
NOUN PHRASE CONSTRUCTION IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING BY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini menganalisis jenis-jenis konstruksi frase kata benda. Ada dua masalah dalam studi ini yaitu jenis-jenis konstruksi frase kata benda yang ditemukan dalam tulisan siswa tahun pertama sekolah menengah atas dan jenis konstruksi frase kata benda yang paling dominan ditemukan dalam tulisan siswa tahun pertama sekolah menengah atas. Data dalam studi ini diambil dari sampel-sampel tulisan siswa khususnya menulis deskriptif. Ada dua kelas paralel yang diikutsertakan dengan jumlah 50 siswa sebagai total populasi dan sampel. Kajian ini didesain menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil analisis menemukan bahwa siswa umumnya menggunakan tiga jenis konstruksi frase kata benda, yaitu Modifier + Head (M + H), Head + Modifier (H + M), dan Modifier + Head + Modifier (M + H + M). Sebagai jenis konstruksi frase kata benda yang paling dominan yang dibuat oleh siswa adalah jenis Modifier + Head (M + H) khususnya struktur Determiner + Noun (68.03%).

Kata kunci: konstruksi frase kata benda, teks deskriptif, menulis

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the types of noun phrase construction. There were two problems in this study, namely the types of noun phrase construction found in writing by the first year students of senior high school and the dominant type of noun phrase constructions found in writing by the first year students of senior high school. The data in this study were taken from the students' samples of writing particularly descriptive writing. There were two parallel classes involved which consisted of 50 students as total population and sample. This study was designed as a qualitative descriptive. The results of the analysis found that the students mostly used three types of noun phrase construction; they were Modifier + Head (M + H), Head + Modifier (H + M), and Modifier + Head + Modifier (M + H + M). As the most dominant type of noun phrase construction made by the students was the types of Modifier + Head (M + H) particularly in the arrangement of Determiner + Noun (68.03%).

Keywords: noun phrase construction, descriptive text, writing

INTRODUCTION

It is true that one of the language components is structure or grammar which is very important to learn. Its function is to make a string of words or an utterance meaningful (Ayuningsih, 2007: 3). English language as well has a complex construction in arranging words particularly concerning the noun phrase. For example, if we write some words like “book color expensive” then it is grammatically wrong, but if we write it as “expensive color book” then those groups of words have meaning and grammatically correct in English. The mechanism of constructing words into correct arrangement can be studied completely in Syntax which covers the entire structure or grammar pattern in English sentence. Syntax comes from Greek word *sun* (with) and *tettein* (placement). Etymologically syntax means placing together the words into a group of words or sentences and groups of words into sentences. Thus, it can be summed up that Syntax is the study of arrangement of words in forming larger construction: phrases, clauses, and sentences. It is the way of words combined to form sentences and the rules which govern the formation to show relationship within (and sometime between) sentences.

The aim of English subject in curriculum is to develop the ability to communicate the language both spoken and written. The ability to communicate shall include the four skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are used to create a discourse in the students' everyday live in society. Moreover, the ability of these skills is expected to be developed in order to be able to communicate using English in certain level of literacy. This level includes performance, functional, informational and epimistic. In performance level, people can read, write, listen, and speak with the symbols. In functional, people can use language to fulfill their daily needs such as reading newspaper, journal or guidance. In Informational level, people can access knowledge with their ability using the

language, and in epistemic level people can express knowledge into the target language.

In the curriculum of senior high school, students also are requested to master some genres/types of writing such as narrative, descriptive, persuasive and argumentative text. On the other hand, writing is a longer process than speaking, listening, and reading. Many students feel difficult in doing writing. It is because the students have to bear in mind how time consuming drills will be. The descriptive text is one genre that must be mastered by students in learning English. And theoretically, descriptive text is a kind of the text which concerns on the description of particular thing, place, person, or others, for instance: a place or person we know well. It is important for the students to know the correct pattern or structure of grammar to make correct and meaningful phrase or sentence because any written text will need correctness of grammar, lexical density and also punctuation. To create a good descriptive text which has lexical density, students can do it by learning construction of noun phrase (Ayuningsih, 2007: 4).

The fact that it is difficult for Indonesian students to learn English as a foreign language causes problems for the students in mastering the concept of constructing or arranging correct word order to form a good and meaningful phrase or even sentence. This is because English has different structure than Indonesia. For example, the construction of English noun phrase commonly uses “Modifier-Head” while in Indonesia uses “Head-Modifier” as shown in the noun phrase construction of “good book” and “buku bagus” respectively. This reversing construction causes problem to English learners as foreign language such as for Indonesian students and this is a reason why their achievement in English subject is low. Hammer (1985: 12) stated that why English grammar is difficult for students lies in the differences between English and Indonesian. Moreover, based on the curriculum, the students are hoped to be able to write descriptive text. It means that

writing is important for the students because it deals with the knowledge and usage of structure or grammar as one of the components in linguistic and the construction of noun phrase is the most important. Noun phrase is part of the sentence construction and English construction of noun phrase is different from noun phrase in Indonesian construction. For those reasons, this research is decided to focus on grammar component particularly the noun phrase construction made by students of first year senior high school as the object of the study.

A phrase is by merging (a technical term meaning “combining”) two words together (Syarif, 2011: 25 in Novianti, 2018: 25). According to Evelyn (2010: 42) in Novianti (2018: 25) a phrase is a group of words that does not contain a subject and a predicate and does not make a complete sense by itself. In English, there are several parts of speech which included in the phrases construction; they are noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase and prepositional phrase.

The noun phrase itself is very important part in sentence construction. Noun Phrase comes from two of words: noun and phrase. The noun phrase is a quintessential part of every sentence, it is potentially infinite in length, and it can include any number of other phrases (e.g. noun, adjective, and adverb) within its structure (Novianti, 2018: 25). Simmons (2018) also says that a noun phrase includes a noun—a person, place, or thing—and the modifiers which distinguish it. Quoted from online web (yourdictionary.com), noun phrases are groups of words that function like a noun. Typically, they act as subjects, objects, or prepositional objects in a sentence. Added also by Bress (2005) as in Ayuningsih (2007: 15) that noun phrase is either a pronoun or any group of words that can be replaced by a pronoun. For example, 'they', 'cars', and 'the cars' are noun phrases, but 'car' is just a noun. From those definitions, we can see the similarities definition and conclude that noun phrase is any group of words that

work together as a noun to name and describe a person, place, thing, or idea which consists of head (noun, pronoun, or adjective) and modifier. Like all nouns, a noun phrase can be a subject, object, or complement.

Noun phrases are traditionally thought of as consisting minimally of a head noun, together with any number of noun phrases modifier, they are determiners, quantifiers and quantifiers phrases, adjective and adjectives phrases, noun and noun phrases, ad position and ad position phrases and clause (Brown & Miller, 1999: 260 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 16). Head in the construction of noun phrase may consist of noun, pronoun, adjective, enumerator, and genitive phrase. Modifier consists of two modifiers: pre-modifier appears before the noun which may consist of noun, adjective, adjective phrase, participle *-ed* and *-ing* post-modifier appears after the the noun which may consist of prepositional phrase, relative clause non-finite clause (*-ing* clause, *-ed* clause and infinitive clause) and complementation.

The head and modifier in noun phrase can have several arrangements. Below are the arrangements proposed which are suitable for this study (Ayuningsih, 2007: 18).

1. Pre-Modifier + Head (M + H)

The Modifier + Head (M + H) pattern is the most common in English noun phrase. It consists of a noun or a pronoun as the head and one or more modifiers before the head (pre-modifier). The place of pre-modifier can be occupied by a pre-determiner which in English can be an adjective, a noun, a verb in the *-ing* form, or a verb in the *-ed* form.

a. Determiner (D) + Noun (N)

Determiner may consist of:

- pre-determiner which includes quantifier (all, both, half), multiplier (double, twice), fraction (one-third, one-fifth),
- central determiner which includes article (definite article (the), indefinite article (a, an)), pronoun which consists of deictic (that,

those), personal (my, her), indefinite (any, some), interrogative (which, what), and negative (no),
- post-determiner includes cardinal numbers (one, two, three), ordinal numbers (first, second), and quantifier (few, several, much).

Example:

| M | + | H |
|----------------|---|----------|
| Determiner (D) | + | Noun (N) |
| an | | orange |
| the | | book |
| that | | shirt |

b. Adjective (Adj.) + Noun (N)

Adjectives usually determine the quality or property attributed to nouns.

They are used to narrow down, or specify the reference of nouns (Leech, Deuchar, & Hoogenradd, 1982: 47 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 19).

Example:

| M | + | H |
|------------------|---|----------|
| Adjective (Adj.) | + | Noun (N) |
| black | | shirt |
| young | | girl |

c. Noun (N) + Noun (N)

Noun themselves may act as pre-modifiers for the construction of noun phrase (Brown & Miller, 1999: 260 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 19). Other structures of noun as pre-modifiers are the possessive construction and noun-adjunct construction. This pattern consists of a noun headword which is preceded by a noun in an English noun phrase.

Examples:

| M | + | H |
|----------|---|----------|
| Noun (N) | + | Noun (N) |
| gold | | child |
| London | | bridge |

| Possessive Construction | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------|
| M | + | H |
| Noun (N) | + | Noun (N) |
| John's | | house |

Noun-adjunct Construction

| M | + | H |
|----------|---|----------|
| Noun (N) | + | Noun (N) |
| Power | | failure |

d. Verb *-ing/-ed* + Noun

There is often doubt whether, for example, a modifier is a phrase or compound word and whether a word ending in *-ed* or *-ing* is a verb or an adjective derived from a verb (Leech, Deuchar, & Hoogenradd, 1982: 62 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 20).

Example:

| M | + | H |
|------------------------|---|----------|
| Verb <i>-ing / -ed</i> | + | Noun (N) |
| frying | | pan |
| interesting | | story |
| broken | | wing |

2. Head + Modifier (H + M)

The construction of Head + Modifier in the noun phrase pattern here means that the modifier plays role as a post-modifier. The post-modifier of a noun phrase may be prepositional phrase, relative clause, and report other types of modifier, including adverb, adjective, noun phrase in apposition, and other types of clause (Leech, Deuchar, & Hoogenradd, 1982: 62 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 20).

In the structure of a noun phrase, the function of modifier may be realized by means of an adjective or adjective phrase, an adverb, a prepositional phrase, an infinitive clause, an *-ed* participle clause, a relative clause, an appositive clause and a clause introduced by temporal conjunction (Ayuningsih, 2007: 21). Below is the description of the modifier in noun phrase structure.

a. Noun + Adjective (Adjective Phrase)

According to Leech (1882: 60) in Ayuningsih (2007: 21) besides preceding the noun headword in a noun phrase, an adjective or adjective phrase can also follow or modify the noun headword.

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Noun (N) | + | Adjective / Adjective Phrase |
| something | | burned in the kitchen |

b. Noun + Adverb

An adverb may modify a noun headword. However it is relatively rare as the noun modifier when it appears in this role, it will come immediately after the noun which is the head (Francis, 1958 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 21).

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|---------------|
| Noun (N) | + | Adverb |
| man | | Downstairs |

c. Noun + Prepositional Phrase (PP)

Another modifies occurring after a noun headword in an English noun phrase is the Prepositional Phrase (PP).

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | Prepositional Phrase (PP) |
| artist | | of the day |

d. Noun + to infinitive clause

Infinitive clauses can modify the noun headword in an English noun phrase. The infinitive in this clause is usually preceded by 'to'.

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | to infinitive clause |
| medicine | | to cure the patient |

e. Noun + *-ing* participle clause

It is a type of non-finite clause equivalent to relative clause functions as modifier. This participle clause does not have any tense. It can be interpreted according to context as part of present tense.

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | <i>-ing</i> participle clause |
| drainage | | causing city flood |

f. Noun + *-ed* participle clause

The *-ed* participle clause is the other type of non-finite clause which can follow or modify a noun headword. In this case the participle clause correspondences in meaning to a passive relative clause, but the participle contain none of the distinction that can be made by tense and aspect (Leech & Svartvik, 1983 in Ayuningsih, 2007: 23).

Examples:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | <i>-ing</i> participle clause |
| drainage | | causing city flood |

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | <i>-ed</i> participle clause |
| consideration | | determined for the purchase |

g. Noun + Relative clause

A noun headword in an English noun phrase can also be modified by a relative clause which modified the preceding noun or pronoun. The noun being modified is called the antecedent.

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|------------------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | Relative clause |
| Lady | | who is crying loudly |
| Boy | | whose bicycle is just stolen |

h. Noun + Clause introduced by temporal conjunction

A noun headword in an English noun phrase can also be modified by appositive clause. It is introduced by the conjunction 'that' or 'wh-word'. This is also called a type of a nominal-complement clause. The head of noun phrase which is modified by the appositive clause must be an abstract noun such as news, issues, rumor, etc.

Example:

| H | + | M |
|-----------------|---|----------------------|
| Noun (N) | + | Clause |
| News | | that he heard before |

3. Modifier + Head + Modifier (M + H + M)

English is quite possible to have a series of modifier to modify a word at the same time which is called a nesting construction (Ramelan, 1992).

Example:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|------------------|---|----------|---|-------------|
| H | + | M | + | H | + | M |
| Determiner (Det.) | + | Adjective (Adj.) | + | Noun (N) | + | Clause |
| the | | terrible | | accident | | that he saw |

According to Peha (2010: 58) writing is the communication of content for a purpose to an audience. Therefore, writing can be said as a process of giving and putting idea or message into words. In short, the successfulness in writing is depend on how much the readers can understand what the writer's mean.

In writing, there are some aspects which have to be considered. Brown (2004: 221) has categorized all those aspects into two main skills; they are micro-skills and macro-skills of writing.

Micro-Skills:

1. Produce grapheme and orthographic patterns of English.
2. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
3. Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
4. Use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g. tense, agreement, pluralization, patterns and rules).
5. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
6. Use cohesive devices in written discourse.

Macro-skills:

7. Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.
8. Appropriately accomplish the communicative function of written texts according to form and purpose.
9. Convey links and connection between events, and communicate such relation as a main idea, supporting ideas, new information, given

information, generalization, and exemplification.

10. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings when writing.
11. Correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text.
12. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using pre-writing devices, writing the fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing

A descriptive writing means write a text in descriptive genre which describes a thing, a person, or a place. Detail information allows the reader to form an image in his or her imagination. The better the description, the clearer the image. A descriptive writing gives a clear picture in a person, place, event, object, or idea.

Quoted from Novianti (2018: 32) description text is a text containing two components: identification and description by which a writer describes a person or an animal or a tree. According to Dirgayasa (2012: 4) every genre has its own characteristic in term of the rhetorical structure and textual elements. The descriptive writing genre shall fulfill below rhetorical and textual elements.

Identification

It is a statement describing and illustrating the topic/theme. Statement must be interesting and is able to attract and provoke the readers to become interested in reading all the complete description.

Description

It is a complete/detail description about the topic/theme proposed in identification.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive design in which the qualitative design presented the data in the

form of description. The analysis was conducted by describing all the finding from the students' writing. This design was intended to find the types of noun phrase construction made by the first year students of a private senior high school in Medan and to find out the most dominant type used. It was also calculated the percentage by employing below formula.

$$X = \frac{N}{\Sigma N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

X = percentage of noun phrase construction found in the students' writing

N = amount of one of the types of noun phrase construction found in the students' writing

Σ N = total number of noun phrase construction found in the students' writing

The data were taken from all the students' writing of descriptive collected from the sample in this study which consisted of 50

students. The data then were analyzed through some procedures as follow:

1. identified every noun phrase construction found in the students' writing,
2. classified each noun phrase construction found based on the arrangement of the noun phrase (Head + Modifier or Modifier + Head or Modifier + Head + Modifier),
3. calculated all types of noun phrase construction,
4. interpreted the result.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study were obtained through the analysis of noun phrase construction from the students' writing. There were 50 writing sheets as the source of data. The results of the analysis and percentage calculation were displayed on below table.

Table 1 Types and Percentage of Noun Phrase Construction

| No. | Noun Phrase Construction | Amount | Percentage (%) |
|-----|--|--------|----------------|
| 1 | Modifier + Head (M + H) | | |
| | a. Determiner + Noun | 83 | 68.03 |
| | b. Adjective + Noun | 21 | 17.21 |
| | c. Noun + Noun | 15 | 12.29 |
| | d. <i>-ing</i> + Noun | 3 | 2.45 |
| | e. <i>-ed</i> + Noun | - | - |
| | Total | 122 | 99.98 ~ 100 |
| 2 | Head + Modifier (H + M) | | |
| | a. Noun + Adjective | - | - |
| | b. Noun + Adverb | - | - |
| | c. Noun + Prepositional Phrase | 1 | 33.33 |
| | d. Noun + to infinitive clause | 1 | 33.33 |
| | e. Noun + <i>-ing</i> clause | - | - |
| | f. Noun + <i>-ed</i> clause | - | - |
| | g. Noun + Relative clause | 1 | 33.33 |
| | h. Noun + temporary conjunction clause | - | - |
| | Total | 3 | 99.99 ~ 100 |
| 3 | Modifier + Head + Modifier (M + H + M) | | |
| | Total | 47 | 100 |

Based on above table, it could be seen that there were three main types of noun phrase construction based on the arrangement of

noun phrase. They were Modifier + Head (M + H), Head + Modifier (H + M) and Modifier + Head + Modifier (M + H + M).

In general, the most dominant construction found in the students' writing was the type of Modifier + Head (M + H) particularly in the arrangement of Determiner + Noun (68.03%).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Noun phrase construction is very important to be learnt especially for senior high school students because this construction is the basic to create a complete and well sentence structure or grammar. Besides, the noun phrase construction in English and Indonesia is quite different. Thus, the students need to understand the correct construction in order to create a good writing in any kind of writing genre in English.

In relation to the conclusion, this study would also like to suggest the following points. For the English teachers, they have to be careful in teaching writing including the grammar or structure so that the students can create a good and grammar correct writing. For the students, they have to be creative and understand well all the English grammar or structure in order to make good and correct sentences in any kind of writing. For other researchers, they can conduct another study dealing with other construction of English phrases

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