

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of The Study

The structure noun phrase has been the focus of a number of text genres. Sharndama (2015) emphasized the importance of the noun phrase as it appears in such functions as subject, object, subject complement, or complement of a preposition. In his qualitative study, Sharndama analyzed the structure of noun phrases in professional legal texts. He seemed to have focused his study on legal texts as legal language is highly nominal based on many researches; A lot of data were certainly expected to be revealed considering such a nature. Sharndama further uncovered that the analysis of the professional legal texts revealed dominant complex postmodifying elements functioning as attributes of the noun head. In legal contexts, postmodifiers are useful to avoid ambiguity in interpretation to achieve effectiveness in meaning delivery. On the other hand, such effort to avoid ambiguity in interpretation may result in lengthy noun phrases. In his study, Sharndama showed examples of lengthy postmodified noun phrases containing predominantly finite clauses as

postmodifiers. The complete analysis in Sharndama's study revealed lengthy complex noun phrases functioning as subjects of sentences/clauses. The premodifiers serve as the given information, while the postmodifiers serve as the new information. The research further revealed that the premodifiers were mostly adjective phrases while the postmodifiers were preposition phrases in popularized legal texts. The professional legal texts, however, were different in the postmodifying element that were predominantly of the finite clauses. The complex noun phrase pre- and postmodification found in both popularized and professional legal texts were obviously communicative to legal practitioners, yet difficult to comprehend by common people.

Swierzbina (2014) suggested that complex ideas require complex language. She further stated that as academic levels rise, noun phrase (NP) complexity increases to express increasingly complex and challenging ideas which require nouns because they are technical terms peculiar to an area. She furthered by stating that it is important that students understand noun, but noun phrases bear more importance due to a more peculiar meaning which adheres to it by the context they set. For example, in example (1) below:

(1) Mandible is the bone that forms the lower jaw.

The noun phrase *the bone that forms the lower jaw* requires the restrictive finite clause to acting as the postmodifier *that forms the lower jaw* to define exactly which bone the mandible is. The noun *bone* is the head of the phrase but by itself tells us little in this context.

As a matter of fact, the understanding of English word classes such as verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and determiner is significant, but, as Derewianka (as cited in Swierzbina, 2014) states that the knowledge on how words are concocted to be meaningful bears more importance.

The preparation of competent human resources with good English command requires proper English teachers who can assist English learners. Therefore, to produce human resources capable of understanding and using English in many contexts in the global trading setting, it is imperative that competent teachers be available. The English Department of the faculty of teacher training of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya is set to prepare such teachers of English. At the English department of the faculty of teacher training, the students are trained:

1. to master English and teach it to the elementary and secondary level students of junior and senior high school;
2. to teach non-English subjects such as mathematics and science in English;
3. to have skills in translation to become a translator or an interpreter.

Discovering the readability of the teachers to be may be done through various types of studies, one of which is through researching their academic writing or compositions. Haan & Esch (as cited in Vos, 2017), stated that a student's level of advancedness and the mean sentence length in their writing were related. Hutter (2015) further suggested the importance of nouns and complex noun phrases in academic writing due to such three factors as (1) predominance, (2) demand to learners, and (3) authority in texts. Besides their prevalence, nouns in academic writing also more frequently contains noun modification, which extends the noun phrases and raises their grammatical complexity compared to unmodified noun phrases. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999, p. 578) exposed his findings on the dominance of noun phrases

in academic writing with 60% appearance of modified noun phrases compared to that of spoken rarity.

The specific source of data will be taken from the Writing III class end of term test compositions written by the undergraduate English department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. Writing III is in fairly high level of Writing due to prior taking of Writing I and II and subsequent taking of Writing IV and Scientific Writing classes afterwards. In the Writing III class, the students are learning to write persuasive compositions. In academic writing such as persuasive writing, students learn to try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions. Convincing others need sort of strategies that require certain expressions that feature noun phrases with postmodifiers. Such convincing strategies are called *signposts*. Signposts are text markers that enable readers to follow our arguments easily. Such signposts may include nominal expressions of refuting the opposing idea as in (2) below:

(2) *There is no way (that) we can agree with this idea.*

In (2) the head noun *way* is postmodified by the restrictive clause *(that) we can agree with this idea*. It is expected that

more such noun phrases will be revealed in Writing III students' end of term compositions.

They are expected to provide sufficient data on complex noun phrase modification because they have taken Structure I, where the students learn affirmative and negative sentences, English tenses and aspects, types of questions, imperatives, articles, nouns, compound, complex-compound sentences and their conjunctions, adjectives, adverbs, participial phrases, prepositional phrases, noun clauses. In Structure II, students learn passive voices, modal verb forms, reported speech, subjunctive, conditional clauses, and adjective clause; and in Structure III, students learn simple, complex, compound, complex-compound sentences, interrelatedness of complex syntactic structures, absolute construction, appositive phrase, adverbial clause, noun clause, adjective clause, gerund phrase, abstract noun phrase, participial phrase, infinitive phrase, and interrelatedness of clauses. By completing the three Structure classes, the students are assumed to have acquired adequate skills for the English grammar, especially the noun postmodification.

Thus, the importance of English noun phrases in better understanding communication in context has stimulated the writer to carry out this thesis to investigate the types of postmodifiers used by the undergraduate students of the English Department of the faculty of pedagogy and teacher training of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya in their compositions. The students' level of acquisition of noun postmodification in the composition should to a certain extent suggest their readiness to share the knowledge in various English learning settings upon their finishing their Bachelor's study.

Research Questions

To discover the students' acquisition of the structure of noun postmodification, the writer raises several questions:

- a. What is the variability level of the structure of English noun postmodification?
- b. What is the complexity level of the structure of English noun postmodification?
- c. What is the accuracy level of the structure of English noun postmodification?

- d. What is the efficiency level of the structure of English noun postmodification?

The Objective of the Study

The thesis is aimed at investigating the acquisition of the structure of postmodification of English department students, which may be reflected on the variability of the types of postmodifiers of English nouns, the complexity level of the structure of English noun postmodification, the accuracy level of the structure of English noun postmodification, and the efficiency level of the structure of English noun postmodification in the Writing III class end-of-term test compositions written by the English department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya.

Theoretical Framework

The theories of complex noun phrase and its postmodification by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) are adopted to describe how the structure of the postmodification of NPs are formed. Furthermore, there are numerous theories of postmodification of noun phrases with varied descriptions. Quirk et al.'s work is used due to its better

comprehensibility along with its comprehensiveness of the explanation on the positioning and ordering of multiple postmodification should they exist.

Theories on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), more specifically Second Language Syntax (SLS) are employed to describe students' complexity level of noun phrase postmodification. Hawkins (as cited in Gan, 2014) states that *“the syntax of a language is a set of properties which determine the construction of sentence in that language, that is to say, rules that govern how words combine into phrases, and into clauses or sentences.”*. Thus, it is expected that the complexity of the noun phrases analyzed in this study will be revealed as the postmodification structures are exposed.

Significance of the Study

The result of the study would have the following theoretical and practical significances:

The theoretical significance. By knowing the frequency of occurrences of postmodifiers and the accuracy of the postmodification structures, teachers of English may find hints on how students work on expressing their thoughts in simple or complex ways which may be reflected on their

constructing noun phrases in the sentences while they can make improvements on lesson plans and syllabus concerning the structure of postmodification which students need to establish when writing. It is also important for the students that they may improve their accuracy and complexity of their English noun phrases to help them better understand complex ideas. Upon the mastery of the concepts of constructing complex ideas using complex noun phrases, in this case the postmodification structure, they should have, more equipment to become competent English teachers. Such competent teachers should be able to assist English learners to understand more developed ideas and, thus, convey them as well.

The practical significance. The result of the study which described the types of postmodifiers and accuracy level of the English noun phrase constructions found in the essays written by the English department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya could be used by the lecturers to reflect on the prevailing course syllabus. The researcher, on the other hand, discovers to what extent the students have mastered the accurate and complex constructions of their English noun phrases through the variations of the postmodifiers of the

English noun phrases. Therefore, the researcher will discover problems and possible solutions.

The Scope of the Study

The scope of the thesis is to investigate the types, frequency of occurrences, the complexity, accuracy, and efficiency of structures of postmodifiers of noun phrases in written language, i.e. students' compositions of the end-of-term test of the undergraduate students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. The result of the study reveals only the noun phrase constructions of the Writing III students of the English Department Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, especially in the constructions of postmodifiers of noun phrases.

Definition of Key Terms

The followings are the definitions of key terms:

Accuracy. Accuracy is the proper construction of the structures of the English noun postmodification based on disambiguity of meaning.

Noun phrase. According to Quirk et al. (1985, p.1238), noun phrase is a phrase consisting of noun as a head, accompanied by a determiner plus one or more modifiers.

- (3) {A} <one-eyed> [sailor].
 (determiner) (modifier) (head noun)

Simple noun phrase. According to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1350), simple noun phrase is a phrase consisting of noun as a head, accompanied by a determiner.

- (4) {A} [sailor].
 determiner head noun

Complex noun phrase. According to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1350), complex noun phrase is a phrase consisting of noun as a head, accompanied by at least one modifier.

- (5) {A } <one-eyed> [sailor].
 determiner modifier head noun

Head nouns. According to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 1238), head nouns are nouns around which the other constituents cluster and which dictate concord with other parts of the sentence.

- (6) {The} <two> [girls].
 Head noun

Modifier. According to Francis (1958, p. 297), modifier is a component in a phrase which serves to broaden, qualify, select, change, describe, or in some way affect the meaning of a head. Modifier, in this study, is a component in a noun phrase which functions to qualify, describe or explain the head noun. The modifier in this study can be determiner, premodifier, or postmodifier.

Premodifier. According to Biber, Conrad, and Leech (2002, p. 459), premodifier is an individual modifier preceding a head noun.

(7) <Some> [gates] have been breached.
Premodifier head noun

Postmodifier. According to Biber et al. (2002, p. 459), postmodifier is an individual modifier following a head noun.

(8) The [women] <in black looked scary>.
Head noun postmodifier