; use <i>nor</i> to join two negative sentences.	She didn't talk, nor did she move.

Note: Adapted from *Introduction to academic writing. Level 3* (3rd ed., p. 30 & 69) by A. Oshima and A. Hough (2007), White Plans.

(2) Using a conjunctive adverb / transition signal

Independent clause + semi colon (;) + conjunctive adverb/transition signal + comma (,) + independent clause.

Saltwater boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; therefore, food cooks faster in salt water.



Conjunctive adverbs such as *also*, *besides*, *furthermore*, *in addition*, *moreover*, *however*, *still*, *nevertheless*, *nonetheless*, and transition signals, such as *on the other hand*, *as a result*, and *for example* can connect an independent sentence with another independent sentence using a semicolon and a comma in a compound sentence.

Examples:

- Community colleges offer preparation for many occupations; *also/ besides/ furthermore/ in addition/ moreover*, they prepare students to transfer to a four-year college or university.
- The cost of attending a community college is low; *however / nevertheless / nonetheless / still*, many students need financial aid.
- Native and non-native English speakers have different needs; *accordingly / as a result/ consequently / hence / therefore / thus*, most schools provide separate English classes for each group.

(Oshima and Hough, 2006)

As discussed above, the second means of constructing a compound sentence is with the use of a conjunctive adverb or a transition signal along with a semi colon and a comma.

(3) Using a semicolon

Independent clause + semi colon (;) + independent clause.

Saltwater boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; food cooks faster in salt water.

Thus, a third way to make a compound sentence is to use a semi colon in between the independent clauses. However, this type of compound sentence is possible only for sentences that are closely related in meaning. If they are not closely related, then they should be written as separate simple sentences.

Shown above are the three ways of making compound sentences as in Oshima and Hough (2006).

1.1.3 Complex Sentences

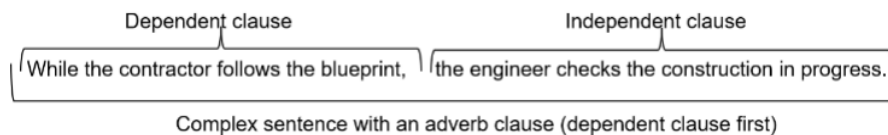
Unlike a compound sentence, a complex sentence contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clause(s). The independent clause will convey comparatively the more important idea than the idea expressed in the subordinate clause(s).

The dependent clauses in a complex sentence are of three kinds: adverb, adjective, and noun.

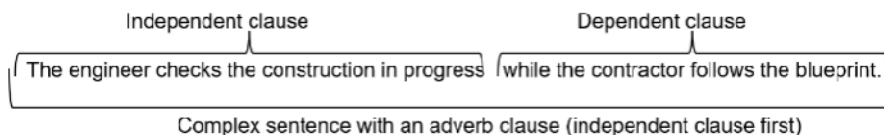
(1) Complex sentences with adverb clauses

An adverb clause plays the role of an adverb, which means it tells when, where, how and why. Adverb clauses begin with subordinators, such as *although, if, when, while, so, because, or that*. An adverb clause can be placed before or after an independent clause.

The following is an example of a complex sentence with an adverb clause (dependent clause) first.

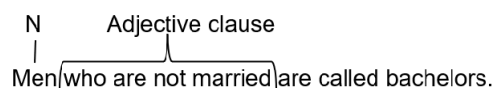


Next is an example of a complex sentence with an adverb clause (dependent clause) last.



(2) Complex sentences with adjective clauses

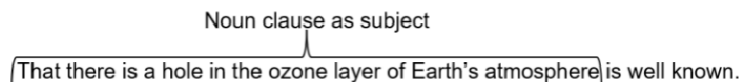
An adjective clause plays the role of an adjective describing a noun or a pronoun in a complex sentence. The adjective clause begins with a relative pronoun, such as *that, which, who, whom* or *whose*, or with a relative adverb, *when* or *where*. The adjective clause follows the noun or a pronoun it describes, for example:



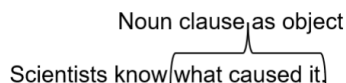
(3) Complex sentences with noun clauses

A noun clause does the work of a noun; that is, it can act as a subject or an object of the independent clause. A noun clause generally begins with a *wh*- question word; in addition, it can also begin with *whether*, *that*, and *if*. A noun phrase can function as a subject and an object in complex sentences. Oshima and Hough (2006) provide the following examples to illustrate its function within a sentence:

A noun clause as a subject of an independent sentence:



A noun clause as an object of an independent sentence:



It was highlighted in Subekti (2017) that the most frequent complex sentences written in their study was of a multiple clause structure, which produced more erroneous sentences compared to the other types of complex sentences containing adverb clauses, noun clauses and adjective clauses. Subekti (2018) shows that there was no significant correlation between the number of complex sentences produced (without considering grammaticality), and L2 writing proficiency, but grammatically correct complex sentences had positive correlation with L2 writing proficiency.

1.1.4 Compound-Complex Sentences

As mentioned by Oshima and Hough (2006), a compound-complex sentence should have a combination of both dependent and independent clauses; at least two of them should be independent clauses. The examples below are provided by Oshima and Hough (2006) to demonstrate the compound-complex type of sentences, and the independent clauses are underlined with a single line and the dependent clauses, with a dotted line:

1. I wanted to travel *after I graduated from college*; however, I had to go to work immediately.
2. *After I graduated from college*, I wanted to travel, but I had to go to work immediately.
3. I wanted to travel *after I graduated from college*, but I had to go to work immediately *because I had to support my family*.
4. I could not decide where I should work or what I should do, so at first I did nothing.

Punctuation also needs to be proper in compound-complex sentences like the other types. Any English sentence belongs to one of the above four types, and it is decided by the clause(s) in it.

Based on a study with Malaysian tertiary level learners, Singh et al. (2017) commented that construction of complex sentences was a common problem in students' essays. A recent study examined the sentence types used in BBC news articles, and the results of the study showed that the complex sentence was the most frequent (53%) among that four sentence types (Andriani & Bram, 2021).

1.2 Syntactic Functions of Clause Elements

Five functional categories of clause elements have been reported in Quirk et al. (1985), and three of these constituents were further subcategorized: 1. subject (S) 2. verb (V) 3. object (O) 3-I. direct object (O_d) 3-II. indirect object (O_i) 4. complement (C) 4-I. subject complement (C_s) 4-II. object complement (C_o) 5. adverbial (A) 5-I. subject-related (A_s) 5-II. Object-related (A_o).

Eliminating the optional adverbials, Quirk et al. (1985) demonstrated seven types of constituents in a declarative sentence: (1) SV (2) SVO (3) SVC (4) SVA (5) SVOO (6) SVOC (7) SVOA. Thus, the basic seven sentence (clause) types are based on the functional categories of the constituents. The complementation that follows the verb (O_d, O_i, C_s, C_a or A) is determined by the main (full) verb in the sentence. However, identifying the main verb with its class is not always easy as it appears. There are some verbs that belong to multiple classes, for instance, the verb *get* in the following examples:

- SVO - He'll get a surprise
- SVC - He's getting angry.
- SVA - He got through the window.

SVOO - He got her a splendid present.

SVOC - He got his shoes and socks wet.

SVOA - He got himself into trouble.

Therefore, some versatile verbs like *get* is open to most types of complementation.

In addition, ambiguity can arise through multiple class membership. The sentences,

- I found her an entertaining partner.
- She called him her favourite waiter.

could be interpreted as types of sentences belonging to either SVOC or SVOO (Quirk et al., 1985).

Blake (1988) also has highlighted five clause elements though the names slightly differ from Quirk et al. (1985). He points out that these elements can be regrouped to create various sentence styles. In a declarative sentence, most of the time, the subject and the predicator are the elements that take the first and second positions respectively. The minimum elements in a sentence are subject and predicator, and elements followed by a clause are determined by the predicator, for instance: a transitive verb takes an object (e.g.: Deedat threw the ball), whereas a stative verb is followed by either a complement (e.g.: He is a cricketer) or an adjunct (e.g.: He is here).

Blake (1988) illustrates various types of clause arrangements in a declarative sentence by using the abbreviations S (subject), P (predicator), O (object), C (complement), and A (adjunct); Downing (2015) names the five elements in the same way. Like Quirk et al. (1985), Blake (1988) mentions seven types of clause arrangements, but the only difference in the two is Blakes' *P* (predicate) instead of Quirk et al.'s *V* although they mean the same (SP, SPO, SPC, SPA, SPOO, SPOC, SPOA). Andriani and Bram (2021) highlighted five sentence patterns namely, SV, SVC, SVO, SVOC and SVOO, and SVO was found to be the most frequent (42%) sentence pattern used in the BBC news articles. This pattern was followed by SV, SVC, SVOC and SVOO respectively.

It should be noted that the above sequence of clause elements in both Quirk et al. (1985) and Blake (1988) represents the minimal structures of the arrangements for declarative sentences in English. Indeed, these basic structures can be expanded or elaborated by using optional elements to bring variety and novelty to the expressions. Furthermore, it should also be remembered that some writers purposefully deviate from the structure, which is neither a mistake nor an error, but for emphasis.

e.g.: Ten thousand saw I at a glance!

This deviation from the norm is accepted (and appreciated) in literary creations. The poet William Wordsworth uses this structure for emphasis in his poem, and such deviations are known as poetic licence.

The use of a variety of sentence patterns is an important aspect of writing. An instructor who is marking students' writing skills look for various types of sentences. It is also a criterion for scoring in IELTS writing. The same type of sentences is monotonous to the readers. In literature, the types of sentences are used for various effects.

1.3 Sentence Errors

Errors in sentence structures vary. Apart from common grammatical errors in writing, there are errors that are specific to sentence structures. Kooistra and Kooistra (2001) illustrate three kinds of errors.

As stated by Kooistra and Kooistra (2001), a fragment is an incomplete sentence. It is only a part of a sentence, and a key element in the sentence is missing in fragments. For example, *That man very famous in our area*. Another type of fragment is that a part of a sentence is used with a conjunction. The coordinate conjunctions like *and*, *but*, *or* and *so* usually combine two or more sentences to make them one. However, ESL and ESP learners use these conjunctions to write a new sentence which is an error. For example, *And Marco is going to the party*. The error in the example could be removed in two ways. One is that it can be made a part of an extended sentence (Franco and Marco are going to the party), but not a sentence on its own. The second way is that the conjunction (*and*) can be removed, so that it can stand alone as an independent clause (*Marco is going to the party*).

Another sentence error is known as stringy sentence or run-on. It is also known as a *fused sentence*. This kind of error also occurs often in non-native speakers' writing. Like a sentence fragment, a stringy sentence also confuses the reader. The sentence runs on and on without stopping at places where it needs to. The error is obvious in the following example:

This weekend I went camping and I was having fun at first but on Saturday night I saw a bear and I thought it looked hungry so I ran away and then I got lost in the woods but then my friend came and found me (Kooistra and Kooistra, 2001).

The long string above, can be broken into several sentences as follows:

This weekend I went camping. I was having fun at first. On Saturday night I saw a bear. I thought it looked hungry. I ran away. I got lost in the woods. Then my friend came and found me (Kooistra and Kooistra, 2001).

The issue with the above sentences is that they are too short and choppy. Thus, choppy sentences are another type of sentence errors. The above authors (Kooistra and Kooistra, 2001) provide the following as an acceptable kind of correction to the sample sentence:

This weekend I went camping. I was having fun at first, but on Saturday night I saw a bear. I thought it looked hungry, so I ran away. I got lost in the woods, but then my friend came and found me.

Comma splice is a kind of stringy sentence, and thus a type of sentence error. In this kind of error, two complete sentences are spliced together using a comma. For instance:

- *Jamal wants to major in accounting, it is his favourite subject.*

Kooistra and Kooistra (2001) point out that there are different ways to fix this error, and the most common ways are to use a period or a semi colon instead of a comma as shown below:

- *Jamal wants to major in accounting. It is his favourite subject.*
- *Jamal wants to major in accounting; it is his favourite subject.*

Furthermore, the correction can be done by using a conjunction such as *and* or *because*.

- *Jamal wants to major in accounting because it is his favourite subject.*

A study on grammatical errors in writing by Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020) also found structural errors amidst other errors in the writings of Jordanian university students. Similarly, Pouladian et al. (2017) studied errors in writing of adult Iranian EFL learners preparing for IELTS and found that 5% of the total errors were on sentence structure. Amiri and Puteh (2017) identified 13 kinds of errors, and they found 32.9% of them were sentence structure errors; however, their paper did not discuss the types of sentence errors.

The study findings of Utari (2019) on students' paragraph writing revealed that errors in paragraph writing were on grammar and sentence structure. 37% of the errors were on sentence structure, and stringy sentences and run-on sentences were 10% each while sentence fragments, and comma splice were 12% and 5% respectively.

Quibol-Catabay (2016) conducted a study on students' writing to examine the frequency and the types of sentence errors among thirty accounting technology students. They were asked to write the story after watching an audio-visual prompt of a popular story. The highest number of errors occurred in the structural category was sentence fragments (52%). Sentence fragment errors were also found in the study of Phukat and Othman (2015) with Thai university learners.

In a study conducted with teacher trainees in Ghana, Adjei (2015) found that there a was significant level of difficulty in using subordinate clauses. He concluded that a majority of the participants lacked linguistic understanding of subordination. A similar study in Indonesia with twenty-four Pre-service English teachers was conducted to identify their mastery of complex sentences. The findings showed that most sentence structures used by these teacher trainees were multiple clause structures; however, their mastery in the structure was very poor compared to other complex structures with adjective, adverb and noun clauses (Subekti, 2017).

While being the highest unit of grammar and also the basic structure of any long text, sentences constructed by most non-native learners of English suffer poor linguistic quality. Every learner, irrespective of the geographical, linguistic, socio-cultural, ethnic, age or gender differences, ideally strives to write error-free sentences, and every teacher wants his or her learner to do so, but practically many errors are made. Constructing sentences with proper clause elements seems to be a complicated task for many learners. Errors cannot be eradicated completely, but they can be minimized if proper measures are taken by relevant parties. Many content teachers and English language teachers in higher education criticize that a majority of the learners cannot even write a correct 'simple sentence'. Observation of the researcher as an experienced ESL and ESP teacher for several years also confirms this allegation. However, it should be noted that a simple sentence has its own complications, and it can be challenging to learners than it appears to be.

Considering maritime writing correspondence, the intention of the writer is to communicate effectively with the other party about what you want to convey and to respond clearly using simple expressions and effective

descriptions. Over the years, the maritime English writing has developed its own language system with the written requirements of clarity, courtesy, completeness, concreteness, consideration, conciseness, and correctness, known as the “7C principle” (Shen & Zhao, 2011).

A needs survey carried out with the cadets who were taking a Maritime English course in Indonesia showed that the learners consider grammar and vocabulary to be the most difficult aspects for them, and most of the cadets mentioned that they were expected to master oral skills followed by writing skills (Arini, 2010). The needs analysis study conducted by Aeni et al. (2018) with the cadets of a Maritime English class supported the findings of Arini (2010) in that the learners agreed that all four language skills were crucial for them but placed the productive skills as the highest priority for their study programme. Windiahsari and Wen-li (2020) highlight that Maritime English is not only the language at sea, but also helps in the industry for various roles.

With these in mind, the current study was guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are the types of sentence structures produced in maritime students' EAP writing?
- 2) What are the clause elements used in the most common sentence type produced by the maritime EAP learners?
- 3) What are the types of sentence errors made by the maritime EAP learners in writing?

The researchers believe that identifying the sentence structures and sentence errors of maritime learners in their writing will be beneficial for both teachers and learners to improve their writing and to cater to their language needs.

Standard Maritime Communication Phrases (SMCP) recognized by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) comprises utterances which are accepted as the language at sea for communication (Saunders, 2020). These utterances and sentences are short, and used specific terms and phrases (Menon, 2021). However, maritime industry is not limited to the sea alone. They also need to communicate with many stakeholders on land.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present research employed analytical and descriptive methods in the study. A frequency count was also made to understand the intensity of the use of different sentence types and sentence errors in students' EAP writing.

2.2 Sampling

The study used a purposive sampling technique to collect data. Twenty freshmen in their first-semester maritime diploma programme at University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, were selected for the study, and this number was equally divided between nautical studies and marine engineering diploma programme. All cadets were male since no female student is accepted for the programme by the university. Ninety percent of the participants' first language was Sinhala while the other 10% was able to communicate in the same language. They were between 20-22 years old. All the participants had a minimum credit pass for English language at the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level), and this was one of the requirements to enrol in the maritime study programme. English is the participants' second language, and they had at least learnt it at school for ten years.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data source were narrative essays written by cadets as an in-class activity in the subject of Maritime English. The essays were on a field-visit the students went the week before, and writings were expected to be between 250-300 words long. The participants were given forty-five minutes to write the essay, and another ten minutes were provided for checking their work. This extra time for editing was provided to ensure that they self-correct performance errors. The writings were collected in the last five minutes of the hour.

2.4 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To identify the types of sentence structures produced in maritime students' EAP writing.
- 2) To distinguish the clause elements used in the most common sentence type produced by the maritime EAP learners in writing.
- 3) To categorize the types of sentence errors made by the maritime EAP learners in writing.

2.5 Data Analysis

The identification and categorization of sentence types, error types and clause elements were based on explanations and boundaries given in Quirk et al. (1985) and Oshima and Hough (2006; 2007).

In the analysis stage, initially, the researchers dissected the essay, and every single sentence from each essay was closely examined and was assigned to its category, namely simple, compound, complex and compound-complex. After all the sentences were grouped into their types, the sentences were put into a table for easy reference. In the second stage, the most common sentence structure was noted, and its clause elements were recorded to find how they were used by the participants. Finally, the sentences or sentence-like structures were investigated for any structural errors. Subsequently, the errors were identified and classified under sentence fragments, choppy sentences, run on sentences, comma splices and stringy sentences.

3. Results

This study attempted to identify the types of sentence structures produced by maritime students in their EAP writing, clause elements used in their sentences, and sentence errors found in their writing. Thus, this section presents the key findings of the study.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of sentences produced by individual participants within the time given. The number of sentences ranged from 28-55. The term sentences here comprises all structural types of sentences and erroneous sentences.

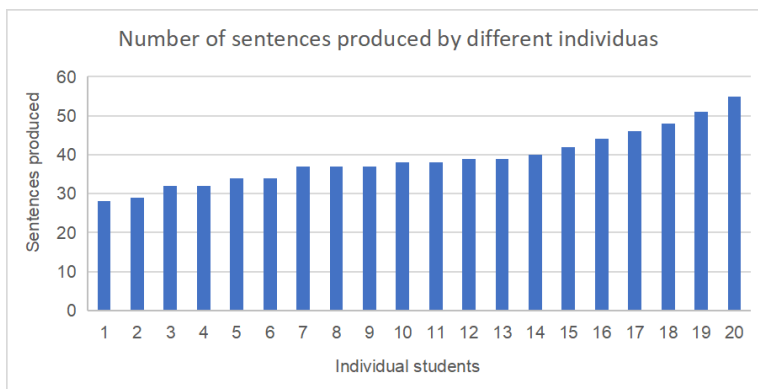


Figure 1. Sentences Produced by Individual Students

Figure 2 demonstrates the percentage of sentence types produced by the sample. The highest number of sentences produced by them belonged to the simple sentence type (63%). Among the other three types, complex sentences were the highest (20%) followed by the compound category (11%) leaving the compound-complex (6%) to the last.

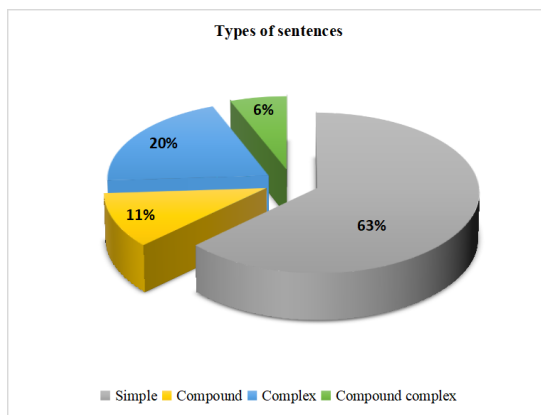


Figure 2. Types of sentences

Table 3 shows the types of sentences that the participants produced along with two examples for each type from the corpus.

Table 3. Types of sentences produced with examples

Sentence type	Example
Simple	In this visit, my friends and me learnt valuable things. With support of the harbour master, all of us got practical knowledge about ships and our work life in the sea.
Compound	I always loved the sea and wanted to work in a ship, but my parents were worry about my safety. It was getting dark, so we left port.
Complex	When we went to the ship, they were unloading cement. I had great respect for the officers, because they answered all our questions without tired.
Compound complex	When we went to sleep, we heard only the waves sound, and it was a lovely music. On the last day everyone was very tired so we were sleeping in the bus while we were returning to the university.

Figure 3 demonstrates different clause elements used in simple sentence structure. SVO pattern was the most utilized structure among the participants followed by SVC and SVA. On the other hand, SVOO was the least used clause elements among the seven.

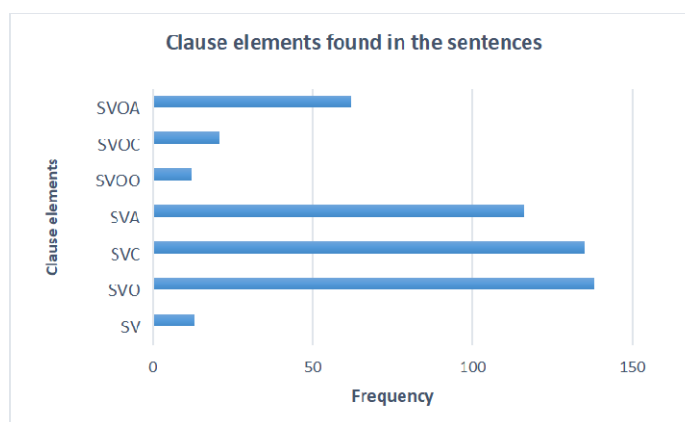


Figure 3. Clause elements in the sentences produced

Examples provided in Table 4 were taken from the participants' writings to show how they combine clause elements to form sentences of different patterns.

Table 4. Examples of simple sentences produced using different clause elements

Clause elements	Example sentence
1 SV	We were waiting. My friends slept.
2 SVO	We saw huge lathe machines. I collected a lot of information.
3 SVC	The engine room was very hot and noisy. I am an engine lover.
4 SVA	We visited the Naval Museum after our lunch. We went to see the engine room first.
5 SVOO	A commander showed us the workshops and their engineering innovations. They gave us a boat ride in the harbour.
6 SVOC	We found the Marine engineering workshops at the naval base busy twenty-four seven.
7 SVOA	The ship visit made me happy. Every student tried shooting with a gun at Naval Maritime Academy. We saw 4 cargo holds in the vessel.

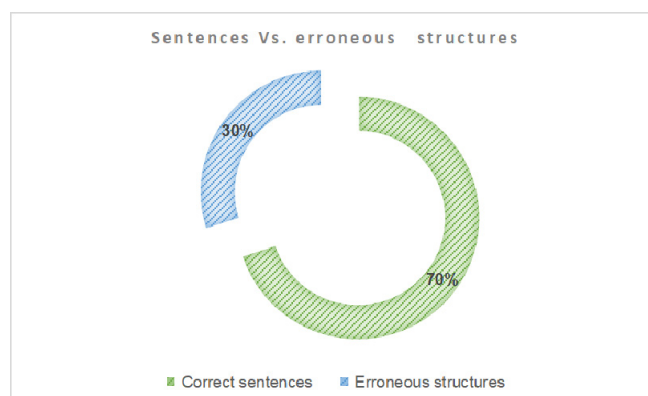


Figure 4. Sentences versus erroneous structures identified

As shown in Figure 4, erroneous sentences were almost one third of the total sentences produced by the participants.

Figure 5 reveals the breakdown of sentence errors and their frequency. 234 sentence errors were identified in total. Sentence fragments were the most occurring while comma splices were the least occurring sentence errors among the participants. Run on sentences were also high in writing after sentence fragments but choppy sentences were less frequent than run on sentences but more than comma splices.

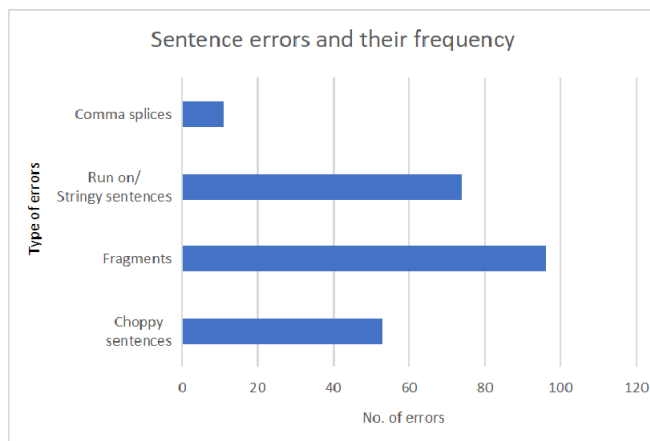


Figure 5. Types of sentence errors

Table 5. Types of erroneous sentences

Type of error	Example
Fragment	The harbour master handsome and amazing.
	Since it was my first visit to the natural harbour.
	In short, enjoyed everything in the field-visit.
	We left the university at 5 o'clock in the morning. We stopped for breakfast on the way. We reached trincomalee before lunch.
Choppy sentence	We enjoyed the trip. We took many pictures.
	The captain shared his travel experiences with us. I felt very happy. I felt I am already a captain.
Run-on/Stringy sentence/fused sentence	The harbour master received us happily and he was one of the past student of our university and some of our lecturers were his lecturers and our Head was his batchmate.
	We saw practically everything we learnt about the ships and it was our first field-visit but it will be an unforgettable visit in my life.
	We spent the nights at a rest-house by the sea we didn't know what time we slept.
Comma splice	The captain, officers and the crew were very polite with us, explained the procedures to us.
	We saw two Sri Lankan naval ships, a bulk-carrier and a passenger ship, this experience will be very useful for my studies.
Comma splice	The field trip made me satisfied, I am happy for selecting maritime study programme.

Table 5 displays the types of erroneous sentences identified in participants’ writing along with examples from their essays.

The findings of the study revealed that the participants used four different types of sentences in narrative writing; in addition, they used seven major sentence patterns. The study findings also demonstrated that a considerable number of the participants’ sentences had some structural flaw in them. These sentence errors were identified and categorized. Based on the results found, the data was analyzed in this study.

4. Discussion

This section discusses the findings highlighted in the results in relation to previous literature and research questions. Thus, the section is structured to answer the research questions.

In answering the first research question, the types of sentence structures produced by maritime students in EAP writing witness the ability of this group of learners in producing a variety of simple, compound, complex and compound complex types. The participants produced seven hundred and eighty sentences in total including erroneous sentences. As it was highlighted in the results section, almost two thirds of the sentences written by them belonged to the simple type. There were very short simple sentences with only a few words as well as lengthy sentences with complex phrases, optional adverbials and extended modifiers as pointed out by Quirk et

al. (1985), Oshima and Hough (2007) and Demirezen (2013). Compound subjects and compound verbs highlighted under the sub-section of *types of sentences* in the introduction were also recorded in the participants' writing.

Literature suggests that a sentence which consists of only one subject-verb pair is called a simple sentence, and this idea is emphasized in research occasionally. However, a clear definition or explanation of *one subject-verb pair* is not adequately provided in grammar books that are easy access to learners. Moreover, many grammar books in the market do not highlight extended simple sentences with modifiers at initial, middle and end positions. Therefore, when the students produce this kind of sentences, the students are not sure of the structure. Therefore, they try to produce what they hear and see without understanding them clearly. Thus, not knowing the structural rules causes errors in their writings.

Although the essays had eleven percent of compound sentences, there were many errors especially with the use of comma. The most utilized coordinators, *in the FANBOYS*, were *and*, *but* and *so*; in contrast, *for*, *yet*, *nor* and *or* were rarely used by the participants. Compound sentences with conjunctive adverbs / transition signals were found, but they were not used correctly with proper punctuation. The use of the structure with a semicolon was rare.

Considering the construction of complex sentences, it was the second highest (one fifth of the total) among the four types. The complex sentences with dependent adverb clauses were common whereas dependent adjective clauses were very limited, and noun clauses were none.

Table 3 provided examples to the types of sentences produced by the participants. The errors of pronoun (*me* instead of *I*), and missing article (*the*) in simple sentences, incorrect verb form (were worry) and missing article (*the*) in compound sentences, unnecessary addition of a comma after an independence sentence in complex sentence, and missing apostrophe (*waves*) and missing commas after the initial modifier (on the last day) and after the first independent sentence (before the coordinator *so*) in compound complex sentence were not taken into consideration in this study as the focus was only the sentence structure and structural errors, not other grammatical errors.

As mentioned in the objectives of this study, this study focused on clause elements of most common sentence type produced. As seen in Figure 2, the highest number of sentences produced by the participants belonged to the simple sentence category. Thus, the second research question has been resolved by identifying and making a list of clause elements used in the simple sentence type produced by the maritime EAP learners which includes SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, SVOC and SVOA. The students also used more combinations of clause elements like SVOAAA (*We bought some famous traditional food items in the boutiques on our way last week.*) and SVAA (*We reached Trincomalee before lunch.*) where the three 'A's in SVOAAA, and the last 'A' in SVAA are optional. Such optional adverbials were not noted as different patterns, and they were only considered as extensions of the basic patterns.

Frequent patterns in the writing were identified as SVO, SVA and SVC. On the other hand, the rare patterns were SV and SVOO. SVOC was also not much common among the participants. Table: 4 demonstrates some examples from the participants' essays. The errors of punctuation, article, spelling and pluralization are not discussed in this paper since the focus is the structure, combinations of clause elements and structural errors.

The recent Indonesian study (Andriani and Bram, 2021) reviewed in this paper found only five sentence patterns in the BBC news articles studied. SVA and SVOA were not identified by the authors. It is not certain whether these two patterns were not found amidst the sentences, or they were taken to SV and SVO patterns respectively considering the "A" as an optional element.

To satisfy the third research question, the findings indicate the types of sentence errors made by the maritime EAP learners in writing are fragments, run on (stringy/fused), choppy sentences and comma spliced. The results of the study show that 30 percent of the total sentences produced are erroneous sentences. There were many errors observed in the writing including errors on subject-verb agreement, tense, preposition, spelling, word choice, word order and article; however, the term *erroneous sentences* in this study is limited to structural errors only.

The most common sentence error recorded in the study was sentence fragments followed by stringy sentences. Sentence fragments observed among the participants are of two types as it was discussed at the early part of this paper. An erroneous sentence from Table 5, for example, *But the jobs there look greater than other offshore jobs* belongs to the second type and it can be corrected by removing the word *But* to make it a new simple sentence or make a complex sentence by joining the previous sentence (*Jobs in the sea are risky.*) in the student's writing.

Thus, the corrected sentence can be a simple, compound or a complex sentence as follows: (1) *The jobs there look greater than other offshore jobs.* (2) *Jobs in the sea are risky, but they look greater than other offshore jobs.* (3) *Although jobs in the sea are risky, they look greater than other offshore jobs.* A stringy sentence as a sentence error runs on and on, as Kooistra and Kooistra (2021) suggest, without stopping at places where they need to. The stringy sentences in Table 5, for example, could be corrected by placing the right punctuation marks such as comma and full-stop, or conjunctions. Without them, the writing will confuse the reader.

Choppy sentences are too short when two or more of such adjoining sentences can be combined to give a complete sense. Sometimes, short sentences are purposefully written for some effect; however, having too many of them in writing is a sentence error in language. Approximately, out of every five sentences, one was a choppy sentence. Table 5, for example, demonstrates some of the erroneous sentences produced by the EAP learners in the maritime discipline. The three choppy sentences provided in Table 5 can be easily combined as follows: *We left the university at 5 a.m., stopped for breakfast on the way and reached Trincomalee before lunch.* This combined sentence is still a simple sentence with compound verbs. However, the combined sentences can take any form such as compound, complex or compound complex depending on the ideas expressed in the choppy sentences used. It should also be remembered that not all short sentences are considered choppy. Comma splice was the least type found among the participants. This error occurs when two or more sentences are joined with a comma instead of a coordinator, or a full-stop.

Although sentence errors in writing were identified as an aspect of grammatical errors in some studies (Alghazo & Alshraideh, 2020; Pouladian et al., 2017; Phukat & Othman, 2015), these sentences were not discussed in the papers. The findings of some other studies (Amiri and Puteh, 2017; Utari, 2019) revealed that sentence errors occur in writing at a higher rate (32% & 37% respectively), but the authors did not discuss these errors. Quibol-Catabay (2016) reported that 52% percent of the structural errors were on fragments. Studies in Ghana and Indonesia (Adjei, 2015; Subekti, 2017) stated that subordinate clauses in complex sentences were a problem to teacher trainees. Considering the amount of sentence errors made in previous studies, and lack of discussions on these errors make the current study significant. Moreover, the participants in the present study are maritime learners, and sentence error study with this group of learners is seldom seen.

The SMCP is a set of key phrases developed by the IMO to assist ship to ship and ship to sea communication. They are mostly short utterances. Learning these short phrases could possibly be a main reason for the cadets to produce many choppy sentences. The simple sentences are not to be confused with choppy sentences. As seen in the introduction, simple sentences can vary in length and patterns. As warned by Oshima and Hughes (1983), they can be considered poor style in academic writing.

As indicated by Windiahsari and Wen-li (2020), maritime English is not only a language at sea, but it is also used in the industry in different ways. Written communication demands a variety of sentence structures and patterns which are grammatically correct. Thus, most maritime learners struggle when it comes to writing. Need surveys carried out with cadets (Arini, 2010; Aeni et al., 2018) taking maritime English course showed that speaking and writing were prioritized by the participants as most needed skills, and grammar and vocabulary were considered by them as the most difficult aspects to master.

It was observed from the results that many participants did not know where to use commas. A comma used at the wrong place or absence of a comma where it is needed can give a wrong or distorted message to the readers. No use or improper use of punctuation causes misunderstanding and misinterpretation in writing. Many sentences produced by the participants in the study were observed to have punctuation issues causing confusion to the readers. Especially in the case of maritime learners, miscommunication can cause disaster. Thus, these learners need to learn the correct sentence structures with proper punctuation in order to give the message unambiguously.

5. Conclusion

The present study was designed to determine the types of sentence structures used by maritime learners in narrative writing, clause elements used in sentences they produced, and sentence structure errors found in these writings.

One of the significant findings to emerge from this study is that Maritime students produce more simple sentences although they use compound, complex and compound complex sentences in their narrative writing. The maritime English learners are more accustomed to short utterances because of SMCP, and it could be a reason for them to produce more simple sentences. Another reason for this could be the fear of making errors in the examination when producing sentences with complex forms. The second major finding is that SVO, SVC and SVA are seen as frequent sentence patterns in their writing. The study has also shown that sentence

fragments and stringy sentences precede the sentence structure errors. Thus, the present work makes noteworthy contributions to the study of sentence errors in EAP writing.

The current study has only examined the types of sentence structures, sentence errors and basic clause elements of simple sentences which were the most used type of sentences by the maritime students in their EAP narrative writing. However, the investigation of sentence extensions such as modifiers and sentence constituents (word classes and phrase structure) were not a part of the current study. Further research could therefore concentrate on these aspects. Moreover, the study can be extended to other institutions that offer similar study programs.

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