

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A HYBRID COURSE ON THE STUDENTS' MASTERY OF NOUN PHRASES

### A Case of Noun--Head Noun Pattern

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#### Abstract

DeCarrio and Larsen-Freeman (2002) state that a sentence is a construction derived from grammatical rules of language in which Noun Phrases (NP) often appear. These NPs are constructions that can consist of a Head Noun (HN) with a pre-modifier and/ a post-modifier. They dominate more in sentences in articles. Writing a construction of NP to students might be problematic since it seems simple, but it is not. When such an NP is expected, it causes a problem even to Indonesian college students. However, they are supposed to write in an international journal or a national journal in English. To accommodate this need, a hybrid course specifically on the use of noun phrases, where nouns as pre-modifiers, is developed. This paper investigates (1) how effective a hybrid course on noun phrases, especially the N-HN pattern is toward the students' mastery, and (2) how an NP where the pre-modifier is a noun is constructed. A pretest and post-test were administered to 42 subjects consisting of the students of the Faculty of Letters and the Business English. Think-aloud protocol was conducted to find out their thinking process in constructing their NPs. It is expected that the hybrid course enhances the students' competence in using N-HN patterns.

**Keywords:** Noun Phrase, Pre-Modifier, Think-Aloud Protocol, Hybrid Course

#### INTRODUCTION

Graduates of Higher Education Institutions, regarding the Decree of Indonesia Ministry of Research and Technology, are to be able to write papers published in journals, either the national journals or international ones. The decree pushes students as well as the institutions to bring the nation to the international scholarly forums, stating that Indonesia has remarkable scientific findings. However, publishing papers written in English journals, let alone international ones, is not an easy job for the students. They are supposedly able to express ideas in effective

and efficient sentences. In other words, the student writers must be able to produce grammatical strings of words. This mastery of English grammar is one of the skills that students have to master.

DeCarrio & Larsen-Freeman (2002) state that a sentence is constructed based on the grammar of a language, in this case, English. One of the grammatical points that occur most in sentences is noun phrases. Noun Phrases dominate more in sentences and are modified by premodifiers and/ postmodifiers. The premodifiers that often occur to modify

the head noun are determiners, adjectives and nouns while the postmodifiers that modify the head noun are finite and non-finite clauses and prepositional phrases.

This paper is a part of a three-year research entitled “Penggunaan dan Pembentukan Frasa Nomina Dalam Karangan Eksposisi Oleh Mahasiswa Indonesia” (in English “The Use and Formation of Noun Phrases in Indonesian Students’ Exposition”) and the research applies a hybrid course with online and offline learning system. In the first year, the writers focus on N-HN pattern where N as a premodifier. Thus, the writers aim to investigate whether the hybrid course influences the students’ achievement in using N-HN pattern. Besides, it looks into how the students comprehend N-HN pattern.

### **Noun Phrases**

Noun Phrases (NPs) dominate in the sentential constructions, functioning either a subject of a sentence, an object of a verb, an object of preposition, or an object or subject complement. These NPs have their constructions with premodifiers and postmodifiers.

The premodifiers and postmodifiers + Head Noun (HN) can have a formulation as follows: 1) determinative—HN, 2) adjective—HN, 3) Noun—HN, 4) determinative—adjective—HN, 5) Noun—Prep. Phrase, 6) determinative—HN—Prep.Phrase, 7) determinative—adjective—HN—Prep Phrase, and mixed type The other patterns, despite their less frequencies, are as follows: a) determinative—HN—Klausula Finite/NonFinite, b) present/past participial—HN, dan c) present/past participial—HN—Klausula Finite/ NonFinite (Jackson, 1990).

These patterns must be mastered by the students so that they can write good sentences with concise and compelling noun phrases.

Research on NP in the past ten years has been done to know how students use the English noun phrases. Tedjasuksmana and Yappy (2006) did research on “Cognitive Learning Strategies of Non-English Department Students on Noun Structure” to the students of non-English Department about how the students used NP constructions in which they were supposed to choose the wrong constructions in the structure part of the TOEFL. The result was that the students were not aware that a noun followed a preposition, the subject of a sentence was a noun, and an NP might consist of parallel constructions. Besides, the students used the Indonesian NPs into English ones.

Musgrave dan Parkinson (2014) in their “Development of noun phrase complexity in the writing of English for Academic Purposes” concluded that the students who were lack of the English ability formed an English NP with attributive adjective (a simple pattern that must be mastered early); while the students who had a better mastery of English used noun modifier (patterns often found in published academic writings). The students whose English proficiency was better used kinds of noun modifiers generally used in academic writings.

Mazgutova dan Kormos (2015) studied the development of the students’ syntactic constructions and lexical choices in their academic writing for six months and the result indicates that the students who had a

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low proficiency of English could use complex NP constructions in their argumentative writing. This shows that their expository writing in the academic contexts improved.

Staples, Egbert, Biber, dan Gray (2016) in their studies found that NP constructions used by the students were, among others, those with attributive adjective, noun modifier, prepositional phrases, that- clause as apposition, adjective clauses, dependent clauses with that and to, non-finite clauses in passive constructions. They found that the higher the academic level of the students the more complex clauses they used in their writing. However, they used a few finite dependent clauses.

Ariwibowo (2017) studied how the Indonesian students of the English Department formed postmodifier in NPs. The result shows that prepositional phrase and restrictive adjective clause were mostly used by the students. This indicates that the students still could not use the various patterns of post-modification, which are often found in journal writings.

Karra (2006) states that learners' errors contribute to teachers, researchers and learners by showing the progress of the learners when learning a language, learners' acquisition of the language, and the corrective feedback to learners as they learn from the errors. Norrish (1983) states that students or learners simply make errors or are not able to produce correct forms because they are not ready yet to use the target language. Errors are indications of an imperfect mastery of the language (Brown, 2000). They indicate breakdown from the

adult grammar of native speakers of English and cannot be self-corrected.

When learners of English acquire the language, they may produce L2 like L1 as L1 influences L2 of the learners. Hagege (1999) said that this interference takes place between L1 and L2 both in children and in adults. He further stated that this L1 is getting stronger in their L2 productions, especially when the learners are monolinguals. Hagege also believes that learners' mistakes due to L1 interference need not be thought of being permanent. They are due to the learners' insufficient capacity.

In the learning process, learners may use their own strategy to cope with the difficulties they encounter when using the language, which is termed as interlanguage (Selinker, 1974). Learners use their own strategy through five processes, namely 1) language transfer, 2) transfer of training, 3) strategies of second language learning, 4) strategies of second language communication, and 5) overgeneralization (Selinker, 1974).

Language transfer or interlingual transfer or external interference refers to a deviation in a learning process of the learners' L2 production which is influenced by their L1 (Abbott (1981), Brown (2000)). Transfer of training refers to a deviation of the learners' L2 production due to textbooks or teacher's way of teaching L2. Strategies of second language learning also indicates a deviation in the learners' performance when producing L2 as they want to make things simpler due to learning or teaching. Strategies of second language communication refers to a deviation

of the learners' producing L2 by ignoring the grammatical system of the language as long as a message is understood. Abbott (1981) said that learners use these strategies by giving no response or keeping quiet, not using inflections, not using L2 grammatical constructions, not using tenses of which learners are not capable, and not keeping to a topic of conversation learners are not comfortable with as they lack mastery of the topic. Brown (2000) uses the term "communication strategies" to refer to approaches which are used by learners to have their messages understood for the sake of the flow of communication. Overgeneralization refers to a deviation in learners' performance when constructing L2 sentences. In this case, learners mix up other types of structure. Norrish (1983) refers to "redundancy reduction" as in \*Yesterday I walk to the shop and I buy.... Another example of overgeneralization is using is, am, are even in the simple present tense \*He is plays tennis every Saturday.

Brown (2000) also proposes intralingual transfer, and context of learning. Intralingual transfer is the generalization learners take from the system of the second language they are familiar with in order to produce second language utterances. It is not the learners' mother tongue that influences the learners' performance but rather "internal interference" (Abbott, 1981). It results from the imperfect competence of the learners over L2 at a particular stage when they are still in the process of learning the language. Context of learning contributes to errors as learners may get insufficient or even wrong inputs in the learning/teaching process to acquire the second language.

Richards (1974) states that intralingual errors are developmental. These errors take place within the learners' competence of L2. What makes errors categorized as intralingual errors are overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

Overgeneralization is defined the same as the one above, while ignorance of rule restriction refers to a deviation as learners miss the limitation of L2 rule as in \*The child who I talked about him. Incomplete application of rules refers to a deviation in the learners' performance as they fail to construct a complete structure as in \*He will do meet the headmaster tomorrow in response to the question What will he do tomorrow? False concepts hypothesized results from the learners' failure to analyze L2 or to comprehend the L2 concept of using the present continuous tense in such a series of actions as \* The man is going downstairs to the meeting room. He is meeting with all his staff. He is discussing the annual report of the company.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the accessibility of Learning Management System (LMS), an independent collaborative way of learning with unlimited time and distance (Koutsodimou and Jimoyiannis, 2015), and it combines both online and offline system. First, the students were given a pretest, and then introduced to the system, especially the online one how to access the web to watch the explanation of Noun-Head Noun pattern of the NP and do the exercises on line. A face-to-face course was also conducted to discuss the exercises before they did the posttest on line. Both the pretest and the posttest problems consisted of three types of items, namely multiple-choice

items, completion items (students were asked to form noun phrases with Noun--Head Noun pattern), and error analysis and correction items. The participants of the study were students studying at the Letters Faculty and the Business English Department. They were all from semester one up to semester five.

Out of 106 students, fifty-eight students took part in the pretest but only forty-one students participated in the posttest. So, this study took only those who did the pretest as well as the posttest to be the subjects with a total of forty-one. After the pretest, Think-Aloud protocol was implemented to know how the students answered the test items. Twenty-one students were randomly chosen for an interview.

In between the pretest and the post-test the students could access the online explanation before doing the online exercises. After a week, a face-to-face tutorial was conducted in a classroom to discuss the exercises they did online. Then, they took the posttest online.

The pretest scores and the posttest scores were then calculated using Wilcoxon test to see the effectiveness of the LMS system for the students to construct Noun-Head Noun correctly.

### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research finding reveals how well the students could achieve their understanding N-HN pattern in the pretest and the post-test, which can be descriptively discussed below.

**Table 1. Percentage of wrong answers in Pretest and Post-test**

Test type	Total # of answers		# of correct answers		# of wrong answers		% of wrong answers		% of correct answers	
	Pr	Po	Pr	Po	Pr	Po	Pr	Po	Pr	Po
Multiple choice	328	328	183	191	145	137	44.21	41.77	55.79	58.23
Completion	410	410	51	139	359	271	87.56	66.10	12.44	33.90
Correction	287	287	74	165	213	122	74.22	42.51	25.78	57.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,025	1,025	308	495	717	530	69.95	51.71	30.05	48.29

**Notes: Pr = Pretest; Po = Post-test**

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre_test	41	4	68	28.49	17.554
post_test	41	8	96	48.29	23.245

Based on Table 2 above, the minimum and maximum scores of the pretest are four and sixty-eight respectively, and those of the post-test are eight and ninety-six. The result of the students' learning in each test type can be seen in Table 1 above.

The pretest data and the posttest data were calculated to know the normality of the data distribution as seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Tests of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre test	.186	41	.001	.904	41	.002
Post-test	.120	41	.142	.967	41	.271

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3 shows the statistical result of the normality test that sig. value of the pretest is .002 which is lower than .05, and that of the post-test is .271 which is higher than .05. It means that one of the data is not normally distributed. Due to this, T-test was not used in this study, but rather the non-parametric one, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, to obtain the sig. value of whether the hybrid course influences the students' ability to master N-HN patterns.

**Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Ranks<sup>a</sup>**

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post-test -	Negative Ranks	5 <sup>a</sup>	12.50	62.50
Pre-test	Positive Ranks	34 <sup>b</sup>	21.10	717.50
	Ties	2 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	41		

- a. post\_test < pre\_test
- b. post\_test > pre\_test
- c. post\_test = pre\_test

Table 4a above shows that five students obtain their posttest scores less than their pretest scores, thirty-four students obtain

their posttest scores higher than their pretest scores, and two students obtain their posttest scores the same as their pretest scores.

**Test Statistics<sup>b</sup>**

Z	post_test - pre_test	-4.576 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

- a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
- b. Based on negative ranks

The result of the calculation indicates that sig. value is .000 which is lower than .05 (see Table 4b). It means that there is a difference between the pretest result and the posttest result when the hybrid course was used.

### Conclusion

A hybrid course with the combination of online and offline way of learning can enhance the students' understanding of N-HN pattern. It enriches the students' knowledge concerning English noun phrases, especially N-HN pattern. There must be more than one face-to-face tutorial so that the students can fully understand N-HN pattern of English noun phrases, and they achieve it much better.

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