Deficiencies in the Use of Full Stop in Second-Semester Written Production of Indonesian Undergraduates

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Abstract
This study investigated patterns of full-stop errors in the written production of Indonesian EFL undergraduates and explored the factors contributing to these punctuation problems. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Data were collected from thirty written essays and semi-structured interviews involving second-semester English Education students at a university in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The written texts were analyzed using content analysis, while the interview data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings revealed five recurrent error patterns. The most frequent error, occurring in 87% of the essays, was the inappropriate insertion of full stops within sentences, disrupting sentence coherence and logical flow. Other errors included placing full stops at the end of titles (75%), omitting them in degree abbreviations (49%), using them at the end of interrogative or exclamatory sentences (37%), and misplacing them before or after quotation marks (25%). Interview findings indicated that these errors mainly stemmed from the transfer of spoken language habits, time pressure during writing, and inadequate editing and proofreading. These findings underscore the importance of explicit instruction in English punctuation, supported by systematic editing practice, to improve writing accuracy and punctuation awareness among Indonesian EFL undergraduates.
Key words: EFL writing, error analysis, full-stop punctuation, Indonesian undergraduates, punctuation errors, second language writing

Introduction

Writing plays a fundamental role in education because it serves not only as a medium for expressing ideas but also as a means of constructing knowledge and communicating meaning in academic and social contexts (Hyland, 2019). A well-developed written text is characterized by semantic unity, communicative coherence, and systematic organization, enabling readers to interpret the writer's intended message accurately. According to Bernárdez (1982, p. 85), effective texts are constructed through interconnected linguistic and textual principles that ensure coherence and communicative unity. Likewise, high-quality writing reflects the seven standards of textuality cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativeness, situationality, and intertextuality while maintaining grammatical accuracy and appropriate punctuation (El-Zaghal, 2022). Consequently, writing quality depends not only on the development of ideas but also on the accurate application of linguistic conventions that enable readers to process information efficiently.

Among these linguistic conventions, punctuation plays an indispensable role in organizing written discourse. Punctuation marks guide readers in identifying sentence boundaries, clarifying syntactic relationships, and interpreting meaning as intended by the writer (Crystal, 2015, 2016). Their functions extend beyond mechanical correctness, as they contribute directly to textual coherence, readability, and communicative effectiveness. The importance of punctuation has long been recognized by both

linguists (Crystal, 2016) and professional writers (Truss, 2003; Waterhouse, 1994), who argue that appropriate punctuation enables written texts to communicate ideas more precisely and minimizes ambiguity. Nevertheless, despite its central role in written communication, many writers at different educational levels continue to experience difficulties in applying punctuation accurately (Figueras, 2001). These persistent difficulties indicate that punctuation remains an important yet frequently underestimated component of writing proficiency.

Among the punctuation marks used in English writing, the full stop (period) holds a particularly fundamental position because it marks sentence completion. Correct placement of the full stop establishes clear sentence boundaries, enhances textual cohesion, and prevents ambiguity that may hinder readers' comprehension (Crystal, 2015). Despite its grammatical importance, however, the full stop is frequently omitted, misplaced, or inserted incorrectly by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in contexts where first-language punctuation conventions differ from those of English (Khan, 2022). Such errors can disrupt the logical relationships between ideas and reduce the overall quality of academic writing. Therefore, understanding how students use full stops is essential for improving writing accuracy and developing effective instructional practices in EFL classrooms.

In contemporary education, the ability to produce clear, coherent, and well-structured academic writing has become increasingly important (Bazarim et al., 2021). Consequently, punctuation has attracted growing scholarly attention across various disciplinary contexts. For example, Darmon et al. (2020) analyzed punctuation patterns computationally in large corpora and demonstrated that punctuation contributes to textual organization and stylistic analysis. Egamnazarova (2023) examined punctuation from a literary perspective, showing how writers employ punctuation as an element of individual writing style. Similarly, Valenzuela (2021) emphasized the pedagogical importance of punctuation in writing instruction, while studies by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982), Fayol (1997), Cazden et al. (1985), Cordeiro (1988), and Cordeiro et al. (1983) primarily investigated punctuation development among children and primary school learners. At the secondary education level, Cabrera et al. (2023) examined punctuation errors in students' written production and demonstrated that punctuation difficulties remain common even after several years of formal education.

Although these studies have considerably advanced understanding of punctuation from computational, literary, and educational perspectives, they leave several important questions unanswered. First, much of the existing literature has examined punctuation as a general feature of writing rather than specifically focusing on the use of full stops. Second, previous investigations have predominantly involved primary or secondary school students, whereas comparatively little attention has been given to university-level EFL learners. Third, studies that specifically explore patterns of full-stop errors together with the factors contributing to these errors remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context. Considering that university students are expected to produce accurate, coherent, and academically appropriate writing (Purmini et al., 2023), this lack of empirical evidence represents an important gap in the literature.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating full-stop usage among second-semester English Education students at a university in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Rather than examining punctuation broadly, the study focuses specifically on identifying recurrent patterns of full-stop errors and exploring the underlying factors that contribute to these errors in students' academic writing. Understanding these error patterns is

expected to provide valuable evidence for improving punctuation instruction and strengthening students' academic writing competence.
Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What patterns of errors frequently occur in the use of full stops in students' written texts?
2. What factors contribute to students' incorrect use of full stops in academic writing?

By identifying the most common full-stop error patterns and examining the factors underlying these errors, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform EFL writing pedagogy. A deeper understanding of these punctuation problems can offer actionable insights for improving writing instruction, strengthening editing and proofreading practices, and enhancing the overall academic writing proficiency of Indonesian EFL undergraduates.

Literature Review

The Role of the Full Stop in Written English

Punctuation plays a fundamental role in written communication because it organizes ideas, clarifies syntactic relationships, and enables readers to interpret meaning accurately (Darmon et al., 2020). Among the various punctuation marks used in written English, the full stop serves as the primary marker of sentence completion and contributes directly to textual coherence and readability (Crystal, 2015, 2016). Beyond marking the end of a sentence, the full stop functions as an important structural device that separates independent ideas, facilitates logical progression, and supports effective communication across different types of written discourse (Truss, 2003). Consequently, accurate use of full stops is essential for producing coherent and academically appropriate texts.

From both linguistic and pedagogical perspectives, punctuation is not merely a mechanical writing convention but an integral component of meaning construction. Crystal (2016) argues that punctuation provides visual cues that guide readers through the structure of written language, while Truss (2003) emphasizes that accurate punctuation prevents ambiguity and enhances communicative effectiveness. Likewise, Kreuzthaler and Schulz (2015) demonstrate that full stops function as sentence delimiters and abbreviation markers, highlighting their importance for both human comprehension and computational text processing. In educational contexts, studies by Putit and Subramaniam (2022), Purmini et al. (2023), and Supiani (2018) consistently report that punctuation accuracy is closely associated with students' overall writing quality and academic performance. These findings indicate that mastery of full-stop conventions is an essential component of effective writing instruction.

The importance of punctuation extends beyond grammatical correctness to broader aspects of textual organization and stylistic expression. Darmon et al. (2020) demonstrate that punctuation patterns contribute to discourse organization and stylometric analysis by revealing distinctive writing styles across authors and genres. Similarly, Valenzuela (2021) argues that punctuation functions as an important rhetorical resource that supports textual clarity and strengthens readers' interpretation of written messages. Accordingly, the effective use of full stops contributes not only to sentence-level accuracy but also to the overall coherence and communicative quality of academic writing.

Incorrect or omitted full stops may substantially reduce the readability of written texts by creating ambiguity and disrupting sentence boundaries (Petersen, 1975). When sentence boundaries are unclear, readers may experience greater cognitive effort when

interpreting relationships between ideas, which may ultimately hinder comprehension (Hsu et al., 2020). Research on reader-oriented writing likewise demonstrates that textual readability depends on linguistic clarity in addition to visual presentation and document design (Crystal, 2015). Furthermore, studies on language comprehension suggest that unclear textual organization may reduce readers' ability to process complex information effectively (Hsu et al., 2020; Smith, 2016). Therefore, accurate full-stop usage is essential for maintaining textual coherence, facilitating comprehension, and ensuring effective written communication across academic contexts.

Full Stop Errors in EFL Learner Writing

Errors constitute a natural and systematic component of second language learning because they reflect learners' developing linguistic competence rather than merely indicating failure in language acquisition. The theoretical foundation of error analysis was established by Corder (1967), who argued that learners' errors provide valuable evidence of the language learning process and reveal the underlying structure of learners' interlanguage. Rather than viewing errors as mistakes to be eliminated, Corder emphasized that they serve as an important source of information for both researchers and language teachers by identifying areas in which learners require additional instructional support. Consequently, analyzing learners' errors enables educators to understand the nature of students' linguistic difficulties and design more effective teaching strategies.

Building on Corder's work, Dulay et al. (1982) proposed a linguistic taxonomy that classifies learner errors into four major categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This classification has become one of the most widely adopted analytical frameworks in second language research because it enables researchers to identify recurring error patterns systematically. James (1998) further expanded error analysis by emphasizing that learner errors should be interpreted not only according to their linguistic forms but also in relation to their underlying causes and communicative consequences. According to James (1998), identifying systematic error patterns provides valuable insights into learners' language development and contributes to the design of pedagogically appropriate instructional interventions. Within the context of punctuation, these theoretical perspectives suggest that the inaccurate use of full stops should be viewed as systematic learner errors that reflect developing writing competence rather than isolated mechanical mistakes.

Research has consistently demonstrated that punctuation errors remain a persistent challenge for EFL learners. Putit and Subramaniam (2022) reported that punctuation inaccuracies frequently reduce the clarity and coherence of students' academic writing, while Purmini et al. (2023) similarly found that inappropriate punctuation use negatively affects writing quality and overall textual organization. Berg and Ellsworth (2017) further argue that explicit punctuation instruction contributes significantly to students' writing development by improving their awareness of sentence boundaries and punctuation conventions. Collectively, these findings suggest that punctuation competence constitutes an integral component of academic literacy and should receive greater attention within EFL writing instruction.

Among various punctuation marks, the full stop is particularly susceptible to misuse because it requires learners to recognize accurate sentence boundaries while simultaneously maintaining syntactic and semantic coherence. Previous studies have documented recurrent problems such as the omission of full stops, incorrect placement at sentence boundaries, and unnecessary insertion within sentences, all of which reduce textual clarity and readability (Crystal, 2015; Khan, 2022). These difficulties are often

intensified by interference from learners' first language, limited grammatical awareness, and insufficient opportunities to revise written work. Guided by the principles of Error Analysis proposed by Corder (1967), Dulay et al. (1982), and James (1998), the present study examines full-stop errors as systematic patterns in Indonesian EFL undergraduate writing. By identifying the types and frequencies of these errors, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can support more effective punctuation instruction and improve students' academic writing proficiency.

Factors Influencing Punctuation Errors in EFL Writers

The accurate use of punctuation in academic writing is influenced by multiple linguistic, cognitive, and instructional factors. Among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, difficulties in applying full-stop conventions often arise not only from insufficient knowledge of punctuation rules but also from broader challenges associated with writing development. Nsakala and Matondo (2010) argue that many students experience persistent punctuation problems because they have a limited understanding of punctuation conventions and receive insufficient practice in applying these conventions in authentic writing tasks. Consequently, inadequate punctuation knowledge frequently results in inaccurate sentence boundaries and reduced writing clarity.

In addition to limited punctuation knowledge, EFL learners often experience difficulties in organizing ideas beyond the sentence level. Arbee (2020) suggests that students who receive limited writing support or fail to utilize available writing resources frequently struggle to revise and refine their written work. As a result, learners may experience difficulties in organizing their writing coherently beyond individual sentences, which can lead to problems with sentence-level textual coherence (Arbee, 2020). Similarly, Piriyasilpa (2009) reports that weaknesses in discourse organization frequently affect learners' ability to apply punctuation accurately because sentence boundaries become less clearly defined. These findings suggest that punctuation errors should be understood as part of broader writing difficulties rather than as isolated mechanical mistakes.

Another important factor concerns students' awareness of the writing process itself. Learners who write under time pressure or neglect editing and proofreading are less likely to detect punctuation errors before submitting their work (Arbee, 2020). Since punctuation revision generally occurs during the editing stage, insufficient proofreading often results in the persistence of full-stop errors throughout students' written texts. Therefore, systematic writing instruction should emphasize not only punctuation rules but also the importance of revision strategies that encourage students to review sentence boundaries and overall textual accuracy.

Previous research has also shown that punctuation competence is closely related to learners' metalinguistic and syntactic awareness. Rahmiani and Malena (2020) found that limited awareness of punctuation conventions contributes to frequent errors involving full stops, apostrophes, and capitalization. Likewise, research conducted in first-language (L1) writing demonstrates that punctuation reflects learners' syntactic awareness (Costa, 2022), a finding that may also extend to EFL contexts in which students must simultaneously negotiate the conventions of their first language and English writing. Consequently, punctuation errors should not be viewed solely as mechanical inaccuracies but also as indicators of developing linguistic competence.

Furthermore, the gap between explicit knowledge of punctuation rules and their successful application in authentic writing remains a significant challenge for many learners. Ali et al. (2020) argue that students often understand punctuation rules

theoretically but encounter difficulties applying them consistently during writing tasks. Similarly, Berg and Ellsworth (2017) emphasize that explicit instruction combined with continuous practice and corrective feedback substantially improves punctuation accuracy. Misuse of punctuation also reduces writers' ability to communicate ideas clearly and may negatively affect both writing quality and reading comprehension (Suliman et al., 2019). Therefore, improving punctuation competence requires sustained instructional support that integrates explicit teaching, guided writing practice, editing strategies, and constructive feedback throughout the writing process.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate patterns of full-stop errors in the written production of Indonesian EFL undergraduates and to explore the factors contributing to these punctuation errors. A qualitative descriptive design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to provide a systematic description of naturally occurring error patterns and participants' perspectives rather than to examine lived experiences, as required in phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Accordingly, qualitative content analysis was used to identify and classify full-stop errors in students' written texts, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the factors underlying these errors. Integrating document analysis with interview data enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of both the observable error patterns and the factors contributing to their occurrence. Prior to data collection, all participants voluntarily provided written informed consent after receiving a clear explanation of the research objectives and procedures. To ensure confidentiality, all written texts and interview transcripts were anonymized before analysis.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research to recruit information-rich cases that are directly relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study involved thirty second-semester English Education students from two intact classes (Classes A and B) at a university in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Participants were selected based on three inclusion criteria: (a) they were enrolled as second-semester English Education students, (b) they had received introductory instruction in English writing and basic punctuation conventions, and (c) they voluntarily agreed to participate in both the writing task and the semi-structured interview. Second-semester students were intentionally selected because they had already been introduced to fundamental writing conventions but had not yet fully mastered their application in academic writing, making this stage particularly appropriate for examining recurring patterns of full-stop errors. The emphasis was placed on obtaining rich qualitative data rather than statistical representativeness, consistent with the principles of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data were collected from two complementary sources: students' written texts and semi-structured interviews. Each participant completed an individual essay consisting of approximately 150–200 words on a topic assigned by the researcher during a regular classroom writing activity. The completed essays were collected as the document corpus for analysis. Following the document analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' understanding of English punctuation, the challenges they encountered when using full stops, their editing and proofreading practices, and the factors that influenced their punctuation use. Each interview lasted approximately five minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. Combining written texts with interview data enabled the researcher to examine both observable error patterns and participants' explanations of those errors.

Two research instruments were employed to facilitate systematic data collection. The first instrument was a researcher-developed error categorization worksheet, which was designed to identify and classify full-stop errors consistently across all written texts. The worksheet categorized errors into five types: (a) full stops at the end of titles, (b) full stops at the end of interrogative or exclamatory sentences, (c) full stops before or after quotation marks, (d) full stops after degree abbreviations, and (e) full stops inserted within sentences. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview guide, which provided a flexible framework for exploring participants' experiences while ensuring that comparable topics were discussed across all interviews.

The written texts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Each essay was read repeatedly to identify and classify every instance of full-stop usage according to the predetermined error categories. After all errors had been coded, the frequency of each category was calculated to determine the most common patterns of full-stop misuse. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were read repeatedly before meaningful statements related to punctuation practices were coded systematically. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes representing the principal factors underlying students' incorrect use of full stops. The findings from both analyses were then compared to establish meaningful relationships between the observed error patterns and participants' explanations.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was employed by integrating multiple sources of evidence (Denzin, 1978, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2017). Trustworthiness was further strengthened through peer review, member checking, and inter-rater agreement. Peer review involved discussions with two researchers experienced in linguistics and English language education to evaluate the coding procedures and interpretations. Member checking allowed participants to review summaries of the interview findings and verify that the interpretations accurately reflected their intended meanings. In addition, two independent researchers categorized the identified full-stop errors using the same coding framework, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. These procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings in accordance with the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Results and Discussion

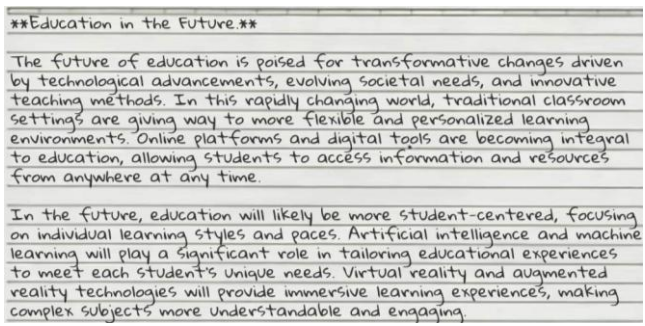
Full Stops Usage Error Patterns

The analysis identified five main error patterns in the use of full stops in student writing. These errors reflect a range of misunderstandings and incorrect applications of full-stop punctuation conventions. The error patterns identified included the placement of full stops at the end of titles, the use of full stops at the end of interrogative or exclamatory sentences, the improper placement of full stops in relation to quotation marks, the incorrect use of full stops in degree abbreviations, and the insertion of full stops within sentences. The frequency and details of these errors are summarized in the table below, highlighting the importance of targeted instruction in specific areas:

Table 1. Percentage of Full Stops Usage Error Patterns

No.	Error Patterns	Percentage of Occurrence
1	Full stop at end of title	75%
2	Full stop at the end of an interrogative or exclamatory sentence	37%
3	Full stop before or after quotation mark	25%
4	Full stop after prefix and suffix of degree abbreviation	49%
5	Using full stop in the middle of sentences	87%

A significant number of students, approximately 75%, incorrectly placed the full stop at the end of the title, revealing a general lack of understanding regarding punctuation conventions. As an illustration, numerous students submitted titles such as "Education in the future." without recognizing that titles typically do not require a full stop, as evidenced in one of the students' essays (Figure 1). This indicates that many students have a limited grasp of the fundamental principles of academic and formal writing.

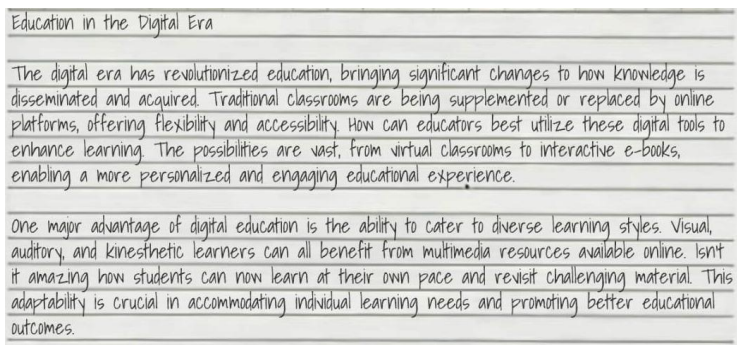

Education in the Future.

The future of education is poised for transformative changes driven by technological advancements, evolving societal needs, and innovative teaching methods. In this rapidly changing world, traditional classroom settings are giving way to more flexible and personalized learning environments. Online platforms and digital tools are becoming integral to education, allowing students to access information and resources from anywhere at any time.

In the future, education will likely be more student-centered, focusing on individual learning styles and paces. Artificial intelligence and machine learning will play a significant role in tailoring educational experiences to meet each student's unique needs. Virtual reality and augmented reality technologies will provide immersive learning experiences, making complex subjects more understandable and engaging.

Figure 1. Essay from error pattern full stop at the end of title

In addition, 37% of students also incorrectly used full stops at the end of interrogative or exclamatory sentences. This error was evident in sentences such as "How can educators best utilize these digital tools to enhance learning." and "Isn't it amazing how students can now learn at their own pace and revisit challenging material.", where a full stop was used instead of the appropriate question mark or exclamation mark, as seen in Figure 2. These errors indicate a limited understanding of punctuation conventions in relation to sentence type.

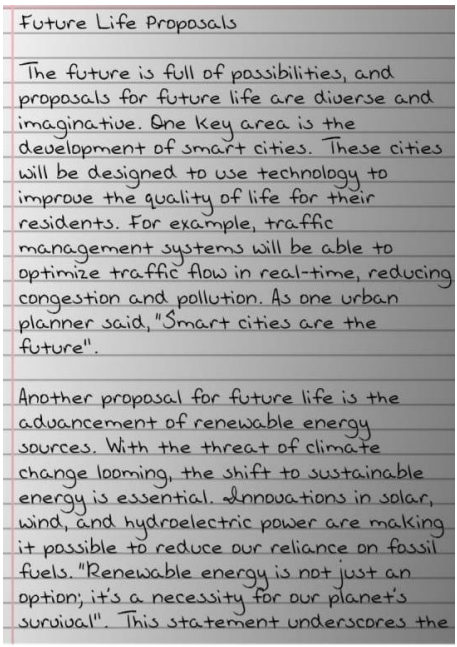

Education in the Digital Era

The digital era has revolutionized education, bringing significant changes to how knowledge is disseminated and acquired. Traditional classrooms are being supplemented or replaced by online platforms, offering flexibility and accessibility. How can educators best utilize these digital tools to enhance learning. The possibilities are vast, from virtual classrooms to interactive e-books, enabling a more personalized and engaging educational experience.

One major advantage of digital education is the ability to cater to diverse learning styles. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners can all benefit from multimedia resources available online. Isn't it amazing how students can now learn at their own pace and revisit challenging material. This adaptability is crucial in accommodating individual learning needs and promoting better educational outcomes.

Figure 2. Essay from error pattern full stop at the end of an interrogative or exclamatory sentence

Furthermore, the analysis also revealed that 25% of students misused full stops in relation to quotation marks. A common error was placing the full stop outside the quotation marks when it should have been inside, as illustrated in Figure 3. These errors show that many students do not fully understand the rules of punctuation placement in quotations, which can affect the clarity and accuracy of their writing.

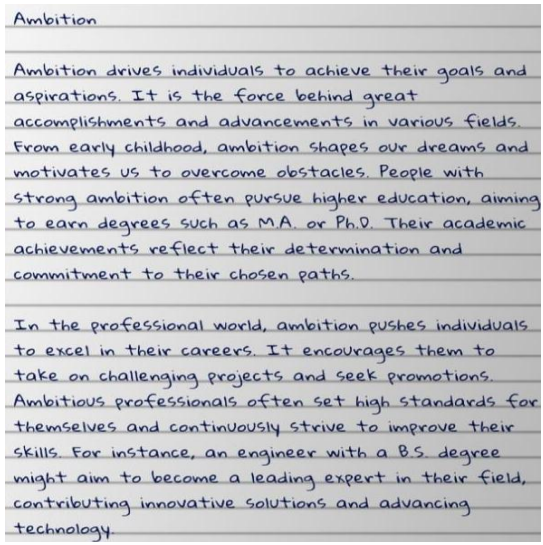

Future Life Proposals

The future is full of possibilities, and proposals for future life are diverse and imaginative. One key area is the development of smart cities. These cities will be designed to use technology to improve the quality of life for their residents. For example, traffic management systems will be able to optimize traffic flow in real-time, reducing congestion and pollution. As one urban planner said, "Smart cities are the future".

Another proposal for future life is the advancement of renewable energy sources. With the threat of climate change looming, the shift to sustainable energy is essential. Innovations in solar, wind, and hydroelectric power are making it possible to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. "Renewable energy is not just an option; it's a necessity for our planet's survival". This statement underscores the

Figure 3. Essay from error pattern full stop before or after quotation mark

Furthermore, 49% of students omitted full stops in degree abbreviations. Figure 4 shows an example of this error: rather than writing "M.A." or "Ph.D." with the required internal full stops, students wrote them without punctuation. This type of inaccuracy demonstrates that students are frequently inconsistent in applying the conventions for writing academic degree abbreviations, which can reduce clarity and impair the professional presentation of their writing.

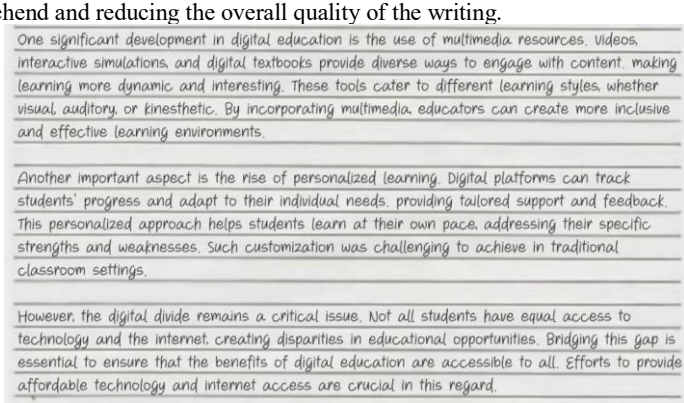

Ambition

Ambition drives individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations. It is the force behind great accomplishments and advancements in various fields. From early childhood, ambition shapes our dreams and motivates us to overcome obstacles. People with strong ambition often pursue higher education, aiming to earn degrees such as M.A. or Ph.D. Their academic achievements reflect their determination and commitment to their chosen paths.

In the professional world, ambition pushes individuals to excel in their careers. It encourages them to take on challenging projects and seek promotions. Ambitious professionals often set high standards for themselves and continuously strive to improve their skills. For instance, an engineer with a B.S. degree might aim to become a leading expert in their field, contributing innovative solutions and advancing technology.

Figure 4. Essay from error pattern full stop after prefix and suffix of degree abbreviation

The most frequent error, found in 87% of the students' texts, was the improper insertion of full stops within sentences, which disrupted sentence flow and coherence. As illustrated in Figure 5, students incorrectly broke continuous ideas into separate fragments; for example, separating "Videos, interactive simulations, and digital textbooks provide diverse ways to engage with content" from a preceding sentence about digital education, or dividing a statement about bridging access gaps from its supporting clause. These improper full-stop insertions not only disrupt the flow of ideas but can also substantially alter the intended meaning, making the text difficult to comprehend and reducing the overall quality of the writing.


One significant development in digital education is the use of multimedia resources. Videos, interactive simulations, and digital textbooks provide diverse ways to engage with content, making learning more dynamic and interesting. These tools cater to different learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. By incorporating multimedia, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments.

Another important aspect is the rise of personalized learning. Digital platforms can track students' progress and adapt to their individual needs, providing tailored support and feedback. This personalized approach helps students learn at their own pace, addressing their specific strengths and weaknesses. Such customization was challenging to achieve in traditional classroom settings.

However, the digital divide remains a critical issue. Not all students have equal access to technology and the internet, creating disparities in educational opportunities. Bridging this gap is essential to ensure that the benefits of digital education are accessible to all. Efforts to provide affordable technology and internet access are crucial in this regard.

Figure 5. Essay from error pattern using full stop in the middle of sentences

Considering the significant number of errors that occur, it is evident that students' grasp of full stop punctuation usage requires improvement. It is crucial for educational institutions to offer comprehensive training on the rules of full stop punctuation and proper writing. This can be achieved through various methods such as workshops, online learning modules, or incorporating punctuation material into the curriculum. Having a strong grasp of punctuation can greatly enhance students' writing abilities, enabling them to produce high-quality work in various academic and professional

settings. Furthermore, the valuable guidance and feedback provided by instructors and tutors can assist students in rectifying their errors. Including exercises that emphasize the identification and correction of punctuation errors can yield significant advantages. Consistent practice and valuable feedback will assist students in gaining a deeper appreciation for the significance of full stop punctuation in writing, as well as its ability to enhance clarity and convey intended meaning.

Factors Influencing Students' Underuse of Full Stops in Writing Text

Based on the interviews, the findings identify key reasons that contribute to university students' incorrect use of full stops in written texts. Three major recurring factors were identified through interviews with 30 students: the influence of spoken language on written expression, the inclination to write hastily, and insufficient editing and proofreading. These factors explain why students frequently struggle with the correct placement and use of full stops, compromising the coherence and clarity of their written communication. The frequency and details of these factors are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Factors Influencing Students' Underuse of Full Stops in Writing

No.	Factors	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
1.	The influence of spoken	10	33.3%
2.	Haste in writing	12	40%
3.	Lack of editing and proofreading	8	26.7%

The analysis revealed that the participants' writing style is substantially influenced by their oral communication habits, as reported by 33.3% of them. In spoken communication, pauses and emphasis do not always follow the same conventions as written punctuation, which can result in errors in full-stop placement. Students often transfer patterns from speaking to writing without adequately accounting for the distinct rules governing each mode of communication. As one student mentioned:

> *"I think the influence of spoken language is very significant in writing because when speaking, we tend to use longer sentences and rely on intonation to separate ideas. This is different from writing, where punctuation marks such as full stops are very important to indicate the end of a sentence, I often bring this oral habit into my writing, thus ignoring the importance of using full stops to separate sentences."*

Another factor found in the analysis was that 26.7% of participants did not do any editing or proofreading after writing. Editing and proofreading is not just about correcting punctuation errors, but also about ensuring the overall quality and communicative effectiveness of the writing, including the correct arrangement of full stops in the context of sentences and paragraphs. Lack of awareness of the importance of this stage can negatively impact the use of punctuation, including full stops, which directly affects the clarity and accuracy of the writing. As one student stated:

> *"Because of the limited time to work on the text, sometimes we don't have time to correct and pay attention to the use of punctuation in our writing. But sometimes I personally often ignore correcting the use of punctuation marks at the point I am more focused on my writing and answers that are correct or not."*

By gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to this issue, we can implement various strategies to address it. First, guidance on shifting from casual

speech patterns to a more formal writing style can help reduce punctuation errors. Additionally, implementing strategies that prioritize the value of thoughtful writing over speed can greatly enhance the overall quality of written work. Finally, a focus on systematic editing and proofreading practices will assist students in honing their punctuation usage and enhancing the clarity of their academic writing. Therefore, these endeavors are anticipated to enhance students' writing abilities and the overall caliber of their written assignments.

Regarding the first research question, the findings reveal that errors in full-stop usage among the participants are diverse and recurrent. These results align with those of Cabrera et al. (2023), who examined common errors in comma usage in essays by junior high school students and demonstrated that punctuation difficulties persist across educational levels. The findings confirm that accurate placement of full stops is essential for coherence and readability in written communication (Petersen, 1975). Errors such as the placement of full stops at the end of headings or within sentences not only disrupt the flow of ideas but can also lead to misinterpretation (Crystal, 2015). Other common errors include incorrect placement of full stops after quotation marks or in the middle of sentences, suggesting a widespread misunderstanding of punctuation rules among students (Darmon et al., 2020). Hsu et al. (2020) demonstrated that the absence of full stops can lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation, especially in complex or ambiguous linguistic conditions, suggesting that a thorough understanding of punctuation marks, including full stops, is crucial.

As for the frequent error patterns in this study, the misuse of full stops after quotation marks or in the middle of sentences highlights the widespread misunderstanding of punctuation rules among students (Darmon et al., 2020). Another frequent error is the placement of full stops in the middle of sentences, which breaks the logical flow. This error is often caused by students' confusion in distinguishing between full stops that mark the end of a sentence and those used in abbreviations or numbers. Cayley (2015) observed that students who struggle with full-stop placement often show challenges in maintaining sentence integrity and coherence. This pattern is evident in the frequent errors in their writing samples, suggesting that a sound understanding of punctuation rules is an essential part of effective writing skills. From a practical standpoint, the correct use of punctuation marks, including full stops, not only improves textual clarity but also facilitates effective communication (Kreuzthaler & Schulz, 2015), while from a systemic functional linguistics perspective, full stops contribute to the flow of information by establishing thematic organization in the text (Nonemacher, 2020).

Regarding the second research question, this study identified various factors that contribute to students' incorrect use of full stops in written texts. These factors include the influence of oral language habits, rushed writing, and insufficient editing and proofreading. According to Arbee (2020), a broader issue in writing education is that students struggle to fully internalize the shift from spoken to written language norms, which in turn affects their accuracy in applying punctuation rules (Khan, 2022). The influence of spoken language on written expression is particularly substantial: students frequently apply oral patterns to writing, resulting in incorrect punctuation (Ali et al., 2020). In spoken language, pauses and intonation naturally guide listeners, but in written language, clear punctuation is necessary to achieve the same effect (Xie, 2022). The problem is further compounded by the hurried completion of tasks and the absence of careful editing, resulting in sentences that are incomplete or incorrectly punctuated (Costa, 2022). This underscores the need for specific instructional strategies that emphasize deliberate writing practice and the integration of both spoken and written language conventions (Ali et al., 2020).

These findings have important implications for educators looking to enhance students' punctuation skills. Integrating explicit instruction on punctuation rules into the language curriculum can greatly enhance students' understanding of when and how to use full stops correctly (Supiani, 2018). For instance, focused lessons on punctuation, combined with hands-on exercises, can strengthen understanding of the rules and how to apply them. Additionally, fostering a culture of meticulous editing and proofreading motivates students to enhance their writing by rectifying punctuation mistakes and enhancing overall coherence (Smith, 2016). Teachers can include peer review sessions in their curriculum, where students can provide constructive feedback on each other's work, paying attention to punctuation and coherence. Furthermore, increasing educators' understanding of how oral language habits affect written expression can contribute to the development of effective learning strategies that address this linguistic disparity (Nsakala & Matondo, 2010). Educators can create effective approaches that target differences between oral and written communication, helping students adapt their writing practices.

Conclusion

This study has identified recurring patterns of full-stop errors in the academic writing of Indonesian EFL undergraduates and explored the factors contributing to these punctuation problems. The five identified error patterns, in descending order of frequency, were (1) the inappropriate insertion of full stops within sentences (87%), (2) the placement of full stops at the end of essay titles (75%), (3) the omission of full stops in degree abbreviations (49%), (4) the use of full stops at the end of interrogative or exclamatory sentences (37%), and (5) the misplacement of full stops before or after quotation marks (25%). Interview findings further revealed that these errors were primarily associated with the influence of oral communication habits, time pressure during writing, and insufficient editing and proofreading practices. These findings demonstrate that punctuation errors extend beyond mechanical inaccuracies and reflect broader challenges in students' academic writing development. Consequently, the study contributes empirical evidence that can inform EFL writing pedagogy by highlighting the importance of explicit instruction on full-stop conventions, guided editing practice, and increased awareness of the differences between spoken and written language.

This study has several limitations. The sample consisted of only thirty second-semester English Education students from a single university in North Sumatra, limiting the transferability of the findings to other Indonesian undergraduate populations. In addition, the analysis focused exclusively on one text genre (academic essays) and one academic level, while formal inter-rater agreement for the coding process was not statistically reported. Future research should therefore involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions, examine different genres of academic writing, compare learners at different proficiency levels, and incorporate clearly documented coding reliability procedures. Such studies would strengthen the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of punctuation development among Indonesian EFL learners.

AI Use Declaration

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools were used solely to assist with language editing, including grammar checking, sentence refinement, and improvement of English academic style. AI tools were not used to generate the research data, conduct the analysis, interpret the findings, or develop the scientific conclusions. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, content, and final version of the manuscript.

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