

An Analysis of Using Prepositional Phrase in Students' Writing

Moh Yusril Jaya¹

Siska Bochari²

Hastini Hastini³

Ferry Rita⁴

¹²³⁴Universitas Tadulako, Palu-Indonesia

¹uciljaya04@gmail.com

Abstract

A prepositional phrase is a word group containing a preposition and its object, which functions to modify the object. This research focused on the prepositional phrase found in the written work of fifth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The goal of this study were to ascertain the functions of prepositional phrases within students' writings and determine the prevailing prepositional phrase type utilized by the students in their writing. This research used descriptive qualitative design. The subject of this research was 10% of total subject (about 19 students). The subject was chosen by using purposive sampling technique. The data of this research were the sentences contain prepositional phrase in students' writings. Based on the theory used, the researchers identified the functions of prepositional phrase in the data, and discovered the most dominant function of prepositional phrase. From the analysis, there are two functions of prepositional phrase found in the students' writings. They are complement and adjunct. If it is adjunct, it can be adjectival adjunct and adverbial adjunct. The most dominant function is complement which is 62%.

Keywords: *prepositional phrase, complement, adjunct*

Introduction

Language is a tool of communication that is as a system which means that formed by a number of components that are fixed and can be patterned (Moats, 2020). Each language has its own rules in linguistics, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Madani, Basri, Bochari and Hastini. 2022). Syntax is a branch of linguistics which discusses about sentence structure. In syntax, A prepositional phrase is a group of words comprising a preposition and its object, which serves to modify the object. A prepositional phrase modifies a verb or a noun. There are two functions of prepositional phrase. The first function is prepositional phrase as a complement. The second function is prepositional phrase as adjunct. The complement and adjunct positions often contain prepositional phrases that communicate obligatory and optional information, like where, when or why an event happens. We can find the complements and adjuncts in writing, for example the use of complement and adjunct in sentences. Writing ability is defined to initiate and evolve ideas and then use certain revising and editing practises to develop them to maturity in a given context (Iftanti, 2016).

This research aims at determining the use of prepositional phrase on students' writings. Prepositional phrases are one of the essential components of a sentence, as they help establish relationships between the subject, object, and verb, often providing additional information. (Putri et al., 2020). Prepositional phrases should generally be

placed near what they describe. Basically, it consists of preposition plus an NP. It is important to conduct because it can explain more about the positions of prepositional phrase in sentences. Sentence is a group of words that has at least one subject and one verb and has a complete idea (Bochari et al., 2019). The students must be familiar with essential phrases as part of their fundamental knowledge and skills because each sentence's structure relies on specific phrase categories. (Junaid, 2018). There are four English phrase levels. It is consisting of Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjective Phrase (AP), and Prepositional Phrase (PP). Thus, the terms NP, VP, AP, and PP are used to represent functions in a sentence Dahlan, (2014). For this research, it focused on the prepositional phrase which has two function such as complement and adjunct.

Complement

Complements are modifiers that are usually positioned near the head (though not always) and are either mandated or prohibited by specific lexical elements. According to Brinton L et al, (2010): The Prepositional Phrase can be either an obligatory complement of the verb. Miller, (2002) argues that complements "complete" the meaning of the verb, giving it both syntactic and semantic completion, while adjuncts simply provide additional information that could be dispensed with. (Basri et al., 2021) explain the position of complement that verbs are not the only categories that take complements. Prepositions also take complements. So in a phrase like in the kitchen, the kitchen is the complement of the preposition in. Certain adjectives also take complements for example fond in 'She is fond of music'. The PP 'of music' is the complement of the adjective fond. Without this PP the sentence is ungrammatical". According to Meyers et al., (1994) state that the verb has an argument theta roles: theme, source, goal, patient, recipient, experiencer, proposition, question, etc. It means the sentence consists of complement in form of prepositional phrase depends on on the verb, if the verb is dynamic, it should need argument.

Adjunct

The term "adjunct" is a concept in grammatical theory used to describe an optional or secondary element in sentence construction. Removing an adjunct does not alter the fundamental structure of the rest of the sentence. For instance, consider the sentence "She baked the cake with chocolate chips," where "with chocolate chips" is an adjunct. Removing it results in "She baked the cake," and the core structure remains unchanged. Other elements, such as vocatives and adjectives, have also been categorized as adjuncts in various grammatical descriptions. Many adjuncts can be viewed as modifiers that attach to the head of a phrase, just like adjectives and some adverbs Major & Crystal, (1992). In some sentences, you may find two or more prepositional phrases (PPs) that serve different functions, such as an adjectival adjunct PP and an adverbial adjunct PP.

a. Adverbial Adjunct

Adverbial adjunct is to modify the verb. According to Brinton L et al, (2010): adverbial adjunct is an optional modifier of the verb, here is the example of adverbial adjunct. The PP *at the monkey* modifies the V *laughed*. This adverbial adjunct carries information about "how" *the girl laughed*.

b. Adjectival Adjunct

Adjectival Adjunct is to modify noun. In the example *the box on the shelf in the room* both PP *on the shelf* and *in the room* are post modifier of the noun, then it can be called as adjectival adjuncts. Thus, Both PP modify the head box.

The researchers are interested in taking this topic because prepositional phrase can be a complement and adjunct, and the position of prepositional phrase can make some confusion for the students because of the multiple positions and the students did

not understanding in identifying the verb in the sentence. It is difficult to know the sentences containing complement and adjunct without know the function of the verb. This makes the researchers want to find out about the functions and the most dominant one of prepositional phrase made by the students.

There are some related studies that conducted previously to support this research. The first is a research was conducted by Nihayati (2020) The data are sentences which contain adverbials working as ideas, and they were taken from a brief story entitled A Story of Two Jackets. The second is the current research was conducted by Dewi (2020). The data were taken from a research entitled Investigation of Adjuncts Use in J. F. Kennedy's Speech for the Members of Congress and Diplomatic Corps of Latin America on 13 March 1961. The third is current research was conducted by Handayani et al., (2016). The data were taken from a research entitled Simple Prepositional Phrases Found in Business Articles of The Jakarta Post.

Those related studies share a common topic, which is the examination of the use of prepositional phrases in syntax studies. However, they vary in their specific focuses. The first study concentrated on the utilization of adjuncts in a story involving two jackets, while the second study examined the frequency of each adjunct used in a recording. In contrast, the third study delved into the syntactic functions of simple prepositional phrases found in business articles of the Jakarta Post. In the current research, the researchers centered their investigation on the analysis of prepositional phrase usage in written work created by fifth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University.

This research was conducted to identify functions of prepositional phrase occurring in the students' writing and to find out the the most prevalent functions of prepositional phrases used by the students in their writing. The researchers limited this study by investigating the use of prepositional phrase as complements and as adjuncts on the written work. The researchers formulated the research question as follows: what functions of prepositional phrase occur in the students' writings? Then what is the most dominant function of prepositional phrase students used in their writings?

Method

For this research, the researchers applied descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the use of prepositional phrase on the students' writings, and to discover the function of prepositional phrase and the most dominant function used in students' writing. Qualitative research provides a way to investigate and grasp the interpretations that individuals or groups assign to a social human issue. (Creswell, 2012). In addition, the purpose of this research is to describe, to identify, and to explain the problem descriptively under the research. The subject of this research was the fifth semester students of English Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The classes in the fifth semester of 2022 consist of six classes from class A to class F. The total of subject is 194 students. The way to choose the subject is from the total of subject X 10%. Thus, the numbers of the subject will be 19 students. In this research, the researchers used purposive sampling. According to Arikunto (2010:183), purposive sampling as the process of selecting a sample based not on the level or area but on a specific purpose. Gay (1987) also suggest that, for descriptive research, a minimum sample size of 10% of the total subjects is considered, and for studies with very few subjects per group, this rule still applies. In this case, some students from each class became the subject of this

research. For purposive sampling, the researchers chose the students who are willing and trusted can provide the correct data to achieve the objectives of this research.

Data collection method is the way that researchers do for collecting the data in the research. In collecting the data, each student was given an assignment by the researchers to make a composition based on the topic which is the use of prepositional phrase that has been discussed previously in their Syntax class. Then, the students writing the sentences, and submitted their writings to the researchers and it was accomplished as the final process of data collection.

Data analysis is the most important step of research findings. This is because data guided us towards scientific findings. The procedures of data analysis have some steps. The first is the researchers read the text. The second is the researchers identified the sentences containing prepositional phrase. The third is to classify the prepositional phrase based on the functions of prepositional phrase (to answer the first research question) and the last is to determine the most dominant functions of prepositional phrase (to answer the second research question).

Results

The data findings were obtained from the students' writings. In the research that has been carried out, 133 sentences were obtained from 7 categories of picture based on the appendix as the total data. Therefore, the researchers only used 80 sentences to be analyzed because the other sentences did not provide sentences that contained prepositional phrase. Sentences contain prepositional phrase are merely identified and discussed in this research. The analyzed data consist of 80 sentences from 7 picture categories obtained from the students' writings which consisted of prepositional phrase. These sentences were written by different students which are 19 students. To make the findings easy to understand, the researchers divided each category. Each item was identified related to the research question, such as the function of prepositional phrase and the function is dominant ones. This following table showed the recapitulation of the data:

Table 1. List of Category

Category	Total each prepositional phrase function		
	Complement	Adjunct	
		Adverbial Adjunct	Adjectival Adjunct
What do the girls buy?	-	10	-
What does the woman cook?	-	11	1
What does the person clean?	-	8	-
What do the boys put?	17	-	-
What do the people move?	10	-	-
What does she throw?	12	-	-
What does the speaker subject?	11	-	-
Total each function	50	29	1
Total functions		80	

Based on the data, it shows the result that consisting prepositional of phrase functions are complement and adjunct. To be easier in understanding the analyzed data, the researchers count it in form of percent. The way to count the result is that the total data of each function of prepositional phrase is divided by the total of data and it will be multiplied by 100. Here are the following pattern and the result:

$$x = \frac{\text{The total data of each function of prepositional phrase}}{\text{Total data (80)}} \times 100$$

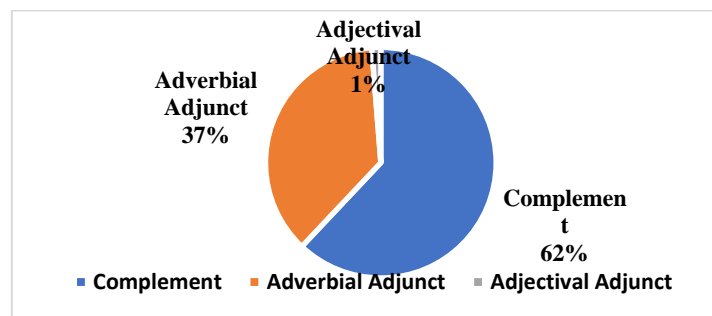


Chart 1. Percentage of each Prepositional Phrase Function

Discussion

In this part, the researchers discuss the results of this research. Prepositional phrases can function as adverbs and complements. If a prepositional phrase serves as an adverb, it can convey information related to time, place, manner, reason, degree, or frequency. When it is adverb of place in form of prepositional phrase, it can be complement and adjunct, if it is complement, it depends on the verb and the object, In their work study, Brown and Miller (1991) points out that adverbials of place and time are typically categorized as sentence modifiers. On the other hand According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2002), adverbials are considered optional elements in sentence structure. However, certain elements conveying the same information as adverbials are necessary for the verb to be complete. In contrast, other adverbs in the form of prepositional phrases are consistently classified as adjuncts because they primarily serve as modifiers. but the other adverbs in form of prepositional phrase are always adjunct because it is only modifier. Basri et al (2021) state that there are two functions of prepositional phrase The first function is complement, and the second is adjunct. If it is adjunct, it can be adjectival adjunct and adverbial adjunct. Nelson et al. (2002) also support this result that prepositions have head PPs which are specified as obligatory and optional. These functions of prepositional phrase are sentences consisting of the phrase structure. Then, the researchers found the sentences that functions of prepositional phrase.

In the chart above, we can see that there are two functions of prepositional phrase found from students' writings which are complement and adjunct. The first is complement. There are 50 sentences of 80 sentences containing complement. Thus, the total data show that 62% of the students used complement in their writing. Although the complement became the dominant function in students' writing, there were some students who did not know what complement is and how important the complement is in the sentence. There were only 50 of 76 sentences produced by the students consisting of complement. The rest was 26 sentences which did not have complement showing that their understanding of complement is less. Thus, some students did not know to identify the verb in the sentences because if the verb is dynamic and the object does movement, it must need argument as location in form of prepositional phrase.

The second is adjunct. There are 30 sentences of 80 sentences that is consisting of adjunct. If it is adjunct, it can be adjectival adjunct and adverbial adjunct. Based on the chart above, the data show the dominant function students used is complement which is 62%. Basri et al (2021) state a complement is required (i.e obligatory). If it is a complement, it needs argument. The number of argument of the sentence depends on the verb. The other reason why it is complement because they know the complements

cannot be omitted from the sentences. If it is omitted, the sentences will be incomplete meaning.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, function of prepositional phrase can be adverb and complement, if it is adverb it can be showing time, place, manner, reason, degree, and frequency. When it is adverb to showing place in form of prepositional phrase can be complement and adjunct, but the other adverbs in form of prepositional phrase are always adjunct because it is only modifier in the sentence. There are 2 functions of prepositional phrase which occurs in students' writings. They are complement and adjunct, and if it is adjunct, it can be adjectival adjunct and adverbial adjunct. Then, the most dominant function of prepositional phrase students used in their writing is complement. After conducting this research, the researchers would like to provide some suggestions, especially to English teachers/lecturers, students, and next researchers. As we know, prepositional phrase is one of the elements in making sentence. First, to English teachers/lecturers, especially in the grammar field, this research provides data that can be used for teaching activity, especially in discussing prepositional phrase and its functions or roles in sentence. Thus, it can be used as reference for learning. To writing teachers/lecturers, they can use this study to know the functions and the role of prepositional phrase in the sentence, thus, they can teach and deepen grammar knowledge of the students. Second, to students, it is still not easy to use the function of prepositional phrase in a sentence. It depends on our grammar knowledge. This research provides data that can be used for learning, especially for using prepositional phrase in sentence. In writing, they must have good knowledge of grammar or sentence structure. Third, to next researchers who want to conduct research in the same field, especially prepositional phrase, maybe they can analyze the use of prepositional phrase function as adverb. They also can use other objects, like student textbooks or writing results from their assignments. In addition, the next researchers should take data repeatedly, so they can obtain a lot of data to be analyzed.

References

- Arikunto, S. (2010). *Dasar-Dasar Evaluasi Pendidikan*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Ba'dulu A.M. (2008). *English Syntax*. Makassar: Online Public Access Catalog.
- Basri, H., Bochari, S., & Hastini. (2021). *Understanding English Syntax (Pertama)*. Palu: Untad Press.
- Bochari, S., Basri, H., & Arid, M. (2019). *The Student's Error in Forming Nominal Clause in Complex Sentence*. Palu: *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 7(2), 1–13.
- Brinton, Laurel J. & Donna M. Brinton. 2010. *The linguistic structure of Modern English, 2nd edn*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Brown, K., & Miller, J. (1991). *Syntax: A Linguistic Introduction to Sentence Structure (2nd Edition)*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (Third Edit)*. Lincoln: SAGE.
- Sarage, J. (2014). The Relationship between Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase. *ADJES (Ahmad Dahlan Journal of English Studies)*, 1(1–2), 49–58.
<http://journal.uad.ac.id/index.php/ADJES/article/view/1687>
- Gay, L.R. & Airasian P. (1987). *Educational Research*. Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.

- Greenbaum, S. & Nelson, G. 2002. *An Introduction to English Grammar. Second Edition*. London: Pearson Education Limited
- Handayani, F., Widiastuti, M. A. N., & Sadia, I. G. (2016). Simple Prepositional Phrases Found in Business Articles of the Jakarta Post. *HUMANIST (Journal of Arts and Humanities)*, 51–57. <https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/sastra/article/view/28944>.
- Iftanti, E. (2016). Improving Students' Writing Skills through Writing Journal Articles. *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia*, 8(1), 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.21274/lis.2016.8.1.1-14>
- Juliarta, I. M. (2020). Verb Phrase and Its Translations Found in the Novel "Budha, a Story of Enlightenment." *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 8(2), 505–518.
<https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v8i2.1520>
- Junaid. (2018). A Syntactic Analysis of the English Noun Phrase (A Study at the Fifth Semester of English Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Muhammadiyah Makassar). *Perspektif: Jurnal Pengembangan Sumber Daya Insani*, 3(1), 317–326. www.jurnal.unismuh.ac.id/perspektif
- Madani, M., Basri, H., Bochari, S., & Hastini (2022). Tipe Ambiguitas Struktural pada Tulisan Mahasiswa Semester IV Universitas Tadulako. *Jurnal Kreatif*, 10(2), 20–31.
<https://jurnal.fkip.untad.ac.id/index.php/jko/article/view/2278>
- Major, R. C., & Crystal, D. (1992). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. In *The Modern Language Journal* (Vol. 76, Issue 3). <https://doi.org/10.2307/330198>
- Meyers, A. (1994). *Standardization of the Complement Adjunct Distinction*. c, 141–150. New York: University of New York
- Miller, J. (2002). *An Introduction to English Syntax*. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Moats, L. C. (2020). *Speech to Print Language Essentials for Teachers*. 1–11. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company
- Nihayati, A. (2020). Types and Meanings of Adjuncts in Short Story a Tale of Two Jackets. December, 17–18. *UHAMKA International Conference on ELT and CALL (UICELL)* <https://journal.uhamka.ac.id/index.php/uicell/article/view/6367>
- Nelson, Gerald. 2002. *Exploring Natural Language: Working with the British Component of the International Corpus of English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Putri, Y. E., Syarif, H., & Refnaldi. (2020). An Analysis of Prepositional Phrase Used in Thesis at Graduate Program of Universitas Negeri Padang. 463, 241–247. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Languages and Arts (ICLA-2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200819.048>