

THE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN ARRANGING WORDS INTO NOUN PHRASES WITH PRE-MODIFIERS

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah (1) mendeskripsikan kemampuan mahasiswa tahun tiga jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris dalam menyusun kata-kata menjadi *noun phrase with pre-modifiers*, (2) mengetahui apa saja yang menjadi penyebab terjadinya kesalahan dalam menyusun kata-kata menjadi *noun phrase*. Data dalam penelitian ini dikumpulkan menggunakan *grammar test* yang berjumlah 40 kelompok kata yang disusun menjadi *noun phrase*. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa adalah rendah. Rata-rata skor yaitu 46.12 dari 29 sampel siswa. Sementara, data yang diperoleh dari interview menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan yang terjadi karena mereka tidak hafal urutan dari *modifiers* di dalam *noun phrase* tersebut.

Key Words: Noun Phrase, Pre-Modifiers, Arranging, Deviations

A. Introduction

In a sentence, one of the important grammatical components is noun. The reason is the noun plays important roles to construct a sentence. According to Kosur (2010), there are ten functions of a noun and a noun phrase in a sentence. They are subject, subject complement, direct object, object complement, indirect object, prepositional complement, noun phrase modifier, determiner appositive and adverbial. Therefore, it is important to know these noun functions in order to make the sentences grammatically correct.

Another important grammatical form in a sentence is phrase. The phrase is the basic patterns of which we build a sentence. Phrase itself is a group of words, which acts as a single unit of meaning in grammar. According to Lam (2004), there are five kinds of phrase. They are noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective

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phrases, adverb phrases, and prepositional phrases. He adds that noun phrases are the common playing various syntactic function in the sentence and clause structure.

Noun phrase is a phrase that is formed by noun and its modifiers. The modifiers that precede the noun are called pre-modifiers. For example, in *the tall building*, *the tall* becomes pre-modifier, and the *building* is as the head of phrase. Then, the modifiers that come after the noun are called post-modifier. For example, in *a man with black trousers*, *manis* as the head of phrase and *withblack trousers* is as the post-modifier.

Because the noun phrase has many pre-modifiers, it has a correct order. Maurer (2000:139) explains about the order of the modifier. He says that there are three main modifiers of noun. They are adjective, noun, and noun modifiers of the same head noun. In addition, Werner and Spaventa (2002) have stated the order of adjectives to be a noun phrase. The order of the modifiers explained by them can be seen as table below:

Table : The Order of Pre-Modifiers in Noun Phrase

No.	Modifiers	Examples
1.	Articles, Demonstratives, Possessives	The, That, These, My etc
2.	Number	three, five, etc
3.	Quality or Characteristic	beautiful, expensive, etc
4.	Size	big, small, etc
5.	Shape	long, round, etc
6.	Age	new, old, etc
7.	Color	green, red, gold, etc
8.	Origin	Italian, Japanese, etc
9.	Material	silk, cotton, gold, metal, etc
10.	Other noun	Time, Mineral, etc
11.	Noun	suit, pencils, carpets, rings, etc

Based on an informal interview from few of the third year students at English Department of the State University of Padang, they had major difficulty in constructing noun phrases with pre-modifiers. This was because the modifiers of the noun phrase have order and the students did not know how to arrange them in an acceptable order. Moreover, the students felt bored while studying grammar, so that they did not pay attention to the lecturers. This was supported by the statement taken from a lecturer who teaches writing skills in this department. He said that some of the students had difficulty in constructing noun phrases especially arranging the words in the noun phrase with pre-modifiers.

There were two possible problems why the students had difficulty in arranging words into noun phrases with pre-modifiers. First, because the noun phrase sometimes has more than one modifiers, the students did not have knowledge how to arrange the modifiers in a correct order. Second, the students were not too serious while learning grammar especially noun phrases. Therefore,

it was important to know how good the ability of English Department students at State University of Padang in constructing noun phrases.

Based on the identification above, the researcher wanted to analyze the third year English Department students' ability in arranging words into noun phrases with pre-modifiers and what deviations of modifier they made. This research, which was conducted by giving grammar test, was focused on the third year academic students in the sixth semester in academic year 2011-2012 in English Department in arranging words into pre-modifiers in noun phrases.

The purpose of this research was to identify the students' ability in arranging words into noun phrases with pre-modifiers. This study's main aim was to describe the third year English Department students' ability in constructing noun phrases. It was hoped that this study was able to give some information to the lecturers in English Department about how good the students in constructing the noun phrases. Then, by showing the result of this research, this study was able to be taken as the references for other researchers who have related research.

B. Research Method

The research design used in this study was descriptive design because the purpose of this research was to find out the English Department students' ability in arranging words into noun phrases with pre-modifiers. Key (1997) states that descriptive research attempts to presents an answer of the questions about the accurate fact or describe the existing phenomena. Therefore, by conducting this research, the ability of the English Department students in arranging the words into in noun phrases with pre-modifiers was able to be described.

This research was conducted by using qualitative and quantitative methods. To the quantitative method, Dörnyei (2007) defines that it is the procedure of data collections that result numerical data. Then, to qualitative methods, he defines that it is concerned with subjective opinion, experiences and feelings of individuals. Therefore, the grammar test and interview were used to get the data.

The population in this research was the third year English Department students at the State University of Padang in semester January-June 2011/2012. In other words, the students were in the sixth semester. As Gay (2009:124) mentions that the population is the group which makes the researcher interested to research and the population are accessible and available. To take the sample, cluster sampling technique was used. According to Gay (2009:110), cluster sampling is a procedure in choosing groups, that has similar characteristic and the minimum sample is at least 10% of the group.

After collecting the data, this research came to the next step that was data analysis. First, the data was scored by the researcher. Then, the percentage was scored by using this formula bellow (Sudjana; 1991):

$$P = (F/N) \times 100\%$$

P= Percentage of the answer

F= Frequency of the students who get correct answer

N= Total number of the items

Then, the ability of the students was counted by the following formula:

$$M = \Sigma X / N$$

M= mean

ΣX = the sum of the scores

N= the sum of students

After that, the ability was transformed into the following category:

Table :Criteria of Students' Grammar Mastery

Percentage of Score	Grading Criterion
81-100 %	Excellent
66-80 %	Good
56-65 %	Average
41-55 %	Poor
0-40 %	Very Poor

Source: Buku Pedoman Akademik UNP, 2007

C. Discussion

Based on the findings, the English Department students should learn intensively about grammar especially noun phrase. After the research had been conducted, it could be seen that the students had difficulty and they seemed confused in arranging pre-modifiers into noun phrase. Their average of the scores was 46.12. Here are some discussions of the problem that were made by the students.

First, it seemed that the students did not know the correct order of the modifiers. It was seen clearly from the noun phrase that consisted adjective of opinion or quality. For example, only one student (sample 20) got the correct answer of the item 37, "the powerful small Canadian machine". This is the same case with the item 39, "some strange short old people". Only three students (student 7, 10, and 11) got correct answer. It was obviously proved that the students had no idea about the correct order. As Folse (2009) describes that what makes the adjective difficult is ordering the adjectives or misplacement after noun. He adds that the most common error is placing descriptive after noun such as *a book interesting*. This was supported by the interview that the students (student 14, 19, and 22) said that their difficulty in arranging words into noun phrase with pre-modifiers was they did not know the order the modifiers.

Second, the students still had difficulties in differentiate between what kind of words those were. Few of the students had difficulties in recognizing which word was the noun and which word was the adjective. Many of the students wrote the word adjective as the head noun of the noun phrase. According to Azar (1996), noun can modify order noun such as *grammar book*. Therefore it cannot be added by any adjectives between that noun phrases such as *grammar good book*. For example of the wrong noun phrase made by the students was the item

40, “these young small handsome bell boys”. The student 3, 7, 13, 14, 17, and 18, for example, they sometimes wrote “these young small bell handsome boys”, “these small bell young handsome boys”, “these small handsome bell young boys”, and “these handsome young boys small bell”. It was clear that the adjectives bell and boys cannot be separated. It was supported by another example of the students who got confused in recognizing the words. For example the student 9, 25, and 28 wrote “this dark cliff steep dangerous”. As Werner and Spaventa (2002) says, the correct order of modifiers in a noun phrase is determiner, number, quality, size, shape, age, color, origin, material and other noun. It was really unbelievable that these students could place the adjective “dangerous” as the head of noun phrase..

Therefore, the problem, which is showed by the deviation made by the students, was really serious problem. The reason is that which was supported from the previous researcher, Julinarti (2008), the average score of the third year English Department students in constructing noun phrase with pre-modifiers was 56.85. It means that the ability of the students at the time was average. This also means that their ability decreases year by year. It was also presumed that the cause of this case was because the sample of this research was the combination of the regular and non-regular students which were assumed that the non-regular students' ability was lower than the regular ones. Meanwhile, in Julinarti's research, the sample was only regular students.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that many students of English Department of the State University of Padang made deviations in arranging words into noun phrases with pre-modifiers. The problem was that they did not know the order of the pre-modifiers of noun phrases. In addition, the students made the deviations because they could not recognize what kind of adjective that word was. The findings show that more than half of the sample of the population was not able in arranging noun phrases with pre-modifiers. Thus, it means that grammatical analysis which was made by the students is really useful. Also, it can help the student to improve their grammatical mastery in constructing noun phrases both in spoken and written language.

From the finding of the research, the following suggestions are aimed for those who are involved. First, the researcher suggests the lecturers especially grammar lecturers to give extra explanation to the students. The students can be given homework or assignments to make the students understand about the materials. Then, the lecturers can give motivation to study harder as well as give the lesson attractively to the students. Then, the students should study harder especially for noun phrases. This is because the order of the modifiers in the pre-modifier of noun phrases should be memorized. Also, they are expected to pay attention when the lecturers teach them. Last, for other researchers, they can analyze the students' ability in constructing noun phrase in speaking or writing in different instruments.

Note : This article was created based on the writer's thesis consulted with the advisor Drs. AmriIsyam, M.Pd and YuliTiarina, M.Pd

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