

**AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ABILITY IN
USING NOMINALIZATION IN ACADEMIC WRITING AT STATE
UNIVERSITY OF PADANG**

Yulianti¹, Refnaldi², Rusdi Noor Rosa³
English Department
FBS State University of Padang
email: yuliantii64@gmail.com

Abstrak

Nominalisasi merupakan salah satu karakteristik dalam bahasa Inggris yang sering muncul dalam teks akademik. Sangat penting bagi mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris untuk mampu menguasai dan menggunakan nominalisasi karena pengetahuan ini berguna ketika mereka akan menulis dan membaca teks-teks bergenre akademik. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan nominalisasi dengan memberikan tes menulis kepada tiga puluh empat mahasiswa tahun keempat jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Padang. Bentuk tes menulis yang diberikan yaitu siswa merubah denominalized teks ke dalam versi nominalisasi. Hasil jawaban siswa dinilai dengan menggunakan teknik kuantitatif yang berpatokan pada scoring rubrik tentang nominalisasi, dan kesalahan – kesalahan yang muncul dalam jawaban siswa kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan nominalisasi masih rendah yang ditunjukkan dengan rata-rata Mean pada angka 52,05. Masalah yang muncul ketika jawaban siswa dianalisis adalah ketidakmampuan siswa dalam merubah bentuk kata kerja dan kata sifat ke dalam bentuk kata benda dan ketidakmampuan siswa dalam memahami informasi dalam versi denominalized teks sehingga hasil jawaban siswa dalam versi nominalisasi sulit dipahami.

Keywords: Nominalisasi, Denominalized Texts, Nominalized texts, Teks akademik.

A. Introduction

One feature of academic writing is the use of nominalization. Eggins (1994) states that nominalization is the process of transferring things which are not normally nouns into nouns. In line with Eggins, Bloor and Bloor (1995) note that nominalization allows a process, in which a verb turns out to be realized as a noun and comes to be a participant in a further process. In this way processes or

¹ Student of English Language Teaching Program of FBS UNP graduated on March 2014

² Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

³ Co-Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

properties are reformulated from a verbal process involving various participants into nominal group.

Halliday and Martin (1993: 131) point out that nominalization is a typical feature in scientific texts. This is because of nominalization allows a process to be transformed into a more abstract phenomenon. One function of nominalization in academic writing is to pack a single clause in several complex abstract ideas. Cristie (2008: 66) mentions that nominalized phrases “abstract away from immediate, lived experiences, to build instead truths, abstractions, generalizations, and arguments.” The sentences (*The city government has decided to widen the road through this neighborhood. This has upset local residents*) will sound more formal if the complex abstract ideas are packed into one single clause (*the city government’s decision to widen the main road through this neighborhood has upset the local residents*). By comparing these two clauses, it can be seen that several complex abstract ideas are packed into one single clause.

In addition, nominalization reduces a number of clauses and more information can be compressed into a nominal group. The clauses “*if you invest in rail facilities, this implies a long-term commitment*” will sound more academic if they are condensed into one nominal group “*investment in rail facilities implies a long-term commitment.*” The nominal group is very helpful in academic writing because it is elastic. Its elasticity means information can be condensed into one nominal group rather than put into a separate clause.

Nominalization can be extensively modified. Halliday (1998: 179) mention that by associating multiple modifiers with a nominalization, writers are able to produce extremely fine and precise delineations of meaning. With these meanings, they can build up elaborate taxonomies of information. Nominalization helps to construct texts economically. One of these has to do with the progression from one sentence to subsequent ones. What writers sometimes do the first time they present information about a process is to use a clause. If they wish to bring that information back in later sentence, they then typically use a nominalization. Usually they express that nominalization early, in the subject position, where it can serve as Theme for that sentence.

The theme of a clause consists of one structural element, and that element is represented by one unit – nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase. This assumption hold for the subsequent example; “*The first chair of general linguistics in this country was established in the university of London in 1944, at the school of oriental and African studies ...*” The Theme in the sentence is *the first chair of general linguistics in this country*, which is one single nominal group (Halliday: 2004, p. 68)

Regarding with classification of nominalization, Halliday (1994) mentions two types of nominalization, that is, verbal nominalization (press – pressure) and adjectival nominalization (hot – heat). Additionally, Harnet (cited in Heyvaert: 2003, p. 207) classifies four kinds of nominalization based on morphological ending; 1) those where the verb and noun maintain the same form, also called de-verbal noun (e.g., to plan – plan), gerunds (e.g., to run – running), 2) adding suffix to the verb (e.g., to engage – engagement), 3) those from adjectives (e.g., beautiful – beauty), 4) when the verb and the noun have different meanings (e.g., to birth –

birthday). Meanwhile Carolyn (2004) distinguishes verb-change nominalizations into two sub-types; nominalization by changing a verb internally (sell – sale; live – life) or by adding an ending such as –al (portrayal), –ance (attendance), –ee (payee), –ment (achievement), –tion (recommendation), (creature), –y (mastery) and – yst (analyst).

In addition to the nominalization of a verb or an adjective with derivational suffix and zero-derivation, Givon (1993, p. 288-289) describe a set of structural adjustment of nominalization. Based on structural adjustment, learner can produce a nominalized structure consciously. They are summarized as follow: 1) the erstwhile verb in the verb structure becomes the head noun of the nominalized structure; 2) the erstwhile verb loses its verbal inflections and takes on noun-like morphology; 3) the subject and direct object often take on the genitive (possessive case); 4) the subject and the object may be converted into possessive determiners. The whole nominalized noun phrase may acquire a definite or an indefinite article; and 5) manner adverbs in the verbal structure become corresponding adjectives that modify the head noun in the nominalized noun phrases. These nominalized structural adjustment are illustrated in example 1 -5

- Example (1) the police rapidly investigated the murder → the police's rapid investigation of the murder
- Example (2) structural adjustment 1 and 2 : investigation
- Example (3) structural adjustment 3: the murder → of the murder (the object becomes the genitive)
- Example (4) structural adjustment 4: the police investigated → the police's investigation (the subject becomes the possessive determiner)
- Example (5) structural adjustment (5): the police rapidly investigated → the police's rapid investigation (the manner adverb rapidly becomes the adjective rapid).

According to the above explanation, the purposes of this study were to find out the English Department students' ability in using nominalization in academic writing and to analyze the problems faced by the students with it.

B. Research Methodology

The participants of the research were the fourth year English Department students' academic year 2010/2011 at State University of Padang. Since the subject of the research has similar experience – all of the students at the fourth year had taken the subject of writing 1 to writing 3, grammar 1 to grammar 3, functional grammar, research language teaching and paper thesis writing – the writer used homogeneous sampling type. There were four classes at this grade and one class was selected as the research participant.

The instrument used in this research was a writing test. Four denominalized texts were given to the students. From these denominalized texts, the clauses that should be nominalized by the students were marked, in that there

were ten denominalize clauses. Another items marked was the verb and the adjective that should be changed by the students into nouns when they tried to nominalized the clauses. The students then were instructed to shift the texts into more academic tone by applying nominalization. The test was administered for sixty minutes. The students' writing was then collected to be used as the data of this research. The scoring rubric used to assess the students' writing was displayed in appendix 1. Meanwhile, the data would be analyzed based on quantitative and qualitative technique.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Students' Ability in Using Nominalization in Academic Writing

After describing and analyzing the data, several findings were found. These findings concern the students' ability in using nominalization and the problems faced by the students with it. Applying quantitative procedure, the students' ability in using nominalization was measured based on the mean of the group mark which would display in table 1 below;

Table 1.
The mean of the first and the second scorer

| Mean of the first scorer | Mean of the second scorer | Average Mean |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 50,07 | 54,04 | 52,05 |

As stated in research methodology above, in order to get a representative data among the group score, the students' mark were measured using the mean. The mean is arithmetical average of the scores. The average mean of the two scorers were 52,05. Based on the students' level of ability at State University of Padang, it could be concluded that the students' ability on applying nominalization was poor.

2. Students' Problem with Grammatical Shift

The finding of the students' problems in grammatical shift or getting the right nominal morphology can be summarized as follow.

Firstly, students have problem determining the appropriate suffix that can be added into a noun. Some suffixes in English to create the nouns forms as assert by Carolyn (2004) are *-al* (*portrayal*), *-ance* (*attendance*), *-ee* (*payee*), *-ment* (*achievement*), *-tion* (*recommendation*), *-ure* (*creature*), *-y* (*mastery*) and *-yst* (*analyst*). Referring to scoring format, the scores they obtain were mostly in level 1 and 2. This means that the students' writings are in very poor and poor level. The criterion of level 1 and 2 is all or some of the suffixes the students add into the nouns are wrong. The results of the students' writing appear to prove that the kinds of suffix that they know are only *-tion* and *-ment*. It is proved in which the students significantly add the suffixes *-tion* and *-ment* to create the noun forms of the verbs *evolve*, *increase*, *remove* and the adjectives *discontent* and *inefficient*.

Secondly, it is clearly visible that the students do not know about zero-derivation nominalization and non-zero derivation nominalization. Halliday (2004) assert that zero-derivation nominalization is the process of nominalization

whereby the verbs and adjectives can be used directly without addition of derivational suffix. Meanwhile non-zero derivation nominalization is by changing the verbs and the adjectives internally. Surprisingly, the result shows over half of the 34 students add suffix to the verb *increase* and the adjective *discontent* which belong to zero derivation nominalization. In line with the students' limited knowledge about zero derivation nominalization, the same result also happens to non-zero derivational nominalization. The most remarkable result to emerge from the data is that majority of the students write the incorrect noun form of verb *lose* and *evolve*.

3. Students' Problems in term of Nominal group and Structural Adjustment of Nominalization

Referring to the analysis of the students' writing, it seems that the students do not have problem creating nominal group in nominalization process. Gerot and Wignel (1994) assert that nominal group in academic writings are often nominalization. While the verb become the head noun in nominalizing noun phrase, the various other elements of the erstwhile clause – subject, object, indirect object, adverb or verbal compliments – become various noun modifier. To produce a nominalized structure consciously, there is a set called structural adjustment of nominalization. Givon (1993) describes this construction as follow: 1) the erstwhile verb in the verb structure becomes the head noun of the nominalized structure; 2) the subject and direct object in denominalized version often take on the genitive (possessive case) in nominalized version; 3) the erstwhile verb loses its verbal inflection and takes on noun like morphology.

In the process of nominalization, the majority of noun forms written by the students are incorrect; however the nominal group of nominalized clauses they created shows a better result. The following are some examples of the nominal group created by the students.

Denominalized version

Every day shops lose thousands of dollars worth of valuable items. This affects us all because prices increase and we have to pay extra.

Students' answers

- a. *The looseness of valuable items in shops everyday affects the increasing prices and extra payment.*
- b. *The lost of thousand of dollars worth of valuable items in every day shops affects us all because the increasing prices and the extra payment of the user.*
- c. *Because of losing of thousands of dollars worth of valuable items, prices will increase and we have to pay extra.*

The examples above show that the students are fail to choose the appropriate suffix to be added into a noun (*the looseness and the lost*), however the nominal group they create are correct. In example (a) and (b) the students success to put the erstwhile verb (*lose*) into the head noun of nominalized structure. In example (c) the object of denominalized version become the genitive in the nominalized version.

4. Students' Problems in Understanding the Meaning of Nominalized Clauses

Analyzing the students' writing after applying nominalization, it seems that the students fail to maintain the meaning of denominalized clause when they tried to nominalize them. The students are unsuccessful to work out what the subject is and what the verb related to it. Consequently, the majority of their writing after nominalize the denominalized clauses are in poor readability and meaningless clause.

In the analyzing of the students' work, the theme concept is applied especially on unmark topical theme category. The unmark topical theme also function as the subject of the clause. The following are some example of students' mistake on theme and rheme of a clause when they tried to do nominalization.

Denominalized clause

Everyday shops lose thousands of dollars worth of valuable items. This affects us all because prices increase and we have to pay extra.

Students' answers

- a. *The losing of thousands of dollars worth of valuable items in everyday shops. the increasing of the prices affects us to pay extra.*
- b. *Everyday, the loosing of a shop by thousands of dollars worth of valuable items. This affects us all because of the increase prices and we have to pay extra.*
- c. *Thousand valuable items lost shops everyday. Prices increasion affects us all and we have to pay extra.*

The examples above show incorrect English. In the example *a* and *b* the students had tried to nominalize the clauses however they only write the theme (*the losing of thousands of dollars worth of valuable items in everyday shop and everyday, the loosing of a shop by thousands of dollars worth of valuable items* – though the noun form of the verb lose is incorrect) and they do not write the rheme so that the clauses are meaningless.

D. Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that the fourth year English students' ability in nominalization at State University of Padang is poor. The students' major mistakes are in case of getting the right nominal morphology, and marking of subject and object of denominalized clauses. As the students of English Department, the acquisition of nominalization is important for them. Either the students whose belong to education field or linguistics should not ignore the importance of nominalization, as it is widely used in academic and scientific writing. The student teachers will teach their students later on how to nominalize in academic writing, meanwhile the linguist candidates will applied the knowledge of nominalization in writing academic texts or in translating a scientific article. Furthermore, students who are able to use nominalization will

make their writing more coherence, concise, and formal and it benefits them in different ways in academic writing.

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