

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, research benefits, conceptual framework, and previous study.

#### **A. Background of The Study**

Writing is one of basic language skills that students especially English for Foreign Language (EFL) students need to develop. From the types of writing the students have to establish, academic writing is the most important skill to learn. For students, academic writing helps them to develop their critical and analytical thinking by expressing their thoughts through writing (Ratnawati, R. at al. 2018). One of academic writing production is research work which can stimulate the intellect of students. The competence of academic writing needs to be accomplished as one of fulfillment of EFL students' academic qualification in university such as final thesis, research journal, etc. (Ratnawati, R. at al. 2018).

Some schools and universities also make a writing project as one of the materials in academic writing. The project can be research. Research is a systematic activity that uses scientific concepts and procedures to collect data and information in order to understand and/or test a field of science and technology (Basu, 2020; Rathnakar. G, 2018). However, due to the difficulties in a real research, students are just given task to write mini research project. Mini research is a research-based field practice (Haryono & Adam, 2021) that compiles scientific papers generated by students as tasks assigned by the lecturer in charge of the course. Although mini research is a small-scale of research, it also refers to one of types in academic writing which has several characteristics.

Several characteristics in academic writing are strictly formed by perfect grammar and organized with the ideas in every paragraph. In academic writing, students cannot use slangs, idioms, and inappropriate words which are uncontextually related to the

topic. They need to be careful in written expressions from spelling punctuation to word selection, from sentence structure to paragraph flow (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018).

Since English is not the native language, EFL students frequently commit punctuation errors because the rules of English and their first language often differ from each other. These errors usually found in the use, omission, or misuse of punctuation marks (Ali, at al.). The lack of knowledge of the rules in punctuation use can cause students commit errors and cause them produce unorganized writing (Gass & Selinker). This is the reason other than content, punctuation as one of the grammatical features need to be paid more attention in language learning, especially English academic writing.

In the preliminary survey conducted by the researcher, it is found that most students make errors in the use of punctuation marks. They either place it incorrectly or omit that actually should be.

Figure 1.1 An Example of Punctuation Errors

1. Will you speak a little louder, George. (1/Sbt/S36/R)
2. All of my cousins and my nephew felt happy, all of them felt so fun. (71/Sbt/S4/P)
3. What a tremendous value? (23/Sbt/S36/R)

From the three examples above, it is known that there is a punctuation error in each number: the use of full stop in the first sentence; the use of comma in the end of sentence in number two; and the wrong use of question mark in the sentence number three. Instead of those punctuation, the use of period in the end of sentence number one should be replaced by question mark because it is an interrogative sentence. The use of comma in sentence number two should be changed by period because it is an end of a

statement. Lastly, the incorrect use of question mark in the third sentence must be an exclamation mark because it is exclamatory sentence that shows a strong emotion.

Some difficulties in applying punctuation such as lack of accuracy, omission, and knowledge of using punctuation properly are mostly faced by lot of students. These obstacles will affect the quality of writing. The difficulty of punctuation use is also caused by the ignorance of teaching punctuation in the English language learning class. Punctuation is not taught with a great attention in most of schools and colleges (Khan& Khan, 2016). Thus, many students learn how to use punctuation marks at their own.

Due to all the troubles and problems the students have made in using symbols and signs, punctuation needs to be paid big attention and taught more seriously to avoid students producing poor writing. According to (Awad, 2012) punctuation plays three important roles in academic writing: phonetic function, grammatical, and semantic role. Phonetic function is related to the tone in writing produced by a reader. Grammatical function refers to punctuation marks that are used to avoid ambiguities by emphasizing.

Related to punctuation issue, there are several studies of punctuation error committed by students in their writing. One of the researchers who studied this issue is Raba (2012). This study looked into the punctuation errors made by the students of An Najah National University. From the investigation, he found that most students made mistake in the use of comma, the capitalization, question marks, and semicolon. The following study was conducted by Mujiyanto (2012) that observed the spelling error, the wrong use of capital letter, and the punctuation marks mistakes used by the first year college students of Al Meghrib University in Libya. Other study was conducted by GEZMIS (2023). The study analyzed the punctuation mark errors in the process of writing an essay by 56 students.

Based on the findings of some previous studies, this shows that punctuation still becomes common error made by students in their writing. Thus, it is essential to study punctuation to improve writing skill especially in writing research as one of the projects of the academic writing course. However, this study has different areas from previous

researches. This study specially expected to find the most punctuation errors in writing mini research as a project made by students academic year 2021 of English Education Department Of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

### **B. Research Question**

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What the punctuation mark errors made by Indonesian EFL students in academic writing especially in the form of mini research?
2. What are the factors of students in making punctuation errors in mini research?

### **C. Research Purposes**

Regarding the research questions above, the purposes of this research are:

1. To identify the type of punctuation mark errors mostly made by Indonesian EFL students in academic writing
2. To analyze the factors behind the punctuation verb errors made by students in academic writing

### **D. Research Significance**

By conducting this study, the students can recognize the errors they mostly made in punctuation. They will learn from their previous errors and avoid the same mistakes in the future. Hopefully, students can be more careful to apply punctuation marks in their academic writing.

Meanwhile, the result practically expects teachers and lecturers to take into consideration to the importance of teaching punctuation use as one of the basic knowledge of the grammatical components of English language learning in the class to improve students' academic writing to be more meaningful and comprehensive. Further, teacher can make this result of study to develop appropriate teaching technique for the students.

Finally, the researcher hopes that this research can be useful as reference to the following researchers who are interested in studying the similar case.

## E. Conceptual Framework

According to Ali, Amin, and Ishtiaq (2020) punctuation marks is the symbols used in writing to tell when the readers have to stop, emphasize, or slow down. As writing is a productive skill that requires various knowledge such as orthographic, semantic, grammatical, syntactical, textual, spelling and punctuation. Punctuation needs to be studied because it makes a written text meaningful and understandable (GEZMIŞ, 2023). Without mastery of punctuation, students will face difficulties and obstacles in producing a successful writing (Amelia, at al., 2018).

Punctuation is an essential skill in writing because incorrect use of punctuation marks can make meaning of a text change (Sudilah, 2015). Further, punctuation has several functions that absolutely support a good writing: it denotes the start and end of sentences or paragraphs and connects them with the presence or absence of punctuation marks; it is used to emphasize or add tone (Kirkman, 2006).

Some researchers differ in classifying the number of punctuation types. However, Hutaeruk (2016) said that there are fourteen of punctuation marks: comma, period, colon, semicolon, parentheses, dashes, ellipses, exclamation mark, quotation mark, question mark, hyphens, apostrophes, capitalization, underline or italics.

Table 1.1 The Punctuation Mark Error in Examples

No	Punctuation Marks	Examples
1	Comma (,)	She is beautiful, but stingy.
2	Period (.)	I have a big house.
3	Colon (:)	My mother loves animals: cat and dog.
4	Semicolon (;)	I knew this street; it has changed
5	Parentheses (( ))	The new restaurant (on Djuanda street) offers a selection of fried noodles.
6	Dashes ( )	My brother is afraid of two things– crocks and mouse
7	Ellipses (...)	I was thinking about who would come next...and Ella entered the room.
8	Exclamation mark (!)	You are beautiful!
9	Quotation mark (“... “)	Alex says "I am tired"
10	Question mark (?)	Have you eaten?

11	Enhyphen	John is looking for dog-friendly restaurant.
12	Apostrophes (‘)	Ana's pen is on the desk
13	Capitalization	Sisca is living in Bandung
14	Underline or italics	I love the word <i>petrichor</i>

Punctuation is one of the basic components of English grammar that is always associated with the main four skills of English, mainly writing. Writing is a method of problem-solving in which the writer must come up with ideas in language and organize those thoughts into a written form reaching the writer's goals and the reader's needs (Lyons, 1987). In addition, writing is a process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing which the written work is influenced by genre. This kind of technique is more preferable for teaching writing in the class (Harmer, 2004:4-5). There are several types of writing such as academic writing, creative writing, and personal writing. Different from creative and personal writing which usually uses informal language, academic writing has formal and strict structures.

According to Bily (2003), academic writing is a formal type of writing which is used by educators and researchers in journal publications. The characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone and style, objective arguments, the use of resources, logical structures, and free from errors. Academic writing is categorized into seven features which are chapters, essays, research articles, technical reports, theses, and literary analysis.

To improve skill of academic writing, teachers and lecturers can create a project as a task of writing research in a small scale. This project is called mini research. Mini research helps students to communicate their writing in a scientific presentation (Haryono and Adam, 2021). Mini research also helps students to heighten awareness of nature specific problems, their causes and the solutions (Stempleski (1994). It is also said that mini research increases the skill of taking note. From the investigation of the research, students are asked to write the findings and the summarize.

Students need to accomplish academic writing to fulfill their needs at the university such as paper, assignments, exercises, and thesis. Therefore, to accommodate these

needs, some universities in Indonesia has academic writing course as one of the subjects of English language learning. Despite the urgency, students might come across the difficulties and challenges in academic writing. One of them is the style of the writing and the language use which frequently requires phrasal verbs.

Students' punctuation errors in writing have become an old problem that still exists in the present. Punctuation error is a misuse of using, omitting, or placing incorrect punctuation marks in writing and it affects misleading writing and misconception of the readers because punctuation has big effect in structure and coherence of the text (Ali, at al. 2020). Furthermore, punctuation problems may have an impact on the organization of the structure of sentence and the overall meaning of the text (Murshidi, 2014). It can be concluded that phrasal verb errors in academic writing is the failure of students in formatting, adding, or misordering the punctuation marks due to the lack of knowledge of the punctuation use and the influence of the students' mother tongue.

#### **F. Previous Studies**

Several studies on students' punctuation errors have been conducted by some researchers. Khan & Khan (2016) investigated punctuation errors made by the intermediate level learners at college of Punjab Group. The sample is taken from sixty students of the first and second-year grade. This study used error analysis and they found that from fifteen types of punctuation marks, most students make mistakes in three symbols: coma, colon, and semicolon.

Shweba & Mujiyanto (2017) studied the errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in writing committed by first year English college students of Al Merghib University. From the thirty participants, it was found that their written works has the most error in capitalization; 179 errors, followed by punctuation marks; 168 errors, and the spelling has 157 errors. The researchers believed that all those errors arise due to a lack of understanding in punctuation use, a lack of balance in the curriculum, and the influence of their first language.

Additionally, a comparative study among different universities in Pakistani was conducted by Ali, Amin, and Ishtiaq (2020). The study looked into students' punctuation error in writing. The researchers used mix-method research design. From more than 5 universities, there were 200 students who become the participants. They were administered a punctuation test and interviewed. After analyzing, it results for the errors that mostly students make are the use of comma, apostrophes, and capitalization. Further, the analysis of the interviews revealed that the major reasons for the differences in the frequency of punctuation errors were a lack of practice on punctuation marks, a lack of teaching punctuation within context, a lack of checking punctuation errors, and a lack of error corrective feedback on punctuation errors.

Furthermore, Awad (2012) conducted a research on error in punctuation use made by the English and the TEFL Majors at An-Najah National University. The participants are taken from random sampling of 100 students from the TEFL Department in the Faculty of Education and the English Department in the Arts Faculty. The results of the test administered by the researcher, it is found that the most commons of punctuation are the use of comma, the incorrect use of the capital letter, the wrong use of the quotation marks and the misuse of semicolon.

Nevertheless, this present analyzed the punctuation errors made by Indonesian EFL students in their academic writing work, mini-research project. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach as a method. The researcher used document analysis and interview as the instrument. Thirty five students' documents of their mini-research project were analyzed to discover the most common type of punctuation mark error they made. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted to look into the factors behind the errors in their writing. All of the participants of this research are the 4th semester students of EED of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This present study differs from the previous researches because they do not specifically investigate the punctuation errors in mini research projects. This study also analyzed more detail because it used the rubric which classified the punctuation marks into fourteen types.