

# Sentence Complexity in Indonesian Legal Language: An Analysis of Subject Constituent Structure in KUHP Texts

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**Abstract**—This study examines the syntactic complexity of Indonesian legal sentence structures, focusing specifically on the constituent organization of sentence subjects in the *Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana (KUHP)* (Indonesian Penal Code). Employing a dual-dimensional syntactic framework—structural and relational—the research analyzes and classifies thirteen representative legal sentences based on the number, type, and hierarchical depth of embedded clauses functioning as subject constituents. The findings reveal that subjects in legal sentences range from simple noun phrases to highly recursive constructions containing up to twelve levels of embedded clauses. Two dominant sentence configurations are identified: the canonical pattern (Subject–Predicate) and the non-canonical or inversion pattern (Predicate–Complement–Subject). While canonical structures become increasingly difficult to process as subject complexity increases, inverted structures—particularly when combined with syntactic enumeration—enhance clarity, reduce cognitive load, and improve interpretability by foregrounding the legal action and segmenting dense legal content. These patterns are not interchangeable but serve complementary functions, depending on clause complexity and legal focus. The study affirms that syntactic complexity in Indonesian legal language is neither arbitrary nor obstructive, but rather a grammatically regulated and functionally adaptive response to the communicative demands of legal discourse, including precision, completeness, and referential clarity. Accordingly, the research advances a dual-axis syntactic model—mapping paradigmatic depth and syntagmatic ordering—as both a theoretical contribution to legal linguistics and a practical framework for improving legal drafting, statutory interpretation, and public access to legal texts.

**Index Terms**—legal syntax, subject complexity, syntactic inversion, Indonesian legal language, clause embedding

## I. INTRODUCTION

Legal language is designed to be precise, authoritative, and unambiguous. However, such precision frequently comes at the cost of syntactic complexity, particularly in highly formalized texts such as statutes and penal codes. In the Indonesian context, legal texts—especially those contained in the *Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana* (Indonesian

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Penal Code) (hereinafter referred to as KUHP)—consistently exhibit structurally dense and hierarchically layered sentence constructions, with a notable concentration of complexity in the subject position. These complex subject constituents, often composed of multiple levels of embedded clauses, are linguistically necessary to fulfill legal requirements such as referential exhaustiveness and semantic precision. Yet, they also pose significant challenges to comprehension, affecting both lay readers and legal practitioners who must interpret these texts with doctrinal accuracy and procedural clarity.

Previous research has identified syntactic density as a salient feature of legal discourse across jurisdictions. Tiersma (1999) observes that legal texts are structurally elaborate and resistant to simplification, while Bhatia (1993) underscores the institutional rigidity of legal drafting within what he terms a “genre colony”—a discursive space governed by highly conventionalized syntactic practices. Indonesian legal scholars such as Soedarto (1986) and Subekti (2008) similarly acknowledge that legal texts often sacrifice accessibility in the pursuit of exhaustive coverage, particularly when long and clause-heavy subject constituents are presented without structural scaffolding or segmentation.

One of the most cognitively demanding features of Indonesian legal syntax is the organization of constituents within the subject slot, which frequently includes recursive embeddings of relative, adverbial, and nominal clauses. In some instances, subjects may span more than a dozen embedded clauses, functioning not merely as nominal references but as legal devices for enumerating actors, conditions, intentions, and legal relationships. This challenge is further compounded by variation in sentence architecture, particularly between the canonical (Subject–Predicate) and the non-canonical or inverted (Predicate–Complement–Subject) structures. While the canonical pattern reflects the expected SVO ordering in Indonesian, it becomes unwieldy when subjects are highly complex. In contrast, the inversion structure—particularly when enhanced by syntactic enumeration—improves accessibility by foregrounding the legal action or consequence and segmenting dense textual content into cognitively tractable units.

Despite its perceived opacity, this syntactic complexity is neither random nor excessive. Rather, it reflects a systematically governed grammatical adaptation to the functional demands of legal discourse. It ensures not only completeness and interpretive precision but also coherence within a highly codified register. From a theoretical standpoint, the complexity of Indonesian legal syntax can be explained through the dual perspectives of paradigmatic organization—which accounts for the vertical, recursive selection of clause types within the subject—and syntagmatic ordering—which governs the linear arrangement of sentence elements to achieve discourse prominence and clarity.

Accordingly, this study aims to uncover the internal grammatical logic that governs complex subject constructions in Indonesian legal language. By analyzing authentic provisions of the KUHP, it examines how structural choices—such as clause embedding, inversion, and enumeration—serve both syntactic and functional purposes. Through a dual-dimensional syntactic model that integrates paradigmatic depth and syntagmatic sequencing, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of legal syntax. It also offers practical insights for improving legislative drafting, supporting statutory interpretation, and enhancing public access to legal texts in a multilingual and pluralistic legal environment.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The complexity of sentence structures in legal language can be systematically explained through syntactic theories that account for both the hierarchical nature of constituent organization and the linear arrangement of sentence elements. This study is grounded in a dual syntactic framework comprising structural syntax and relational-functional syntax, which together provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing how legal language organizes meaning through form.

### 1. Constituent Structure and Hierarchy

At the core of structural syntax lies the concept of constituent hierarchy, where sentence elements are nested within increasingly larger grammatical units. Radford (2004, p. 5) asserts that “a sentence is not simply a string of words, but a structured set of phrases and clauses organized hierarchically.” Likewise, Carnie (2013, p. 42) explains that “constituents are the groupings of words that function as units within a hierarchical syntactic structure,” emphasizing that these constituents form recursive layers of embedding.

Payne (1997, p. 83) further notes that “many syntactic constructions are recursive, allowing clauses to be nested within other clauses to any degree necessary,” a feature heavily utilized in legal texts to encode complex and exhaustive legal information. In Indonesian legal texts, this manifests in subject positions that are filled not by simple noun phrases but by multi-layered embedded clauses, as required to enumerate legal actors and conditions with precision.

A critical mechanism underlying this complexity is recursion—the ability of syntactic structures to contain instances of themselves. Recursion allows for theoretically infinite clause embedding, which is pragmatically employed in legal drafting to incorporate layered exceptions, qualifiers, or conditions. For example:

*Barang siapa [yang melakukan [perbuatan [yang bertentangan dengan hukum [yang berlaku di wilayah ini]]]]...*

*"Whoever [commits [an act [that is against the law [applicable in this jurisdiction]]]]..."*

Here, four nested clause levels fill the subject slot alone. While this structure enables syntactic depth and semantic elaboration, it simultaneously imposes greater cognitive load on the reader, which is a central concern in processing legal texts.

### 2. Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Relations

This study also draws upon the classic distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, first articulated by Saussure and later developed in syntactic theory. Halliday (1994, p. 15) defines these as “two axes of language organization: the paradigmatic axis, which organizes choice, and the syntagmatic axis, which organizes combination”.

Matthews (1981, p. 24) further clarifies: “Paradigmatic relations are those of substitution and contrast, whereas syntagmatic relations are those of sequence and co-occurrence”.

- a. Paradigmatic relations refer to the vertical axis of selection—what elements can fill a given syntactic slot (e.g., a noun phrase, a relative clause, or an entire clause complex as a subject).
- b. Syntagmatic relations concern the horizontal ordering of elements—how constituents are sequenced to form a grammatically coherent unit.

These two structural axes interact in legal sentences to produce dense and layered syntax. The table below illustrates this interaction:

| Slot                | Paradigmatic Option (Selection)                             | Syntagmatic Position (Order)             |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Subject             | NP / Relative Clause / Nominal Clause / Coordinated Clauses | Initial (canonical) or Final (inversion) |
| Predicate           | Verb Phrase, Passive / Active, with Modals                  | Usually second element (S–P or P–S)      |
| Complement/Modifier | PP / Adverbial Clause / Prepositional Phrase                | Follows predicate in canonical order     |

### 3. Canonical and Non-Canonical Sentence Patterns

In standard Indonesian, the canonical sentence structure follows the SVO (Subject–Verb–Object) pattern. However, legal texts often deviate from this by using non-canonical (inversion) patterns such as Predicate–Complement–Subject. This reordering reflects what Carnie (2013, p. 328) refers to as “marked word order,” where “constituent movement is used for discourse or information-structural purposes,” such as thematizing the predicate for interpretive clarity.

In legal discourse, such inversion serves several communicative functions:

- a. Foregrounding the legal action or consequence,
- b. Reducing the memory load of processing a long initial subject,
- c. Signaling clause hierarchy and enumeration, often supported by numbering or typographic segmentation.

### 4. Functional Motivation and the Legal Register

The formal properties of legal syntax cannot be fully understood without considering the functional demands of legal discourse. As Van Valin (2004, p. 6) contends, “syntactic structure is not autonomous but interfaces with semantics and pragmatics,” especially in genres that require precision and interpretability, such as legal texts.

Within Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), syntactic choices are shaped by communicative intent. Legal drafting prioritizes explicit reference, exhaustiveness, and unambiguous interpretation, which motivates the use of recursive constructions, embedded subjects, and inversion. These features are not stylistic flourishes but structurally governed responses to institutional norms.

Thus, legal syntax should not be seen as a deviation from everyday language, but as a specialized, goal-oriented grammar designed to serve the legal system's communicative priorities.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study has revealed that the syntactic complexity found in the subject position of Indonesian legal sentences—especially those in the KUHP—is neither arbitrary nor merely a byproduct of legalese. Rather, it reflects a deliberate grammatical strategy that serves the communicative imperatives of legal discourse: namely, referential precision, semantic exhaustiveness, and cognitive coherence.

By applying a dual-dimensional syntactic analysis—focusing on paradigmatic depth (hierarchical clause embedding) and syntagmatic ordering (canonical vs. non-canonical patterns)—this research identifies two dominant structural configurations in legal drafting: the canonical Subject–Predicate (S–P) pattern and the non-canonical Predicate–Complement–Subject (P–C–S) inversion. These patterns are not interchangeable but serve complementary functions: the canonical form is suited for simpler or actor-focused constructions, while the inverted form is more efficient for managing cognitively demanding, clause-heavy subjects.

The analysis of thirteen legal sentences, with subject constituents ranging from a single noun phrase to more than a dozen hierarchically embedded clauses, demonstrates how legal syntax exploits recursive mechanisms to encode legal actors, intentions, and conditions exhaustively. Additionally, the study highlights the strategic role of numbering or segmentation as a syntactic aid, which not only enhances readability but also improves legal interpretability by delineating dense legal information into manageable units.

Functionally, syntactic complexity is shown to be a grammatically motivated response to institutional needs. The recursive structure of subject clauses ensures legal completeness, while inversion and numbering address readers' cognitive limitations and support interpretive clarity. These findings confirm that Indonesian legal language constitutes a specialized grammatical register in which form is meticulously aligned with function.

Accordingly, this study contributes to both theoretical syntax—by extending constituent and relational analyses into legal domains—and applied legal linguistics, by offering concrete syntactic strategies that legal drafters, educators, and computational linguists can adopt. Ultimately, the complexity of Indonesian legal sentence structures should not be simplified indiscriminately, but rather understood, managed, and utilized as part of a linguistically sophisticated

response to the normative and informational demands of legal governance.

#### IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

##### 1. Typology of Sentence Patterns in KUHP

The syntactic structure of legal sentences in the KUHP reveals a consistent typological distinction between two dominant patterns: the canonical pattern (Subject–Predicate) and the inversion pattern (Predicate–Complement–Subject). These structures are functionally distinct and respond to varying levels of clause complexity in the subject slot.

The syntactic structure of legal sentences in the KUHP exhibits a typologically consistent system that revolves around two dominant patterns of sentence organization: the canonical pattern and the non-canonical pattern. These patterns are not merely surface variations but reflect distinct functional and cognitive strategies in managing syntactic complexity, especially in relation to the subject slot, which frequently hosts layered and clause-heavy constructions.

###### a. The Canonical Pattern (Subject–Predicate / S–P)

This pattern reflects the canonical syntactic order in standard Indonesian, where the subject precedes the predicate. It is structurally straightforward and aligns with traditional expectations of declarative sentence construction. However, in legal texts, this pattern becomes increasingly problematic when the subject is complex. Legal subjects often comprise:

- a. Noun phrases modified by relative clauses,
- b. Multiple subordinated clauses expressing legal conditions,
- c. Enumerative or coordinate clause series.

As a result, when the subject is excessively long—as is typical in legal drafting—it delays the appearance of the main predicate, causing:

- a. Delayed thematic clarity,
- b. Higher cognitive load on readers,
- c. Risk of semantic ambiguity, especially when embedded clauses contain additional subordination or coordination.

Example (canonical pattern with overloaded subject):

*Barang siapa tanpa izin kepala polisi atau pejabat yang ditunjuk untuk itu menyabung ayam atau mengadu jangkrik di jalan umum atau di pinggirnya, ataupun di tempat yang dapat dikunjungi oleh umum, diancam dengan pidana...* (Article 495).

In this structure, the subject (from *barang siapa* to *umum*) spans four levels of clause embedding, while the predicate (*diancam...*) appears only at the end. This delays the delivery of the core legal action and requires the reader to retain complex syntactic information in working memory.

###### b. The Inversion Pattern (Predicate–Complement–Subject / P–Compl–S)

In contrast, the inversion pattern reorders the clause constituents by placing the predicate or legal sanction at the front, followed by the complement and then the subject. This non-canonical order is a strategic response to the overload created by long subjects. Its functions include:

- a. Thematic foregrounding: Presenting the consequence or legal sanction upfront,
- b. Cognitive simplification: Reducing reader effort by immediately anchoring the sentence's purpose,
- c. Legal clarity: Preventing ambiguity in provisions where multiple conditions apply.

Example (inversion pattern):

*Diancam dengan pidana kurungan paling lama enam hari atau pidana denda paling banyak tiga ratus tujuh puluh lima rupiah, barang siapa tanpa izin kepala polisi...*

This structure enhances legal readability and provides a rhetorical rhythm suited for formal interpretation. The use of inversion in KUHP is not incidental but systematic, especially in provisions where:

- a. The subject clause is highly embedded,
- b. Legal focus is on the penalty or action, not the actor,
- c. Legal enumeration or numbering follows the predicate,
- d. Complementarity, Not Substitution.

The canonical and noncanonical patterns are not syntactic variants that can be freely substituted; rather, they serve complementary functions based on:

- a. Clause load (light subjects favor canonical, heavy subjects favor non-canonical),
- b. Legal focus (actor-oriented vs. action-oriented),
- c. Textual genre (preambular clauses vs. punitive norms),
- d. Information flow (topic-to-comment vs. comment-first).

Hence, the distribution of these patterns across the KUHP text corpus reflects an adaptive syntactic system: legal sentence construction operates not only on grammatical correctness but also on communicative efficiency, information hierarchy, and genre-based functional load.

##### 2. Complexity Gradient in Subject Construction

Legal sentences in the Indonesian Penal Code (KUHP) often contain subject constituents that exhibit varying degrees of complexity, as follows:

- a. Simple subject: consists of a single clause (e.g., "*Whoever incites...*")
- b. Moderately complex subject: contains up to 4–6 subordinate clauses

c. Highly complex subject: consists of up to 10 clauses (e.g., Article 466)

The following is an illustration of an article whose subject is composed of thirteen clauses.

(10) *Seorang nakhoda kapal Indonesia yang dengan maksud menguntungkan diri sendiri atau orang lain secara melawan hukum atau untuk menutupi perbuatan itu menjual kapalnya, atau meminjam uang dengan mempertanggungkan kapalnya atau perlengkapan kapal itu atau perbekalannya, atau menjual atau menggadaikan barang muatan atau barang perbekalan kapal itu, atau memperhitungkan kerugian atau pengeluaran yang dibuat-buat, atau tidak menjaga supaya buku-buku harian di kapal dipelihara menurut undang-undang, ataupun tidak mengurus keselamatan surat-surat kapal ketika meninggalkan kapalnya, diancam dengan pidana penjara paling lama tujuh tahun* (Article 466).

The sentence demonstrates a highly complex syntactic configuration, particularly in its subject, which is composed of a core noun phrase—*Seorang nakhoda kapal Indonesia* (An Indonesian ship captain)—expanded by a deeply embedded relative clause that contains twelve embedded clauses. This layered subject begins with an intent clause: *dengan maksud menguntungkan diri sendiri atau orang lain* (1) (with the intent of benefiting oneself or others), followed by a legal modifier *secara melawan hukum* (2) (unlawfully), and an alternative purpose clause *untuk menutupi perbuatan itu* (3) (to conceal such actions). These motivations introduce a series of disjunctively linked action clauses, including *menjual kapalnya* (4) (sells the ship), *meminjam uang* (5) (borrows money), and a manner clause *dengan mempertanggungkan kapalnya atau perlengkapan kapal itu atau perbekalannya* (6) (by mortgaging the ship, its equipment, or its provisions). Further actions include *menjual atau menggadaikan barang muatan atau barang perbekalan kapal itu* (7) (sells or pawns the cargo or ship's supplies) and *memperhitungkan kerugian atau pengeluaran yang dibuat-buat* (8) (calculates fabricated losses or expenses), which itself embeds a relative clause (*yang dibuat-buat*). The structure continues with *tidak menjaga supaya buku-buku harian di kapal dipelihara menurut undang-undang* (9–10) (fails to ensure the ship's logbooks are maintained in accordance with the law) and *tidak mengurus keselamatan surat-surat kapal ketika meninggalkan kapalnya* (11–12) (fails to secure the ship's documents when abandoning the ship), incorporating both a subjunctive clause (*supaya...*) and an adverbial time clause (*ketika...*). The predicate of the sentence is the passive verb *diancam* (is subject to), and the complement is a prepositional phrase: *dengan pidana penjara paling lama tujuh tahun* (with a maximum prison sentence of seven years). This dense subject structure, containing nested motivations, conditions, and multiple legally significant actions, exemplifies the syntactic complexity characteristic of legal language.

| Function   | Sentence Element (embedded clause)   |
|------------|--|
| Subject    | Seorang nakhoda kapal Indonesia yang dengan maksud menguntungkan diri sendiri atau orang lain (1)<br>secara melawan hukum (2)<br>atau untuk menutupi perbuatan itu (3)<br>menjual kapalnya (4)<br>atau meminjam uang (5)<br>dengan mempertanggungkan kapalnya atau perlengkapan kapal itu atau perbekalannya (6)<br>atau menjual atau menggadaikan barang muatan atau barang perbekalan kapal itu (7)<br>atau memperhitungkan kerugian atau pengeluaran yang dibuat-buat (8)<br>atau tidak menjaga (9)<br>supaya buku-buku harian di kapal dipelihara menurut undang-undang (10)<br>ataupun tidak mengurus keselamatan surat-surat kapal (11)<br>ketika meninggalkan kapalnya (12) |
| Predicate  | diancam  |
| Complement | dengan pidana penjara paling lama tujuh tahun  |

In this example, each clause is semantically and syntactically layered within the subject structure, forming a deep paradigmatic hierarchy. This structure imposes a high processing load, but at the same time fulfills the legal requirement for referential completeness.

### 3. Canonical vs. Non-Canonical Sentence Structures

In Indonesian syntax, the canonical Subject–Predicate (S–P) structure represents the standard sentence order, where the subject precedes the predicate. However, in legal contexts—particularly statutory texts—this pattern becomes inefficient when the subject contains multiple layers of embedded clauses or coordinated elements. Long and complex subjects require readers to process a large amount of information before reaching the main legal provision, typically located in the predicate. This increases cognitive load and delays thematic clarity.

In contrast, the non-canonical or inversion structure (Predicate–Complement–Subject / P–C–S) places the predicate at the beginning of the sentence. This strategy allows immediate access to the legal consequence, postponing the complex subject until later. According to Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), such foregrounding improves discourse coherence and facilitates faster information processing, especially in legal texts with dense content.

The contrast between these two patterns is clearly illustrated in the following KUHP provisions:

First, the canonical structure appears in Article 569 of the KUHP:

*“Barang siapa menandatangani surat jalan yang dikeluarkan dengan melanggar ketentuan Pasal 533b Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Dagang, demikian pula orang yang untuknya hal itu dilakukan sesuai dengan kewenangannya, diancam, bila surat itu lalu dikeluarkan, dengan pidana denda paling banyak tujuh puluh lima ribu rupiah”.*

This sentence begins with a complex, layered subject (“*Barang siapa... demikian pula orang yang...*” --(Whoever... as well as the person who...)), containing multiple relative clauses and coordination. The main predicate (*diancam* -- shall be punished) appears only after the entire subject, requiring the reader to retain multiple syntactic units before understanding the legal sanction.

Second, the inversion structure is used in Article 554 of the KUHP:

“*Diancam dengan pidana kurungan paling lama dua bulan atau pidana denda paling banyak empat ribu lima ratus rupiah, seorang bekas pejabat yang tanpa izin penguasa yang berwenang menahan surat-surat jabatannya*”.

Here, the predicate is placed at the front (“*Diancam dengan pidana...*” -- Is punishable by), followed by a complex subject. This structure offers earlier access to the legal consequence and delays the subject, thereby enhancing interpretive efficiency and reducing cognitive burden.

STRUCTURAL COMPARISON

| Aspect             | Canonical (S-P)                                 | Inversion (P-C-S)                                     |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Sentence Example   | <i>Barang siapa... diancam...</i>               | <i>Diancam... seorang bekas pejabat yang...</i>       |
| Subject Position   | Initial   | Final   |
| Predicate Position | Delayed (after complex subject)                 | Fronted (legal action appears early)                  |
| Processing Load    | High (due to clause embedding before predicate) | Lower (due to predicate-first structure)              |
| Legal Focus        | On the actor or legal condition                 | On the sanction or legal action                       |
| Usage in KUHP      | Common in actor-based descriptive provisions    | Common in punitive provisions with complex conditions |
| Interpretive Ease  | Lower   | Higher  |

#### 4. Numbering as a Syntactic and Cognitive Aid

The legal-linguistic function of numbering becomes especially salient in articles where the subject or condition spans multiple clauses. For example, in Article 253 of the KUHP, the offense is defined across two separate conditions, each of which contains multiple embedded clauses that together describe the legal behavior constituting stamp forgery. Presented in a linear block, these clauses would risk overwhelming the reader. However, when formatted using numbering, the information becomes more manageable:

##### Article 253 KUHP – Two Points (Six Clauses)

*Punishable by imprisonment for up to seven years:*

1. *Anyone who forges or falsifies a stamp issued by the Government of Indonesia, or who falsifies the signature required to validate such a stamp, with the intent to use or have another person use it as if it were authentic and valid;*
2. *Anyone who, with the same intent, unlawfully produces such a stamp using an original die or seal.*

Here, the subject of the sentence is structurally complex, comprising multiple coordinated verbs (*forges, falsifies, uses, produces*) and conditions (*with intent, unlawfully*), all of which are distributed into two clearly delineated points. The numbering transforms what would otherwise be an overburdened clause into an accessible and scannable legal formulation.

More strikingly, Article 385 of the KUHP illustrates the full capacity of numbering to manage extremely dense legal content. The article enumerates six distinct forms of unlawful land transactions, each consisting of 4–7 internal clauses, totaling 29 clauses overall. This degree of complexity is virtually unreadable without visual segmentation. Through the use of numbering, the article becomes structurally navigable and legally precise:

##### Article 385 KUHP – Six Points (29 Clauses)

*Punishable by imprisonment for up to four years:*

1. *Anyone who, with the intent to unlawfully benefit themselves or another person, sells, exchanges, or encumbers with a credietverband any uncertified land right, or any building, structure, planting, or nursery on such land, while knowing that another party holds or shares the right over it;*
2. *Anyone who, with the same intent, sells, exchanges, or encumbers any such property that has already been burdened with a credietverband, without informing the other party;*
3. *Anyone who, with the same intent, enters into a credietverband involving uncertified land, while concealing that the land has already been mortgaged;*
4. *Anyone who, with the same intent, mortgages or leases such land, knowing another party also has rights over it;*
5. *Anyone who, with the same intent, sells or exchanges mortgaged land without informing the other party;*
6. *Anyone who, with the same intent, sells or exchanges uncertified land for a fixed period, knowing it has already been leased to another person for that period.*

Each point functions both as a semantic unit and as a syntactic one, enabling the reader to isolate, interpret, and apply legal norms without becoming entangled in a web of interdependent clauses. This strategic presentation of legal norms is particularly useful in judicial reasoning, where determining culpability often hinges on the fulfillment of one or more discrete legal conditions.

These examples demonstrate how numbering in Indonesian legal texts acts not merely as a typographic convenience, but as an essential syntactic-management strategy. It reinforces legal coherence by clarifying the scope and structure of offenses, and reduces interpretive error by visually encoding legal distinctions that would otherwise be embedded in uninterrupted linear text.

### 5. Functional Motivation Behind Complexity

From a functional-linguistic perspective, the complexity of sentence subjects in legal texts is not stylistic ornamentation but a necessary grammatical strategy to:

- a. Fulfill legal completeness (no actor/condition omitted),
- b. Maintain legal precision (semantic and referential specificity),
- c. Allow for exhaustive enumeration of conditions under a single provision.

As supported by Halliday and Hasan (1985), legal texts display high lexical density and clause complexity, and often sacrifice linear simplicity for semantic completeness. This justifies the usage of inversion, clause layering, and syntactic deviation as legitimate adaptations within the legal register.

### 6. Implications for Legal Drafting and Syntax Theory

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications:

- a. Theoretically, the dual-dimensional syntactic model—paradigmatic depth (clause embedding) and syntagmatic ordering (linear inversion)—provides a robust framework for analyzing complex legal syntax.
- b. Practically, the inversion structure and numbering can be adopted as best practices in legal drafting, especially for public-facing laws, to ensure accessibility without compromising legal validity.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study offer a comprehensive account of the structural and functional logic that underpins the syntactic complexity of Indonesian legal language, particularly in the construction of subject constituents in the KUHP. Far from being the product of stylistic redundancy or grammatical inconsistency, this complexity emerges as a systematic linguistic strategy governed by the grammatical principles of recursion, embedding, and ordering—operating in tandem with legal communicative imperatives such as clarity, explicitness, referential completeness, and enforceability. Central to the findings is the identification of two dominant structural sentence patterns: the canonical pattern (Subject–Predicate) and the non-canonical or inverted pattern (Predicate–Complement–Subject). These are not merely surface-level variations but represent structurally and functionally distinct strategies shaped by the syntactic load and discursive purpose of each provision.

### 1. Syntactic Complexity as a Grammatical and Legal Necessity

The analysis shows that syntactic complexity—especially in the subject position—is a grammatical necessity in legal drafting. Legal subjects often encode multiple actors, intentions, and legal conditions, necessitating hierarchically embedded clause constructions that can reach up to thirteen layers. This structure fulfills what the study refers to as the *principle of referential exhaustiveness*, ensuring that no legally relevant entity or condition is omitted. Such deep embedding aligns with constituent structure theory (Radford, 2004; Carnie, 2013), which affirms the recursive potential of syntax to encode complex semantic information. Furthermore, drawing on Van Valin’s Role and Reference Grammar, the study underscores that the grammatical function of the subject cannot be interpreted in isolation from its communicative and referential role in legal discourse. The subject in legal texts is thus not merely a syntactic initiator but a central node of legal responsibility and definitional specificity.

### 2. Inversion and Enumeration as Functional Syntactic Strategies

The strategic use of inversion structures—where the predicate is fronted and the subject delayed—is a prominent feature in KUHP sentence constructions, particularly when the subject is clause-heavy. This non-canonical ordering serves multiple cognitive and communicative purposes: it foregrounds the legal action or consequence, allows for earlier thematic clarity, and reduces processing burden by delaying complex constituents. The Predicate–Complement–Subject (P–C–S) pattern thus functions not only as a grammatical alternative but also as a device of legal salience and accessibility. Complementing this is the use of syntactic enumeration (*penomorán*)—the segmentation of complex clause structures into numbered or delineated units—which serves as a cognitive aid to the reader. Drawing on findings in discourse comprehension theory (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978), the study shows that enumeration increases the intelligibility of dense legal content by scaffolding it into semantically and syntactically distinct segments, thereby improving interpretive accuracy, retention, and legal applicability.

### 3. Paradigmatic Depth and Syntagmatic Ordering

This research further elaborates the interplay between two fundamental axes of syntactic structure: paradigmatic relations (vertical, hierarchical selection of clause types within the subject) and syntagmatic relations (linear sequencing of constituents). Paradigmatically, legal subjects in the KUHP frequently comprise relative clauses, nominal clauses, and adverbial clauses, embedded recursively to encode specificity, legal conditions, and actor intent. Syntagmatically, the rearrangement of constituents—most notably in inversion patterns—functions as a discourse strategy to foreground or background particular legal elements. This dual-dimensional analysis supports Halliday’s (1994) position that register-sensitive syntax is shaped by communicative function rather than prescriptive norms alone, and it enhances the descriptive adequacy of syntactic theory when applied to highly formalized texts such as law.

### 4. Legal Language as a Specialized Syntactic Register

The accumulated findings affirm that Indonesian legal language operates as a genre-specific syntactic register, consistent with Bhatia’s (1993) notion of institutionally constrained syntax. The syntactic features of this register include:

- a) High lexical and clause density, reflecting semantic precision and legal completeness;
- b) A strong preference for explicit reference over elliptical structures, eliminating interpretive ambiguity;
- c) Systematic deviation from canonical word order, used as a rhetorical device to structure legal emphasis; and
- d) Strategic deployment of formal devices such as clause layering, inversion, and numbering to manage complexity while maintaining coherence and enforceability.

### 5. Practical Implications for Drafting, Pedagogy, and Computational Applications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study has several practical implications. For legal drafting, it provides a model of how syntactic manipulation—especially inversion and enumeration—can be leveraged to improve legal clarity without compromising doctrinal precision. For legal education, understanding the structural anatomy of legal sentence construction is essential for developing interpretive literacy among law students and practitioners. In computational linguistics, the study's insights into clause embedding, syntactic patterning, and segmentation strategies offer foundational knowledge for the development of legal NLP tools such as parsers, information extractors, and automated legal text simplifiers—especially in multilingual and high-stakes legal environments.

In sum, this study advances the argument that syntactic complexity in Indonesian legal language is neither incidental nor problematic, but rather represents a linguistically sophisticated and pragmatically coherent adaptation to the functional demands of legal governance. The structural intricacy of legal sentences—particularly in the subject position—operates within a principled, rule-governed framework that addresses the dual imperatives of legal precision and public comprehensibility. Accordingly, the dual-axis syntactic model proposed in this research contributes not only to the theoretical advancement of syntactic analysis but also to practical applications in the fields of legal drafting, education, and computational linguistics, reaffirming the central role of syntactic structure in shaping the authority, transparency, and interpretability of legal discourse.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the syntactic complexity found in the subject position of Indonesian legal sentences—particularly those in the KUHP—is neither a result of stylistic excess nor a sign of structural disorganization, but rather a grammatically deliberate and functionally motivated system shaped by the institutional demands of legal discourse, such as referential exhaustiveness, juridical clarity, and interpretive precision. Through a dual-dimensional syntactic analysis encompassing paradigmatic depth (the hierarchical embedding of clauses within the subject slot) and syntagmatic ordering (the linear sequencing of sentence constituents), this research reveals that Indonesian legal syntax operates within a coherent and internally governed grammatical framework. The identification of two dominant patterns—canonical (Subject–Predicate) and non-canonical or inverted (Predicate–Complement–Subject)—demonstrates that constituent order is strategically manipulated to manage cognitive load, with inversion especially effective when subjects are densely layered. The study also highlights the systematic use of syntactic enumeration, particularly in complex provisions such as Articles 253 and 385 of the KUHP, where numbering enhances readability and interpretive clarity by segmenting dense legal content into cognitively accessible units. Collectively, these findings affirm that Indonesian legal language constitutes a specialized grammatical register engineered for semantic density and legal precision, in which syntactic complexity serves a purposeful and communicative role. Accordingly, this study proposes a dual-axis syntactic model as both an analytical framework and a practical guide for improving legislative drafting, statutory interpretation, and public accessibility to legal texts—emphasizing that such complexity is not a flaw to be simplified but a linguistically sophisticated strategy aligned with the demands of legal governance in a pluralistic society.

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