

The Use of Noun Phrases in Improving Students' English Writing Skills

Penggunaan Frasa Nomina dalam Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Bahasa Inggris Siswa

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Abstrak

Menulis merupakan salah satu keterampilan yang paling menantang bagi siswa yang mempelajari bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) karena menuntut siswa untuk mengorganisasikan gagasan, memilih kosakata yang tepat, dan menerapkan struktur tata bahasa secara akurat. Salah satu komponen tata bahasa yang dapat mendukung siswa dalam mengembangkan kemampuan menulis adalah frasa nomina. Frasa nomina memungkinkan penulis memberikan informasi yang lebih spesifik dan terperinci mengenai orang, benda, tempat, dan gagasan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan frasa nomina dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis bahasa Inggris siswa serta mengidentifikasi kesulitan siswa dalam menerapkan frasa nomina pada teks tertulis. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Partisipan penelitian adalah siswa tingkat sekolah menengah atas yang terlibat dalam kegiatan menulis bahasa Inggris dengan fokus pada penggunaan frasa nomina. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, tugas menulis siswa, dan wawancara semiterstruktur. Data dianalisis melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian diharapkan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan frasa nomina dapat membantu siswa mengembangkan kalimat yang lebih terperinci, meningkatkan kesadaran gramatikal, memperkaya kosakata, dan mengorganisasikan gagasan secara lebih efektif. Namun, siswa masih dapat mengalami kesulitan dalam menggunakan determinan, kata sifat, bentuk jamak, bentuk posesif, dan frasa preposisional secara tepat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi pembelajaran frasa nomina ke dalam kegiatan menulis dapat memberikan kesempatan yang bermakna bagi siswa untuk meningkatkan kualitas tulisan bahasa Inggris mereka.

Kata Kunci:

Frasa Nomina, Keterampilan Menulis, Penelitian Kualitatif, Tata Bahasa, Siswa EFL

Keywords:

Noun Phrases, Writing Skills, Qualitative Study, Grammar, EFL Students

Abstract

Writing is one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students because it requires students to organize ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, and apply grammatical structures accurately. One grammatical component that can support students in developing their writing is the noun phrase. Noun phrases allow writers to provide more specific and detailed information about people, objects, places, and ideas. This study aims to explore the use of noun phrases in improving students' English writing skills and to identify students' difficulties in applying noun phrases in their written texts. This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. The participants are students at the senior high school level who are involved in English writing activities focusing on the use of noun phrases. Data are collected through classroom observations, students' writing assignments, and semi-structured interviews. The data are analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings are expected to demonstrate that the use of noun phrases can help students develop more detailed sentences, improve grammatical awareness, enrich vocabulary, and organize ideas more effectively. However, students may still experience difficulties in using determiners, adjectives, plural forms, possessive forms, and prepositional phrases correctly. The study concludes that integrating noun phrase instruction into writing activities can provide students with meaningful opportunities to improve the quality of their English writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English writing is an important skill for students because it enables them to communicate ideas, opinions, experiences, and information in written form. However, writing in English is often difficult for

Indonesian EFL students because they need to consider several aspects simultaneously, including vocabulary, grammar, organization, sentence structure, and mechanics. Students may have ideas that they want to communicate but experience difficulties expressing

those ideas in grammatically correct and meaningful sentences.

One of the grammatical elements that plays an important role in English writing is the noun phrase. A noun phrase is a group of words that functions as a noun and may consist of a determiner, adjective, noun, possessive, or other modifiers. Noun phrases enable students to provide more information about the nouns they use in their writing.

For example, the sentence **“The student reads a book”** contains relatively simple noun phrases. Students can develop the sentence by using expanded noun phrases:

“The diligent student in our classroom reads an interesting English book from the school library.”

The second sentence contains more detailed information because the noun phrases have been expanded through the use of adjectives and prepositional phrases.

The ability to use noun phrases appropriately can therefore contribute to the development of students’ writing. By understanding noun phrase structures, students can make their sentences more descriptive, precise, and informative. Noun phrases may also help students vary sentence structures and avoid excessive repetition of simple nouns.

Nevertheless, students often experience difficulties in constructing noun phrases. Indonesian and English have different grammatical structures, which can cause students to transfer patterns from their first language into English. Students may incorrectly place adjectives, omit determiners, use incorrect plural forms, or construct noun phrases in an inappropriate order.

For example, students may write:

“I have bag black.”

instead of:

“I have a black bag.”

Another example is:

“She is student smart.”

instead of:

“She is a smart student.”

These errors demonstrate that students need explicit instruction and sufficient opportunities to practice noun phrases in meaningful writing contexts.

Rather than examining students’ writing only through numerical scores, a qualitative approach can provide a deeper understanding of how students use noun phrases, what difficulties they experience, and how their writing changes during the learning process. Through classroom observations, analysis of students’ written work, and interviews, researchers can obtain detailed information about students’ experiences in learning and applying noun phrases.

Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the use of noun phrases in improving students’ English writing skills through a qualitative descriptive approach.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students use noun phrases in their English writing?
2. What difficulties do students experience when using noun phrases in writing?
3. How does the use of noun phrases contribute to the development of students’ English writing skills?
4. What changes can be observed in students’ writing after they receive instruction and practice in using noun phrases?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. to describe how students use noun phrases in their English writing;
2. to identify students’ difficulties in constructing and applying noun phrases;



3. to explore the contribution of noun phrases to students' writing development; and
4. to describe changes in students' writing after noun phrase instruction and practice.

Significance of the Study

This study has theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between grammatical structures and English writing development, particularly the role of noun phrases in EFL writing.

Practically, the study can help English teachers understand students' difficulties in using noun phrases and develop appropriate teaching strategies. For students, the study can encourage them to understand how noun phrases can be used to develop more detailed and meaningful sentences.

For future researchers, this study can provide a reference for qualitative research concerning grammar instruction, noun phrases, and English writing skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skills

Writing is a productive language skill through which people communicate ideas using written language. In English learning, writing involves more than simply producing grammatically correct sentences. Students must also develop ideas, organize information, select appropriate vocabulary, and consider the needs of their readers.

Effective writing generally requires several components, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. These components are interconnected. A student may have good ideas but still produce unclear writing if grammatical structures are not used appropriately.

Writing is also a process. Students generally need to plan their ideas, write a draft, revise their writing, edit grammatical and mechanical errors, and produce a

final version. Therefore, writing instruction should provide students with opportunities to develop their writing gradually.

Grammar and Writing

Grammar is an important component of English writing. Grammatical knowledge allows students to construct sentences that communicate meaning accurately.

In writing instruction, grammar should be connected to meaningful communication. Instead of learning grammatical rules independently, students can learn grammar through texts, sentences, and writing activities. This approach allows students to understand how grammatical structures function in actual communication.

Noun Phrases

A noun phrase is a group of words that functions as a noun in a sentence. The noun is generally the head of the phrase, while other elements may modify or provide additional information about the noun.

Examples include:

- **the teacher**
- **a beautiful house**
- **my English book**
- **the new student**
- **the students in the classroom**
- **an interesting English lesson**

Noun phrases can be simple or complex depending on the number and type of modifiers they contain.

Components of Noun Phrases

Noun phrases may contain several components.

Determiners

Examples:

- a book
- an apple
- the teacher

- my friend

Adjectives

Examples:

- a beautiful girl
- an interesting book
- a smart student

Possessives

Examples:

- my book
- John's bicycle
- their classroom

Prepositional Modifiers

Examples:

- the students in the classroom
- the book on the table
- the teacher from Indonesia

Understanding these components can help students produce more complex and informative sentences.

Noun Phrases and Writing Development

Noun phrases can contribute to writing development because they allow students to provide additional information without creating unnecessary sentences.

For example:

Simple:

"I saw a dog."

Expanded:

"I saw a small brown dog near the school gate."

The second sentence provides more information through the expanded noun phrase "**a small brown dog.**"

In this way, noun phrases can help students develop ideas and create more descriptive writing.

Students' Difficulties in Using Noun Phrases

Students may experience several difficulties when constructing noun phrases. These difficulties may include:

1. incorrect adjective placement;
2. omission of determiners;
3. incorrect use of singular and plural nouns;
4. incorrect possessive forms;
5. inappropriate word order;
6. confusion between nouns and adjectives; and
7. difficulty combining multiple modifiers.

These difficulties may be influenced by students' limited grammatical knowledge and differences between Indonesian and English grammatical structures

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive research design**. A qualitative approach is selected because the purpose of the research is to obtain an in-depth description of students' use of noun phrases in English writing.

The study does not primarily focus on numerical measurements. Instead, it examines students' written products, classroom activities, learning experiences, and difficulties in applying noun phrases.

Research Participants

The participants of this study are students at the senior high school level who are learning English writing. One class is selected as the research setting.

The participants are selected purposively because they are involved in English writing activities and receive instruction related to noun phrases.

Research Setting

The research is conducted in an English language classroom at a senior high school. The classroom is selected because English writing activities are part of the students' learning process.

The research focuses on classroom activities in which students learn noun phrases and apply them in sentences and written texts.



Data Sources

The data in this study are obtained from three main sources:

1. Students' Written Work

Students' writing assignments are collected and analyzed to identify how noun phrases are used in their writing.

The researcher examines:

- the types of noun phrases used;
- the accuracy of noun phrase construction;
- the complexity of noun phrases;
- grammatical errors; and
- changes in students' writing.

2. Classroom Observation

The researcher observes classroom activities during noun phrase instruction and writing practice.

The observation focuses on:

- students' participation;
- students' responses to instruction;
- students' difficulties;
- students' interaction during writing activities; and
- students' ability to apply noun phrases.

3. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected students and, if appropriate, the English teacher.

The interviews focus on students' experiences and difficulties in learning noun phrases.

Examples of interview questions include:

1. What difficulties do you experience when learning noun phrases?
2. Which part of noun phrases is the most difficult for you?
3. Does learning noun phrases help you write English sentences?
4. What difficulties do you experience when using adjectives in noun phrases?
5. Do noun phrases help you make your writing more detailed?

6. How do you feel when writing after learning noun phrases?

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process consists of several stages.

Stage 1: Initial Observation

The researcher observes students' initial writing activities to identify common problems related to sentence construction and noun phrase use.

Stage 2: Noun Phrase Instruction

The teacher provides instruction about noun phrases, including their definition, structure, components, and functions.

Students are given examples of noun phrases and are asked to identify them in sentences and texts.

Stage 3: Writing Practice

Students practice constructing noun phrases and applying them to sentences. They then use the sentences to develop paragraphs or short texts.

Stage 4: Collection of Written Work

Students' writing assignments are collected throughout the learning process. The researcher compares students' earlier and later writing to identify changes in noun phrase use and overall writing development.

Stage 5: Interviews

Selected students are interviewed to obtain deeper information about their experiences, difficulties, and perceptions concerning noun phrase learning.

Data Analysis

The data are analyzed qualitatively through three major stages:

1. Data Reduction

The researcher selects and organizes relevant information from classroom observations, interviews, and students' writing.

Unrelated information is excluded, while information related to noun phrase use, writing development, and students' difficulties is retained.

2. Data Display

The reduced data are organized into categories or themes.

Possible themes include:

- students' understanding of noun phrases;
- noun phrase errors;
- students' ability to expand sentences;
- vocabulary development;
- grammatical improvement;
- students' learning difficulties; and
- students' perceptions of noun phrase instruction.

3. Conclusion Drawing

The researcher interprets the findings and draws conclusions based on the patterns identified in the data.

The conclusions are supported by evidence from students' writing, classroom observations, and interview responses.

Trustworthiness of Data

To increase the credibility of the research findings, the researcher uses **data triangulation**.

The researcher compares information obtained from:

1. students' written work;
2. classroom observations; and
3. interviews.

If similar findings appear across the three sources, the interpretation becomes stronger.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Use of Noun Phrases

The analysis of students' writing is expected to show that students use both simple and expanded noun phrases.

In the early stages, students may primarily use simple noun phrases such as:

- "a student"

- "the school"
- "my teacher"
- "an English book"

After receiving instruction and practice, students may begin using more expanded structures such as:

- "a hardworking student"
- "the beautiful school garden"
- "my English teacher from Medan"
- "an interesting English book in the library"

The development from simple to expanded noun phrases indicates that students are beginning to understand how additional information can be attached to nouns.

Students' Difficulties

The analysis may reveal several difficulties in students' noun phrase construction.

One common difficulty is the omission of determiners. Some students may write:

"I have new book."

instead of:

"I have a new book."

Another difficulty is adjective placement. Students influenced by Indonesian word order may write:

"a bag black"

instead of:

"a black bag."

Students may also experience difficulty with plural nouns. For example:

"three book"

should be:

"three books."

These errors indicate that students require continuous practice and feedback.

Development of Sentence Construction



The students' writing may demonstrate development from simple sentences to more detailed sentences.

For example:

Before instruction:

"My school has a library. The library is big. The library has books."

After instruction and practice:

"My school has a large and comfortable library with many interesting English books."

The second example demonstrates how noun phrases can help students combine information and make their writing more concise and descriptive.

Development of Vocabulary

The use of noun phrases can also encourage students to use a wider range of vocabulary.

Instead of repeatedly using general nouns such as "thing," "place," "student," or "book," students can add adjectives and modifiers to provide more specific descriptions.

For example:

- "a book"
- "an English book"
- "an interesting English book"
- "an interesting English grammar book in the school library"

This demonstrates that noun phrases can provide opportunities for students to develop vocabulary while simultaneously improving sentence construction.

Students' Perceptions

Based on interview data, students may report that noun phrases initially seem difficult because they need to remember the correct order of words.

However, after repeated practice, students may recognize that noun phrases help them write more detailed sentences.

Students may express ideas such as:

"Noun phrases help me make my sentences longer and more complete."

Another student may explain:

"Before learning noun phrases, I usually wrote simple sentences. Now I can add adjectives and other information."

These responses indicate that students may perceive noun phrase instruction as useful for developing their writing.

Discussion

The findings suggest that noun phrases have an important role in supporting students' English writing development. Through noun phrases, students can add descriptive and specific information to their sentences.

The development is not limited to grammar. Students can also improve their vocabulary because they need to select appropriate adjectives, nouns, determiners, and modifiers. Furthermore, students become more aware of English word order.

The findings also demonstrate that students need contextualized grammar instruction. Teaching noun phrases through isolated exercises may not be sufficient. Students need opportunities to use noun phrases in actual writing tasks.

Writing activities can therefore be combined with grammar instruction. After learning a particular noun phrase structure, students can immediately apply it by writing sentences, developing paragraphs, and revising their own texts.

Although noun phrases can support writing development, students may still require continuous guidance. Errors involving determiners, plural nouns, adjective placement, and word order may continue to occur. Therefore, teachers should provide corrective feedback and repeated practice.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This qualitative study demonstrates the potential importance of noun phrases in developing students' English writing skills. Noun phrases allow students to add specific and meaningful information to their sentences and can help them move from simple sentence construction toward more detailed and complex writing.

The analysis of students' writing may show that students initially rely on simple noun phrases and experience difficulties with determiners, adjective placement, plural forms, and modifiers. Through explicit instruction, classroom practice, and writing activities, students can gradually become more familiar with noun phrase structures.

The use of noun phrases can contribute to several aspects of writing development, including grammatical awareness, vocabulary use, sentence construction, and the ability to develop ideas. Students may also become more confident when constructing English sentences because they have a clearer understanding of how words can be combined around nouns.

Therefore, noun phrase instruction should be integrated with writing activities rather than taught only as an isolated grammar topic. Teachers can introduce noun phrases through authentic texts, sentence-building exercises, paragraph writing, and revision activities.

Suggestions

For English Teachers

Teachers should integrate noun phrase instruction with writing activities. Students should be given sufficient opportunities to identify, construct, and apply noun phrases in meaningful contexts.

For Students

Students should practice identifying noun phrases in English texts and use them in their own sentences and paragraphs. Regular practice can help students improve grammatical accuracy and writing fluency.

For Schools

Schools should provide teachers and students with appropriate English learning resources, including reading materials and writing activities that support grammar and writing development.

For Future Researchers

Future researchers may conduct similar qualitative studies involving different types of noun phrases, different educational levels, or different genres of writing. Researchers may also investigate noun phrases in academic writing, descriptive texts, report texts, analytical exposition texts, or TOEFL-related writing.

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