

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Thesis is the final requirement for undergraduate students who want to finish their study. Every student must write a thesis to complete their study. Neufville & Field (2010) stated that a thesis is “a proposition that a person advances and offers to maintain by argument.” The definition of thesis above has three core elements. First, a thesis is a proposition and as a proposition it advances an idea or a hypothesis about something new. Second, a thesis offers an argument. The arguments come to strengthen the idea of the proposition of thesis. They present a rationale for accepting the preposition made, rather than simply asserting point of view. Third, the arguments of the thesis should be maintained. They should be made convincingly by appropriate logic and sufficient evidence.

The higher academic level of a writer affects the complexity of the produced writing. Parkinson and Musgrave (2013) say that academic writing becomes increasingly complex as the writers advances in their studies. Thesis, as it is written by university level students which must contain the three core elements that have been explained by Neufville & Field, is surely considered as a complex academic writing. Complex writing surely is formed by the complex aspects of writing

including grammatically and semantically. One of the language aspects that is very important in writing is noun phrases. "Noun phrases are crucial parts of natural language" (Vadas, 2009). The use of noun phrases in academic writing is significantly important because it plays an important thematic role and also has the highest frequency in a text. Not only the crucial and important part of language, but noun phrases are also the most common terms that can be found in academic writing because noun phrases can be placed and used as the subjects or objects in a sentence. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) add that that noun phrases may function as the subject or as an object in a sentence. Because of this flexibility of noun phrases, it is frequently found in any texts, paragraphs, or even sentences including thesis.

Compared to the other phrases, noun phrases are more frequent to be found (in texts) than the other type of phrases. In prepositional phrases, the importance of noun phrases is shown by the structures which always contain noun phrases in its structure: P NP or P P NP or even P P P NP (Brinton, 2010). While in other phrases, like adjective phrases, adverb phrases and verb phrases, they are not able to stand alone in a sentence. They need to be strictly followed by noun phrases to form an independent sentence:

1. Very loud → Adjective Phrase
2. Very quickly → Adverb Phrase
3. Make the dog angry → Verb Phrase

The example above shows that the adjective phrase, adverb phrase, and verb phrase cannot stand alone in a sentence and they need to be accompanied by noun phrase to form a sentence.

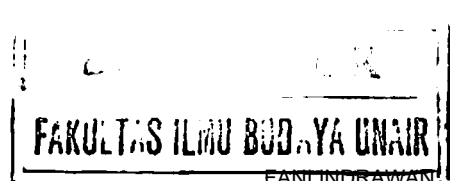
English language has a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure rule. To make a sentence, a writer should follow this rule. University students should be able to write a complete sentence to form an academic writing. However, many incomplete sentences are still found in their academic writing. The SVO structure rule makes noun phrases play an important role in sentences (as what have been explained by Fromkin et al (2011)) that noun phrases may function as a subject and an object of a sentence. For university students, “the ability to pack meaning into the noun phrase becomes increasingly important” (Parkinson and Musgrave, 2013). In a special case of two different field of studies, linguistics and literature theses, noun phrases will also be frequently found in the texts because of the reasons (that have been explained before). The issue about the difficulty of writing noun phrases has made the students confused to write the correct noun phrases. Starting from the title of theses, it must contain at least a noun phrase to make a good and correct title. Considering this reason, a good understanding of the structure of noun phrases and the ability to choose the most suitable type of noun phrases are needed to write a good title. As part of complex academic writing, thesis contains a lot of noun phrases in the body which form it to become the whole thesis.

Research about noun phrases has been conducted by some researchers. Research that is similar to the present study is conducted by Zabala (2004) who investigated the structural and discourse properties of complex noun phrases in ESL narratives made by Japanese and Korean native speakers. However the previous research is limited to focus on the structural and discourse properties of the texts produced by the users of English as the second language. Moreover the previous research neglects to consider the interesting issue of analyzing the differences between narratives texts made by Japanese and Korean native speakers. The next similar research was conducted by Parkinson & Musgrave (2013). They compared the writing of the international students in an English language course (the EAP group) with that of international students at a more advance level of proficiency, those who had already achieved the goal of enrolment in graduate studies. They focused on measuring the use of nominal modifiers in two sets of learner writing. No studies has ever been conducted to find out the noun phrases contained in thesis before which make the findings will surely gain new interesting knowledge. In addition, the present research is analyzing two sets of writing in the same level but having different field of studies.

The data that are analyzed in this research is linguistics and literature theses done by the English Department students in Universitas Airlangga. Having the same level, this subject separation of linguistics and literature has led to the differentiation of theoretical and applied learning process. English Department students do not only

study the English language, but they also study the development of the English literature, culture, even the historical background of the English. Linguistics is a specific subject that concerns the language itself, whereas literature is another major which concerns literature work produced in English. The theses made by the English Department students from the two studies are different based on fields and subjects belong to those particular subjects. Since the subject and field are different, students will gain different background of knowledge. "Knowledge refers to all types of understanding gained through experience or study, whether indigenous, scientific, scholarly, or otherwise nonacademic" (Hess & Ostrom, 2007). From Hess and Ostrom definition of knowledge, students who study linguistic and literature through experience, the students of each group will gain different specific knowledge based on the focus of their study.

In the explanation above, it is explained that sentences have the form of Subject-Verb-Object. In specific way, sentences is formed by noun phrases and followed by verb phrases which is shown by the structure that is propose by Brinton (2010): $S \rightarrow NP + VP$. The noun phrases are the main element of the sentences which must be contained in the structures. the importance of noun phrases is also found in the abstracts. Abstract is a summary of the contents of book, article, or speech (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2014). As the summary of the contents, abstracts contain the most important information of the whole content of the paper. Luhn (1958) adds that the objective of the abstracts is to save a prospective reader time and



effort in finding useful information in a given article or report. In the present research, the data are the abstracts of the undergraduate theses which also have the characteristics of containing the contents of the whole thesis (as what have been explained above). Having those objective, abstracts need to be written appropriately to provide clear information of the paper. The noun phrases which is contained in the sentences of the abstracts need to be written clearly to give clear information and avoid ambiguity of the contents.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulates the problems as follows:

1. What type of noun phrases are used in the abstracts of 30 linguistic undergraduate theses?
2. What type of noun phrases are used in the abstracts of 30 literature undergraduate theses?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the problems above, the writer formulates the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To find what type of noun phrases used in the abstracts of 30 linguistic undergraduate theses.

2. To find what type of noun phrases used in the abstracts of 30 literature undergraduate theses.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Due to the phenomena of separating the English major at the English Department, Universitas Airlangga, this study is conducted to analyze the thesis produced by students of these two different fields of studies in one major. This study is also expected to give both theoretical and practical contributions. In terms of theoretical contribution, the writer will expand the knowledge on language and its structure, specifically in analyzing noun phrase in undergraduate theses or other text sources.

After conducting this study, the results will show how noun phrases in each text are being written and carefully chosen based on the specific text and its content. In terms of practical contribution, the writer hopes that this study will inform and help to find out about the frequent type of noun phrases used in different theses which is influenced by different field of study and background of knowledge. The contribution of the present research will give specific information of which noun phrases is the most understandable by university students by categorizing the frequent noun phrases they use in the theses. Having understanding the common noun phrase in previous theses, the next researchers who want to write their theses will be helped to write the proper noun phrase regarding to its structure. In addition, the results of

this research can show the typical usage of noun phrases that is used in the abstracts to provide clear information about the contents which can be used and applied in students' theses.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on the use of noun phrases in linguistics and literature abstracts. The analysis of this study only analyzes the noun phrases that are contained in the abstracts of linguistics and literature undergraduate theses. The numbers of theses abstracts that is analyzed in this study is limited only 60 abstracts with the comparison of 30 linguistics abstracts and 30 literature abstracts. In addition, this study only chooses the theses that get A or at least AB score. Since this study only focuses on the use of noun phrases in undergraduate theses, the results of this study may not be applicable in other phrases and in other kind of academic writing.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- a. **Syntax:** Part of grammar that represents a speaker's knowledge of sentences and their structures (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011).
- b. **Phrases:** Sequences of words – or a single word – having syntactic significance: that is, they form a constituent (Brinton, 2010)
- c. **Noun Phrases:** Noun phrase is grammatical whole constituted by juxtaposing a substantive as the main word alongside subordinate words (Hirtle, 2009)

- d. **Thesis: A statement or theory that is put forward as a premise to be maintained or proved (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2014)**

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW