



Advanced ENGLISH GRAMMAR



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- c. All creations and/or related rights products and users of creations and/or related rights products of non-Indonesian citizens, non-residents of Indonesia, and non-Indonesian legal entities, subject to the following provisions:
 1. their country has a bilateral agreement with the Republic of Indonesia regarding the protection of Copyright and Related Rights; or
 2. their country and the Republic of Indonesia are parties or participants in the same multilateral agreement regarding the protection of Copyright and Related Rights.

CHAPTER XVII CRIMINAL PROVISIONS

Article 112

Any person who, without authorization, commits the acts referred to in Article 7 paragraph (3) and/or Article 52 for commercial use shall be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 2 (two) years and/or a maximum fine of IDR 300,000,000 (three hundred million rupiahs).

Article 113

- (1) Any person who, without authorization, infringes economic rights as referred to in Article 9 paragraph (1) letter i for commercial use shall be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 1 (one) year and/or a maximum fine of IDR 100,000,000 (one hundred million rupiahs).
- (2) Any person who, without authorization and/or without the permission of the creator or copyright holder, infringes the economic rights of the creator as referred to in Article 9 paragraph (1) letters c, d, f, and/or h for commercial use shall be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 3 (three) years and/or a maximum fine of IDR 500,000,000 (five hundred million rupiahs).
- (3) Any person who, without authorization and/or without the permission of the creator or copyright holder, infringes the economic rights of the creator as referred to in Article 9 paragraph (1) letters a, b, e, and/or g for commercial use shall be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 4 (four) years and/or a maximum fine of IDR 1,000,000,000 (one billion rupiahs).

Any person who fulfills the elements referred to in paragraph (3) and commits the act in the form of piracy shall be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 10 (ten) years and/or a maximum fine of IDR 4,000,000,000 (four billion rupiah)

PREFACE

This book, *Advanced English Grammar*, is designed to address the needs of advanced learners of English, particularly university students, educators, and language professionals seeking a deeper, more functional understanding of English grammatical structures. Unlike introductory grammar books that emphasize rules in isolation, this volume approaches grammar as a dynamic system that operates within discourse, argumentation, and academic communication. The primary aim of this book is to bridge the gap between grammatical form and communicative function. Grammar is not presented merely as a set of prescriptive rules, but as a resource for meaning-making, enabling users of English to construct precise, coherent, and rhetorically effective texts. For this reason, the discussions in this book integrate insights from modern grammatical theory, discourse analysis, and academic writing practices.

Each chapter focuses on grammatical phenomena that are central to advanced proficiency, such as adverbials, information structure, conditional and hypothetical constructions, and their roles in organizing ideas, expressing stance, and developing arguments. The explanations are supported by authentic examples, analytical discussion, and pedagogically oriented exercises that encourage critical thinking rather than mechanical memorization. This book is intended for use in advanced grammar courses, applied linguistics programs, teacher education, and independent study. It is also expected to serve as a reference for readers who wish to refine their grammatical awareness for academic writing and professional communication. Throughout the book, attention is given to how grammatical choices reflect levels of certainty, emphasis, and perspective—elements essential to scholarly discourse.

The author hopes that *Advanced English Grammar* will help readers move beyond surface-level accuracy toward a more reflective and purposeful use of English. By understanding grammar as a functional, context-dependent system, learners are better equipped to participate effectively in academic and global communication.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION TO ADVANCED GRAMMAR STUDIES

Chapter Outline:

1. From Basic to Advanced Grammar
2. Prescriptive and Descriptive Approaches to Grammar
3. Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Approaches
4. Grammar as a System
5. Component of the Grammar System
6. Developing Critical Thinking about Grammar
7. The Role of Advanced Grammar in English Studies
8. Common Misconceptions about Advanced Grammar

Learning outcome:

- Readers are able to identify differences between basic and advanced grammar and explain the scope of advanced grammar.
- Readers are able to analyze the differences between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to grammar.
- Readers are able to develop critical thinking about grammar as a system, not just rules.
- Readers are able to incorporate advanced grammatical competence in English studies.

Chapter 1. Introduction to Advanced Grammar Studies

Grammar is generally known as a set of rules that governs the way words are structured and arranged to form a correct, meaningful sentence. It is an essential part of a language, as it helps people communicate properly and be understood by others. Grammar

learning in English traditionally begins with foundational structures and gradually progresses toward more advanced and complex uses of language. This chapter discusses the scope and significance of advanced grammar, as well as its role in academic discourse and language teaching.

1.1. From Basic to Advanced Grammar

The grammar learning processes begin at the basic level, which forms the core system of rules. This level typically includes essential components such as parts of speech, simple verb tenses, basic sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, articles, and common prepositions (Ur, 2012). In language-learning curricula, these elements are usually introduced at the beginner and lower-intermediate levels to provide learners with a practical toolkit for constructing accurate sentences in everyday communication contexts.

Instruction in basic grammar emphasizes the correct forms of linguistic units with grammatical accuracy as the primary goal. The analysis focuses on the level of individual sentences rather than on extended discourse. Learners practice combining morphemes, words, and phrases in structurally acceptable ways to meet target language norms. Errors are typically treated as deviations from prescriptive norms that should be corrected in controlled exercises.

Meanwhile, advanced grammar extends beyond basic rules to encompass complex structures and functions that enable nuanced, context-sensitive language use. It examines how grammatical patterns contribute to meaning, coherence, and rhetorical effect across texts and interactions. At this level, grammar is seen as an integral component of meaning-making rather than an isolated set of forms.

Language learners explore multi-clause structures, modality, voice, cohesion devices, and register variation.

Advanced grammar deals with structures that are syntactically richer and more elaborate than those in basic grammar. Moving from parts of speech and simple sentences to complex structures such as subordinate clauses, conditionals, and passive constructions. It is not just about correctness. It is about how attitudes signal pragmatic functions. Grammar at this level is viewed as a means to convey meaning. It analyzes how particular structures function in different communicative contexts to perform rhetorical or interpersonal roles. Rather than focusing only on isolated sentences, advanced grammar examines how grammatical devices contribute to cohesion and coherence across larger stretches of text and interaction.

One of the defining features of advanced grammar is its focus beyond isolated sentence structures. While basic grammar focuses on simple and compound sentences, advanced grammar examines the relationships between clauses. These complex constructions allow language users to express logical relations in more sophisticated ways (Biber et al., 2021). This grammar level bridges sentence grammar and text grammar, allowing learners to understand how meaning develops across longer stretches of language.

Advanced grammar examines the relationship between structures and their meaning (semantics) and their use (pragmatics). A particular sentence structure can convey different meanings depending on the context, intention, and interactional setting. For example, tense and modality choices may signal certainty, politeness, distance, or stance rather than merely time reference (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016). From a pragmatic perspective, grammar shapes

communicative functions such as requesting, persuading, and hedging, which can be fully understood only by considering the social and situational context in which the language is used.

Another essential scope of advanced grammar is its attention to variation. Grammatical patterns differ across genres (e.g., academic writing, narratives, legal texts), registers (formal vs. informal), and modes (spoken vs. written language). For instance, academic texts often favor nominalization, passive constructions, and dense clause structures, whereas spoken discourse relies more on coordination and interpersonal markers (Biber et al., 2021). Understanding such variation enables learners to make conscious grammatical choices that align with the communicative purposes and genre expectations.

Advanced grammar recognizes grammar as a dynamic and evolving system rather than a fixed body of rules. Grammatical usage changes over time in response to social, cultural, and technological developments. Contemporary English, for example, shows shifts in modality use, pronoun reference, and clause simplification in digital communication contexts (Leech et al., 2009). From this perspective, variation and change are not viewed as deficiencies but as natural features of language use.

1.2. Prescriptive and Descriptive Approaches to Grammar

Prescriptive grammar represents one of the earliest and most influential approaches to the study of grammar. It has played a predominant role in formal education, standardization, and language policy. This is an approach to grammar that sets norms and guidelines for proper language usage. Rather than describing how speakers use

language, prescriptive grammar focuses on how language should be used, particularly in formal and written contexts (Crystal, 2018).

Historically, prescriptive grammar emerged in the 18th century, influenced by classical Latin grammar and the desire to standardize the English language. Latin was viewed as a prestigious and logically structured language. Thus, early grammarians such as Robert Lowth sought to codify English by imposing rules modeled on Latin (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005). This period marked the rise of grammar books that aimed to “fix” the language and prevent perceived decline or misuse.

Prescriptive grammar is characterized by a set of explicit rules and conventions that define standard language usage. These rules often prioritize consistency, clarity, and formality and are closely associated with Standard English. Traditional norms typically emphasize correctness in areas such as tense agreement, pronoun usage, sentence structure, and punctuation. Prescriptive grammar has had a lasting influence on how English is taught and assessed, particularly in academic and professional settings (Trask, 1999) due to its extensive applications in education systems, style guides, and examinations.

Common examples of prescriptive grammatical guidelines include rules such as “Do not end a sentence with a preposition,” “Do not split infinitives,” “Use *whom* as the object form of *who*,” and “Avoid double negatives.” While these rules are widely taught, many of them do not accurately reflect the actual language use of native speakers. Even native speakers often violate these rules in natural spoken and written discourse. Linguists have demonstrated that such

prescriptions are based less on empirical data and more on tradition and stylistic preference.

One of the main strengths of prescriptive grammar is its role in standardization. It provides clear guidelines that are useful for formal writing, academic communication, and contexts where consistency and shared norms are necessary. For language learners, especially in EFL contexts, prescriptive rules can offer a clear starting point for understanding acceptable forms in standardized English.

However, this grammar approach also has notable limitations. It often ignores language variation and change. This way, it marginalizes non-standard dialects and authentic language use. By showing grammar as a fixed set of rules, it may limit learners' understanding of how language functions in real communications. In modern linguistics, prescriptive grammar is seen as insufficient on its own and is increasingly complemented by descriptive and functional approaches (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016).

Descriptive grammar, on the other hand, is a central approach in modern linguistics that seeks to explain how language is actually used by speakers and writers in actual communications. Its primary objective is to record how language works rather than to prescribe how it should work. It aims to observe, analyze, and account for naturally occurring language patterns. Huddleston and Pullum (2005) state that this approach is grounded in modern linguistic theory, which emphasizes empirical observation and data-driven analysis.

The development of descriptive grammar gained momentum in the 20th century alongside the rise of linguistics as a scientific discipline. Linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure promoted the idea that language should be studied as a system shaped by use, variation,

and social context. This approach rejects the notion of fixed rules in grammar and instead recognizes it as flexible and adaptive (Crystal, 2018). It sees grammar as a part of broader communicative behavior.

Descriptive approach relies on authentic language data from spoken interaction, written texts, and digital communication. Linguists analyze big collections of language from natural communications to identify recurring patterns, frequencies, and variations across contexts and speaker groups (Biber et al., 2021). Descriptive grammar examines how grammatical choices reflect meaning instead of merely labelling forms as correct or incorrect. For example, it analyzes how tense or modality are used to express stance or interpersonal relations.

Research on descriptive grammar typically seeks to answer questions related to spoken and written discourse in its natural environment, taking into account semantic and pragmatic factors. One example of a descriptive grammar observation is that split infinitives are used in both spoken and written English and do not hinder comprehension. Such observation demonstrates that forms traditionally considered incorrect from a prescriptive are, in fact, meaningful features of language use. Therefore, descriptive grammar provides a more accurate account of how English is used in everyday communication.

One of the major strengths of descriptive grammar is its empirical and inclusive nature. It acknowledges diversity in linguistics and does not favor a single standard variety. In language teaching and applied linguistics, descriptive grammar contributes to a more realistic understanding of the authentic input. It supports pedagogical approaches that emphasize meaning, use, and context rather than

strict rule memorization. Consequently, this approach plays a crucial role in contemporary views of grammar as a dynamic system shaped by social interaction and communicative needs (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016).

1.3. Comparing Prescriptive and Descriptive Approaches

The primary distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar lies in their orientation toward language norms and usage. While prescriptive grammar underscores rules and standard accuracy, descriptive grammar focuses on observing and explaining actual language use. The main goal of prescriptive grammar is to maintain consistency, clarity, and social acceptability in formal communication (Crystal, 2018). On the other hand, descriptive grammar aims to describe how language is actually used by speakers and writers across different contexts. It prioritizes observation and function, viewing variations as a natural feature of language (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005).

Despite their differences, the two approaches overlap in some areas. Both aim to provide frameworks for understanding language structure. Although they have different goals, they identify recurrent patterns in language and try to explain regularities in their area of focus. However, they treat variations and changes differently. Prescriptive grammar promotes a single standard form, whereas descriptive grammar looks at variation as evidence of linguistic diversity and contextual adaptation. Additionally, according to Biber et al. (2021), unlike prescriptive rules, which are often static and tradition-based, descriptive rules are dynamic and data-driven.

In advanced grammar, relying solely on either approach is insufficient. Learners need prescriptive grammar that provides them with an understanding of standard systems required in academic, professional, and institutional contexts. At the same time, they need descriptive grammar to equip them with insights into authentic usage, which is crucial for interpreting and producing language that is contextually appropriate and pragmatically effective. This balanced approach enables learners to critically evaluate grammatical choices rather than merely following or rejecting rules (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016).

For English language learners, especially in EFL contexts, understanding both approaches raises grammatical awareness. Learners gain the ability to distinguish between forms that are academically and formally expected and forms that are commonly used in everyday communication. Focusing on and mastering only one approach might bring disadvantages to them. Understanding only prescriptive grammar may limit communicative competence, while knowing only the descriptive approach may leave them unprepared for standardized assessment and formal writing. Hence, effective grammar instruction involves strategic integration of prescriptive rules should be taught alongside descriptive explanations of usage, variation, and context.

1.4. Grammar as a System

Grammar is often perceived by learners as a rigid collection of rules that must be memorized and followed. One reason grammar is commonly misunderstood as a fixed collection of regulations is due to traditional language teaching practices. Grammar instruction has

historically emphasized rule memorization and error correction exercises. Thornbury (1999) argues that such practices encourage learners to see grammar as prescriptive and inflexible rather than as a resource of communication.

Another contributing factor is the dominance of standardized assessments. These assessments often prioritize correctness over appropriateness. In these contexts, grammar is reduced to separate items that can be tested, thereby strengthening the idea that grammar consists of isolated rules instead of flexible patterns of use (Ellis, 2006). In contrast, in advanced grammar, grammar is viewed as a system of interrelated choices used by speakers and writers to create meaning in context.

Viewing grammar as a system means recognizing that grammatical elements do not function independently but are interconnected and equally significant. Choices in tense, aspect, voice, or clause structure affect how information is organized and interpreted within a text. From a systemic perspective, grammar provides language users with options to select from based on their communicative goals and contextual restrictions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). For example, the choice between active and passive voice can only be understood by considering information structure, emphasis, and audience expectations. It shows that grammar functions as an integrated system, rather than merely as a collection of independent rules.

A key principle of grammar as a system is the inseparability of form, meaning, and function. Grammatical forms encode meanings, and these meanings serve specific communicative functions within particular contexts. Advanced grammar studies emphasize that

focusing on form alone provides an incomplete picture of grammatical competence (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016). For instance, tense forms do not merely indicate time but also express stance, certainty, and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, clause types such as declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives function differently depending on the context, the speaker intention, and social norms.

1.5. Components of the Grammar System

Grammar is not limited to sentence structure alone. Instead, it encompasses multiple levels of linguistic organization that work together in communication. Understanding grammar as a system requires recognizing its major components and how they interact to produce meaning. The first linguistic component is syntax. It refers to the principles and patterns governing how words are arranged to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax deals with word order, agreement, constituency, and hierarchical relationships within sentence structure.

In advanced grammar, syntax extends beyond simple sentence patterns to include complex constructions such as subordination, coordination, embedding, and clause connection. Syntax functions not only as a formal mechanism but as a resource for organizing meaning within texts (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005). Syntactic choices influence how information is structured and interpreted. For instance, changing word order or choosing between active and passive constructions affects emphasis and information flow.

The next component is morphology, which deals with word formation. Morphology concerns the internal structure of words and the processes by which words are formed. In advanced grammar,

morphology is closely linked to syntax and meaning. Grammatical choices at the morphological level can signal subtle distinctions in time, aspect, or stance. For example, the use of derivational forms such as nominalization often adds to the density and formality of academic discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Another linguistic component is semantics, which deals with meaning as encoded in grammatical structures and lexical choices. From a grammatical perspective, semantics examines how structures such as tense, aspect, modality, and clause relation express logical and interpersonal meanings. Advanced grammar emphasizes that meaning is not carried by words alone but is distributed across grammatical patterns. According to Lyons (1995), Understanding grammatical semantics allows learners to interpret how meaning is constructed systematically.

The next component is pragmatic, which focuses on how meaning is shaped by context, speaker, intention, and social interaction. While semantics concerns what structures mean in general, pragmatics examines how those meanings are negotiated and interpreted in specific situations. In grammar studies, pragmatics explains why the same grammatical structure may perform different functions depending on context, such as an interrogative sentence may function as either a request or a question. In relation to contexts, advanced grammar integrates pragmatic analysis to justify appropriateness, politeness, and communicative effect (Yule, 2020).

Lastly, the biggest linguistic component is discourse. Discourse analysis examines how grammar functions beyond individual sentences to create cohesive and coherent texts. At this level, grammatical choices contribute to reference, information flow,

thematic development, and rhetorical structure across stretches of language. Grammar is a dynamic system, viewed as a tool for constructing meaning across texts and interactions (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Devices such as reference, conjunction, and clause sequencing allow ideas to be connected and developed logically, which is the focus of analysis in discourse level.

1.6. Developing Critical Thinking about Grammar

Acquiring complex structures is just one aspect of an advanced grammar study. It also involves developing critical thinking about grammatical knowledge and its use. Instead of accepting rules as permanent, learners are encouraged to question, analyze, and evaluate grammatical choices in relation to context, purpose, and audience.

Many rules in traditional grammar instruction are context-dependent. However, advanced grammar persuades learners to ask why a rule exists, where it comes from, and under what conditions it applies. Crystal (2018) believes that this analytical approach enables learners to see grammar as a set of evolving conventions rather than fixed laws and to understand that rules may change over time or differ across varieties of English.

Critical thinking about grammar also involves recognizing and respecting linguistic variation. English exists in multiple forms, including regional, social, and institutional varieties, each with its own grammatical patterns. Developing tolerance toward variation helps learners avoid associating grammatical differences with error. In advanced grammar studies, learners are guided to distinguish

between non-standard forms, informal use, and contextually inappropriate choices.

An essential part of critical grammar awareness is the ability to evaluate grammatical choices based on communicative purpose, audience, and context. Advanced grammar views grammatical forms as options that serve different rhetorical and interpersonal functions. For example, passive forms are generally preferred over active forms in academic writing, whereas active structures may be more effective in narrative or persuasive contexts compared to passives (Biber et al., 2021).

Critical thinking about grammar is fostered through analytical and reflective learning practices. Instead of memorizing rules, learners analyze authentic texts, compare alternative grammatical choices, and reflect on how those choices shape meaning and interaction. Such practices align with learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches to language education (Ellis, 2006).

1.7. The Role of Advanced Grammar in English Studies

Advanced grammar plays a crucial role in English studies by allowing language users to move beyond basic accuracy to precision, appropriateness, and effectiveness in communication. It equips learners, professionals, and researchers with the ability to make informed grammatical choices that align with purpose, audience, and context. In academic writing, advanced grammar is essential for constructing complex arguments, presenting nuanced ideas, and maintaining coherence across texts.

As Hyland (2009) states, academic discourse often requires complex grammatical resources, such as nominalization, hedging, and

cohesive devices, to express relationships between ideas and to position the writer properly within scholarly discourse. With advanced grammatical competence, writers can manage information flow, signal stance, and achieve an appropriate level of formality. Simultaneously, without advanced grammar, writers may produce grammatically correct but rhetorically weak texts that lack clarity or academic credibility (Biber et al., 2021).

Advanced grammar is equally important in professional and public communication. Fields such as law, business, government, and media require precise and context-sensitive language use to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation. Professionals can utilize advanced grammar to tailor their language to different audiences, purposes, and communicative settings. In public communication, grammatical choices contribute to tone, authority, and persuasiveness. Comprehension of advanced grammar helps language users to adjust their communication strategies for effective and appropriate communication in diverse contexts.

Furthermore, in EFL contexts, advanced grammatical knowledge is fundamental to language teaching and linguistic research. It supports effective classroom instruction, error analysis, and material development. Teachers with strong grammatical awareness are better equipped to explain not only how structures work, but why certain forms are preferred in particular contexts (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2016). In research, advanced grammar provides analytical tools for research in areas such as discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and sociolinguistics.

1.8. Common Misconception about Advanced Grammar

Despite its central role in English studies, advanced grammar is often misunderstood by students and some educators. A common misconception is that advanced grammar is relevant only to linguists or language specialists. Advanced grammatical knowledge is essential for academic writers, teachers, professionals, and advanced learners who need to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively. In fact, advanced grammar equips learners with tools to interpret and produce texts across disciplines and contexts.

Another misconception is that grammar consists of fixed rules that remain unchanged over time. Crystal (2018) notes that linguistic research has shown that grammatical patterns evolve in response to communicative needs and sociocultural developments. From a modern linguistic perspective, grammar is a dynamic system shaped by usage, social interaction, and historical change. Advanced grammar exposes learners to variation across registers, genres, and varieties of English. It helps them understand that grammatical norms are context-dependent.

Many learners assume that the primary goal of grammar is correctness, that language users must avoid errors and follow rules precisely. In fact, it is not the sole objective of advanced grammar. It emphasizes appropriateness, effectiveness, and meaning. It focuses on how grammatical choices fulfill communicative purposes. From this perspective, grammar is evaluated not only in terms of correctness but also in terms of clarity, coherence, stance, and audience engagement.

CHAPTER 2.

NOUN PHRASES AND DETERMINERS

Chapter Outline:

1. Noun Phrase in Advanced Grammar
2. Structure of Noun Phrases
3. Determiners and Reference in Academic Texts
4. Modifications in Complex Noun Phrases
5. Noun Phrases in Academic Discourse and EFL Context
6. Common Challenges of EFL Learners in Using Noun Phrases

Learning outcome:

- Readers are able to identify and analyze the complex structure of noun phrases, including determiners and modifiers within an advanced grammatical framework.
- Readers are able to evaluate the use of noun phrases in academic and literary texts.
- Readers can overcome difficulties in creating complex noun phrase structures.

Chapter 2. Noun Phrases and Determiners

Noun phrases are often treated as simple units consisting of an article and a noun in basic grammar instruction. However, in advanced grammar, noun phrases are known as a central mechanism through which knowledge is constructed, organized, and evaluated in texts. This chapter provides concise information on noun phrases in advanced grammar, including their structures, modification, variations in academic texts, and pedagogical insights.

2.1. Noun Phrases in Advanced Grammar

Academic writing relies heavily on noun phrases to present ideas in a compact, abstract, and objective manner. Research in discourse and functional grammar reveals that academic texts often employ complex noun phrases. According to Biber et al. (1998) and Hyland (2004), this is because noun phrases can package information efficiently and emphasize concepts over actions.

In advanced grammar, noun phrases are best understood as units of meaning rather than isolated grammatical forms. They function as carriers of participants, concepts, and phenomena within clauses and across texts. In academic discourse, these units often represent abstract and generalized concepts such as development, relationship, effect, or variation.

Because noun phrases can encapsulate the entire arguments in a clause, they often serve as points of reference for writers to build cumulative knowledge. Noun phrases are generally introduced at the beginning and are later repeatedly mentioned throughout the text using determiners or reduced forms. This way, cohesion and coherence can be ensured.

A simple noun phrase typically consists of a head noun with minimal modification, for example, *a theory* or *the analysis*. Such structures are common in spoken interaction and at the basic level writing. In contrast, complex noun phrases involve multiple layers of modification, as in *the long-term impact of instructional feedback on students' academic writing development*. The ability to construct and interpret complex noun phrases is a key indicator of advanced proficiency.

Noun phrases play a crucial role in shaping the discourse features of academic writing. First, increase information density by condensing meanings that would otherwise require multiple clauses (Biber et al., 1998). Second, they support abstraction, which is essential for theorizing and generalization. Third, noun phrases promote objectivity by emphasizing processes and concepts over explicit human agency (Hyland, 2004). Hence, mastering noun phrases is crucial for students who aim to participate effectively in academic discourse.

From a functional perspective, noun phrases contribute to what Halliday (1998) describes as *grammatical metaphor*, where meanings typically realized as actions or qualities are reconstrued as entities. Noun phrases are not merely grammatical constructions but cognitive tools that enable writers to recognize experience into academic knowledge. The frequent use of abstract noun phrases in research writing reflects the epistemological goals of academia, which prioritize explanation, classification, and evaluation over narrative sequencing.

In addition to grammatical metaphor, noun phrases contribute to what Coffin et al. (2003) describe as *technicality* in academic discourse. Technicality refers to the tendency of academic texts to develop specialized meanings through the use of complex noun phrases. As technicality increases, meanings become more consistent and transferable across texts, which allows writers to construct cumulative arguments. It explains why advanced academic writing places more emphasis on noun phrases that encapsulate concepts as objects of knowledge rather than clauses that convey actions.

2.2. Structure of Noun Phrases

Although noun phrases in academic texts may appear complex, their internal organization follows a relatively stable structural pattern. Noun phrases are commonly constructed with one head noun, determiners, and modifiers. The head noun is the core element of the noun phrase and determines its grammatical properties, such as number and agreement. All other elements in the noun phrase are structurally dependent on the head. In academic writing, head nouns are frequently abstract and nominalized forms such as *analysis*, *relationship*, *implementation*, or *significance*. As noted by Halliday (1998), these nouns enable writers to repackage processes and qualities as entities that can be defined, evaluated, and logically connected.

Determiners have a structurally fixed position at the beginning of the noun phrase and play a crucial role in establishing reference. They indicate whether a noun is a definite or indefinite, specific or general, singular or plural (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). In extended texts, determiners help readers follow ideas across sentences and paragraphs.

Determiners encode distinctions such as definiteness, specificity, and quantity, all of which are crucial for interpretation. In academic discourse, determiner choices often reflect assumptions about shared knowledge within a discourse community. For instance, *the framework* presupposes familiarity, while *a framework* introduces a concept as new or provisional (Swales, 1990). Meanwhile, modifiers expand the meaning of the head noun by adding defining information. Pre-modifiers tend to compress information, while post-modifiers allow for more explicit elaboration and clarification.

Recent corpus-based research reveals that the distribution of noun phrase elements varies systematically across registers. Biber et al. (1998) show that academic texts favor heavy modification within noun phrases. Moving beyond form-based descriptions to a register-sensitive perspective, where grammatical choices are made in relation to communicative purpose and audience expectation, is necessary to understand noun phrase structure.

2.3. Determiners and Reference in Academic Texts

As mentioned earlier, determiners are central to the management of reference in academic texts. Determiners are words placed before nouns to indicate quantity, definiteness, possession, or location and textual reference, which includes articles, demonstratives, possessives, and quantifiers. Through determiner choice, writers introduce concepts, maintain continuity, and signal evaluative viewpoint.

The English article system is highly sensitive to discourse context. The definite article *the* is frequently used in academic writing to refer to shared or textually established entities, such as *the results* or *the principle*. Indefinite articles (*a, an*), by contrast, often signal the introduction of new concepts or general categories (Master, 1997). According to Ionin et al. (2004), numerous studies have demonstrated that article use is particularly challenging for EFL writers, as it requires pragmatic and discourse-level awareness, rather than rule-based knowledge alone.

Another type of determiner, demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*), function as powerful cohesive devices in academic texts. Expressions such as *this finding* or *these limitations* allow writers to

refer back to previously mentioned information (Hyland, 2004). Such patterns also allow writers to summarize, evaluate, and transition between ideas efficiently while maintaining a formal tone. The frequent use of *this + abstract noun* patterns has been noted as a characteristic feature of academic texts, particularly in research articles (Biber et al., 1999).

In academic writing, possessive determiners often indicate conceptual relationships rather than physical possession. Hyland (2002) argues that phrases like *the study's objectives* or *teachers' perceptions* allocate responsibility or association while maintaining an impersonal tone. These structures help writers attach ideas without relying excessively on personal pronouns.

Lastly, quantifiers allow writers to express quantity, scope, and frequency. Although quantifiers vary in types and functions, academic discourse often prefers approximate quantification (e.g., *some*, *a number of*, *the majority of*) as a form of hedging. This cautious use of language reflects disciplinary norms that value caution and precision in claims (Hyland, 1998).

Beyond individual determiner types, determiner choice also contributes to patterns of information flow in academic texts. Writers commonly introduce concepts using indefinite determiners and later shift to definite determiners once the referent has been established. This progression reflects the given-new and plays a key role in textual coherence.

Importantly, determiner use is also dependent on the text's discipline. There is a shared knowledge within a disciplinary study across academic communities. It means that determiner choice reflects disciplinary norms rather than purely grammatical rules.

Raising learners' awareness of this variation can help them adapt their writing to different academic contexts and expectations.

2.4. Modifications in Complex Noun Phrases

Modification is a defining characteristic of advanced noun phrase construction. Through modification, writers can either compress or elaborate on meaning, depending on rhetorical purposes. Complex noun phrases use premodifiers to give more information to a head noun and create detailed descriptions with multiple layers of information using postmodifiers.

Premodifiers commonly include adjectives, nouns, and participles (e.g., *recent* studies, *developing* countries). Corpus studies indicate that academic writing increasingly relies on stacked premodifiers to compress information efficiently (Biber & Gray, 2016). While effective, excessive use of premodifiers may increase readers' difficulty in processing the information.

Postmodifiers, on the other hand, include prepositional phrases and relative clauses, which are partially prominent in academic writing (e.g., the solution *to the problem*, another major factor *that we must consider*). They allow writers to specify meaning more explicitly. Prepositional phrases and relative clauses are particularly common in academic texts because they enable detailed elaboration without excessive syntactic complexity. Postmodifiers are often preferred when precision is more important than conciseness. Postmodifiers are also more reader-friendly, as information is unfolded gradually (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The structural complexity of noun phrases can be illustrated through graduated layers of analysis. For example, consider the

progression from *a study* to *a recent study* and finally to *a recent longitudinal study on language development in EFL contexts*. Each added modifier narrows the reference and increases the specificity of the information. Such expansions demonstrate how writers can control the precision and relevance through a noun phrase without having to elaborate the information in different clauses.

Furthermore, the choice between pre-modification and post-modification is not merely structural but rhetorical. Premodifiers highlight classification and evaluation before the noun is fully revealed. However, as mentioned earlier, they can be effective in guiding readers' interpretation, but they can also increase processing difficulty. Postmodifiers, conversely, allow writers to introduce a general concept first and then refine it through elaboration.

For EFL learners, difficulty with noun phrase structure often lies not in identifying individual components but in understanding how these components interact hierarchically. Furthermore, Xue and Ge (2021) find that one thing that differs in the complexity of academic texts written L2 writers from natives is the use of postmodifiers. Their finding emphasizes the critical function of advanced grammar competence. Advanced grammatical competence involves knowing when complexity enhances meaning and when it obscures it. Writers must balance the need for precision with the reader's processing capacity.

Earlier, Swales and Feak (2012) postulate that effective academic writers balance dense noun phrases with more elaborated structures to maintain readability and rhetorical effectiveness. Excessive noun phrase compression can negatively affect readability, particularly for novice readers. According to studies on academic

reading comprehension, dense nominal structures increase the cognitive pressure on readers, especially those reading in a second or foreign language (Schleppegrell, 2004). Effective academic writing, therefore, requires not only grammatical control but also audience awareness.

2.5. Noun Phrases in Academic Discourse and EFL Context

Different academic genres employ noun phrases in varying ways. Research articles typically favor dense nominal structures. Whereas textbooks and pedagogical texts often simplify noun phrase structures to facilitate readers' comprehension. In the academic field, disciplinary conventions strongly influence the use of noun phrases. For example, Hyland (2004) finds that scientific writing often prioritizes technical precision through compact noun phrases, while humanities writing may allow for more elaborated and interpretive noun phrase structures.

From a pedagogical perspective, noun phrases should be taught as functional elements of texts. EFL learners often struggle with article use, unclear reference, and excessive pre-modification. These challenges often stem from differences between English and learners' first languages as well as limited exposure to academic texts (Liu & Gleason, 2002; Master, 1997).

Noun phrases can be taught through genre-based instruction. This method encourages learners to analyze authentic academic texts, identify noun phrase patterns, and reflect on the functions. Another helpful strategy is through analytical practice. In analytical tasks, learners are required to identify, interpret, and revise noun phrases in

context. These activities foster a deeper understanding of grammar and support the development of academic writing skills.

From a curriculum perspective, noun phrases should be introduced progressively. Learners are first introduced to basic determiner-noun combinations and gradually expand their understanding toward more complex, abstract structures. This progression reflects learners' cognitive development and supports the transition from narrative or descriptive writing to analytical and argumentative writing. To achieve this aim, teachers and lecturers can incorporate noun phrases into reading and writing tasks that highlight their discourse functions.

One effective classroom practice is guiding noticing, where learners examine model texts to identify noun phrase patterns and discuss their communicative purposes. Another approach is revision-based instruction, in which learners transform sentences with numerous clauses into shorter noun phrase structures. These activities encourage them to view grammar as a resource for meaning-making and not a set of prescriptive rules.

2.6. Common Challenges of EFL Learners in Using Noun Phrases

Recent research consistently shows that learners' difficulties are not limited to grammatical accuracy but extend to discourse-level control, particularly in reference management, modification, and abstraction (Hinkel, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2004; Xue & Ge, 2021). One common issue is overreliance on simple noun phrases combined with clausal elaboration. Learners often express complex meanings through lengthy sequences of clauses rather than through compact nominal structures. Biber and Gray (2016) argue that it is commonly

found in early-stage learners who have not yet internalized the function of noun phrases.

Another frequent problem is related to the misuse of articles and unclear references. Learners may omit articles, overuse definite articles, or fail to differentiate between generic and specific reference. These problems arise from the interplay between grammatical knowledge and discourse awareness, as the use of the article requires consideration of shared knowledge and textual context (Ionin et al., 2004; Master, 1997). In an extended text, an inappropriate choice of a determiner can cause cohesive problems and make argument development difficult to follow.

Learners also struggle with modifier ordering and scope. Although exposure to academic texts encourages learners to adopt compressed noun phrase patterns, when the relationships between modifiers are unclear, they may create awkward or ambiguous structures. Such errors indicate partial acquisition of noun phrase complexity without complete control of its hierarchical organization (Biber et al., 1998).

From a developmental perspective, learners' use of noun phrases typically progresses in the following stages:

- 1) simple determiner-noun combinations (e.g., an apple, the dog, this table),
- 2) adjective-modified noun phrases (e.g., a cute kitten, the old magazine seller),
- 3) postmodified structures with prepositional phrases or relative clauses (e.g., the museum across the street, a man who lives next door),

4) dense, abstract noun phrases incorporating nominalization and technical vocabulary (e.g., the successful implementation of the genre-based instruction).

Explicit instruction, repeated exposure, and guided revision are essential for helping learners move along these stages (Schleppegrell, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2012).

CHAPTER 3.

VERB PHRASES AND TENSE-ASPECT SYSTEM

This chapter examines verb phrase structure, including tense (present, past, and future), and aspect (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive). Readers are invited to analyze differences in meaning in narrative, academic, and formal conversation contexts. It includes an analysis of common mistakes made by Indonesian readers in using tense-aspect.

Learning Outcome:

- Readers are able to explain the differences between tenses and aspects in English (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive).
- Readers are able to analyze the use of tenses and aspects in narrative, academic, and formal conversation contexts.
- Readers are able to identify common mistakes made by Indonesian readers in the use of tenses and aspects.

1. Verb Phrase and Tense-Aspect System

A verb is one of the eight parts of speech in English. It expresses an action or state of being and is essential to sentence construction. Using verbs can be tricky, as they change forms not only based on the subject but also based on tense. The fun fact is that a verb is the only part of speech that is directly affected by tenses through changes in its forms (inflection) or the use of modal and auxiliary verbs. Refer to the

table below to see, in a nutshell, the verb inflection due to tense and aspect.

Tense	Aspect	Sub ject	Modal verb	Auxiliary verb	Verb form			
					Base form	Past tense	Present participle	Past participle
Present	Simple present	I	-	-	drink	-	-	-
	Present progressive		-	Am	-	-	drinking	-
	Present perfect		-	Have	-	-	-	drunk
	Present perfect progressive		-	have been	-	-	drinking	-
Past	Simple past		-	-	-	drank	-	-
	Past progressive		-	Was	-	-	drinking	-
	Past perfect		-	Had	-	-	-	drunk
	Past perfect progressive		-	had been	-	-	drinking	-
Future	Simple future		will	-	drink	-	-	-
	Future progressive		will	Be	-	-	drinking	-
	Future perfect		will	Have	-	-	-	drunk
	Future perfect progressive		will	have been	-	-	drinking	-

The table shows that English signals differences in tense and aspect through systematic changes in verb usage. There are two primary grammatical tenses: past and non-past (present and future

time references). Except for the additional auxiliary ‘will’ to indicate future action, the verb form for simple present and future is basically the same. The tenses and four primary aspects (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive) produce a matrix of forms, each with its own grammatical structure. Simple aspects use the base form (e.g., *drink*) for non-past contexts and the past tense form (e.g., *drank*) for past contexts. Progressive is formed with the appropriate form of be (is, am, are, was, were) followed by the present participle (e.g., *am drinking*). Perfect aspect is formed with the appropriate form of have (have, has, had) followed by the past participle (e.g., *drunk*). Perfect progressive combines both structures: have + been + present participle (e.g., *have been drinking*).

Tense and aspect are interrelated yet distinct concepts. According to Partee (1984), tense only identifies **when** an event occurs (reference time), while aspect describes **how** it unfolds within that time frame—whether it is ongoing, completed, repeated, temporary, habitual, or futurate, among other possibilities. To better understand which tense to use in context, study these sample sentences illustrating how tense and aspect function together in practice.

*I **drink** coffee every morning.* (simple present)

*I **drank** coffee before bed last night.* (simple past)

*I **have drunk** coffee today.* (present perfect)

*I **was drinking** coffee when you called.* (past progressive)

*I **will drink** black coffee, as usual.* (simple future)

*I **will have been drinking** my coffee at this café for half an hour by the time you arrive.* (future perfect progressive)

In the examples above, *drink* is the base form. It is used in the simple present tense indicating a habitual activity (every morning). It does not describe what is happening at the moment. Instead, it explains what is generally across time. The adverb phrase *every morning* is the key time marker. The verb in the first example remains in the base form because the subject is the first person, not the third person singular. Moreover, *drank* is the irregular past form of *drink*, and it means a completed past activity (last night). This presents the fact as a completed whole last night. At the moment of speaking, the subject *I* is no longer engaged in the act of drinking coffee.

Moreover, the verb phrase *have drunk* consists of a modal 'have' plus a main verb 'drink' which is inflected into its irregular past participle form 'drunk.' It is used in the present perfect tense, indicating a completed past action with ongoing relevance in the present. In this case, the relevance may be that the effects of the caffeine have not yet worn off, making the subject feel awake and energized, and not in the mood for another coffee at the moment.

Meanwhile, the verb phrase *was drinking* is a form of the past progressive, used to show an ongoing action that was already happening (*drinking coffee*) when another activity interrupted (*someone called*). Both occurred in the past. Next, '*will drink*' is a simple future tense. It means the speaker is confident that the event is going to happen based on a plan, a schedule, or a general expectation. It can be considered a future fact because it is not based on a guess or a conditional idea. The simple future is often used to discuss predictions, plans, intentions, spontaneous decisions, promises, and offers that will occur in the future. The auxiliary 'will' signals the future reference.

The last example is trickier. The structure is more complex, as it combines perfect and progressive forms in a future context: ‘*will have been drinking.*’ It means the action (*drinking*) will start before a specific point in the future (*by the time someone arrives*) and will continue right up to that point. It emphasizes the duration or ongoing process of the action. In other words, there are two events: one ongoing action (*drinking*) is interrupted by a second, shorter action.

In simple tenses, the verb consists of a single word: *drink* (present) and *drank* (past). In the present perfect, however, the verb is a phrase formed with the auxiliary ‘have’ plus the past participle *drunk*. In the past progressive tense, it was the auxiliary ‘was’ plus the main verb ‘*drinking.*’ Structurally, the first two examples contain simple verb phrases, while the last two contain complex verb phrases. It is important to note that a verb phrase may consist of a main verb only and is called a **simple verb phrase**. However, it can also consist of a main verb and any modal verb (*can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would*) or auxiliary verb (*to be, have, do*)—which is called a **complex verb phrase**. In this complex one, the main verb always comes after the modal or auxiliary verb.

When analyzing a verb phrase in relation to the tense and aspect system, it is also necessary to determine whether it uses an action or linking verb. Most verbs in English belong to the category of ‘action verbs,’ while a small number function as ‘linking verbs.’ Action verbs can be either regular or irregular based on their past tense and past participle forms. *Drink* is an action verb since the act of drinking denotes a physical action. It is also categorized as an irregular verb as it does not follow the regular pattern. For the simple past and present perfect tenses, regular verbs are generally formed by adding -d or -ed

to the base verb. For example, the regular verb *arrived* is formed from the base form *arrive + -d*, and *walked* is formed from *walk + -ed*. For irregular verbs, however, the past and past participle forms change in varied and unpredictable ways. Refer to the table below to see the difference.

Base form	Regular		Irregular	
	Past tense	Past participle	Past tense	Past participle
arrive	arrived	Arrived	-	-
walk	walked	Walked	-	-
drink	-	-	drank	drunk
eat	-	-	Ate	eaten

English learners must be familiar with the list of irregular verbs in the English language. For further study, consult the appendix containing a list of over 100 irregular verbs.

Linking verbs are as essential as action verbs, as they are also key elements that make up a sentence. Linking verbs do not show an action, but they connect the subject of a sentence to a noun phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, or prepositional phrase that describes the state of being or condition of the subject. Linking verbs include forms of ‘be’ (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been), sense verbs (taste, smell, sound, seem, appear, look, feel), and other verbs such as become, grow, and remain.

For example, *Coffee is my favorite beverage. It **smells** so good.* Here, ‘is’ and ‘smells’ function as linking verbs because they connect the subject (coffee) to its description, without which the sentence would be incomplete. Linking verbs also apply in other tenses. For example, *I **was** an instant coffee fan for its convenience and simplicity.* (simple past). Another example: *After the price of other beverages*

*increased, the cost of the basic coffee **had remained** the same for months.* (past perfect).

The explanation and examples above show that the tense and aspect system is encoded within the structure of a verb phrase, especially through verb inflection. When examining the verb phrase structures, learners must pay attention to key distinctions, such as action verbs versus linking verbs, regular versus irregular verbs, and simple versus complex verb phrases. They must also ensure that the verb forms align with the intended tense and aspect.

2. The Use of Tenses and Aspects in Narrative, Academic, and Formal Conversation Contexts

Mastering tense and aspect in English extends beyond syntactic concepts as it requires a semantic-level understanding. This knowledge is crucial for constructing meaning and facilitating effective communication. In practice, this skill helps shape discourse critically across various contexts, including narrative, academic, and formal conversational settings, each of which demands specific rhetorical strategies. Therefore, speakers must carefully select tense and aspect to avoid misunderstanding, prevent ambiguity, and ensure clarity.

In the narrative context, the simple past tense serves as the foundational temporal framework. It establishes the ‘story world’ as a completed series of events, distinct from immediate news reporting. This default past tense anchors the storyline, allowing for more complex tenses, such as the past progressive and past perfect, to

specify sequences and relationships within that timeline. Its use is not merely to record events but to shape the reader's temporal and psychological perspectives. It draws the readers into the world of the story by framing all events as part of a complete sequence. For example, *He took a sip of his coffee, watching the passersby outside. He studied their faces and recognized no one. The cruel irony settled over him: alone in the middle of a crowd.* Here, the consistent use of the simple past establishes a clear temporal backdrop. Each action (*took, watched, studied, recognized, settled*) is set as a separate, completed step but still within a coherent timeline. The tense does not just tell what happened, but also constructs the scaffolding upon which meaning, such as observation, loneliness, and detachment, is built.

Besides the simple past, past progressive, and past perfect tenses are generally employed. While the former is to set scenes, the latter is to inform flashbacks, where the narrator retreats to a point in the past that contains an important event, which serves as a crucial setting for understanding the story. For example, *It **was raining** heavily, accompanied by the sound of thunder, as he **drove** his car home after returning from a coffee shop. He **had promised** to be back before dark, and now he **was** scared but **had** no other choice but to keep moving.* Here, the combination of the past progressive (*was raining*), the simple past (*drove, had*), and past perfect (*had promised*) helps create a rich, atmospheric background. The narrative invites readers to inhabit the character's mind, creating a relatable experience that nurtures emotional intimacy.

Although narratives are typically grounded in the past tense, non-past tenses remain essential. The present and future tenses are

also generally used, especially for direct quotes from conversations between characters in the story. This kind of use is not only to create a dramatic effect in key moments of the story, but also to distinguish it from the model of reporting. In short, applied artistically to control the reader's perspective, the tense establishes the timeline of the events in the story, which serves as the basis for constructing the plot framework.

In contrast to narratives, academic contexts emphasize formal precision and the systematic dissemination of knowledge. In this domain, the simple present serves as the primary mode for conveying established facts and logical arguments. The use of simple present aligns with the academic imperative to present theories, arguments, and data as established current knowledge. For instance, "Research indicates that coffee may increase heart rate. This is supported by recent interviews with patients at cardiovascular clinics, who reported elevated heart rate after consumption" (John, 2025). Here, present-tense frames research results and knowledge as information that is up-to-date, relevant, and timeless.

In academic writing, another tense-aspect which is often used is the present perfect. It is crucial as it fosters an ongoing scientific dialogue by connecting the latest research to the prior work, allowing findings to confirm, contradict, or build upon one another. For example, "A significant body of research **has examined** the link between the consumption of instant and sweetened coffee and GERD in Gen Z, but no study **has yet addressed** its psychological impacts." The use of the present perfect (has examined, has addressed) in this example frames knowledge as a collaborative, evolving dialogue,

where past work remains relevant in the present, and it is key to establishing scholarly continuity.

It is also important to note that the simple future is also employed in academic writing to engage with future research, primarily through recommendations and proposed directions. In short, academic writing, like narratives, strategically uses different tenses. The simple present predominates, creating a sense of timeless validity to facts, theories, and logical arguments. Additionally, the present perfect serves as a critical connective function, explicitly sequencing prior studies to build a foundation for new claims.

Besides narrative and academic contexts, it is crucial to understand how tense and aspect function in formal spoken contexts, such as business meetings, diplomatic exchanges, or professional consultations. These interactions differ from narrative and academic writing due to their highly interactive nature and the fluidity of information flow. One of their primary defining features is strategic formality. This is exemplified in the use of modal auxiliaries like 'would', 'could', and 'should' not merely for time, but also to hedge directness and foreground politeness. For example, *Would you like to purchase more coffee beans from our company? Could you send the invoice today? Should we send the contract via email or fax?* While *would*, *could*, and *should* can be past tense markers in reported speech, here they function as modal verbs of politeness in a present-time conditional structure. Similarly, speakers often opt for stative verbs in the simple present or the present progressive. For example, *I wonder/am wondering if you have time for a follow-up meeting this*

afternoon. This usage creates a sense of tentativeness and thus softens directives into collaborative suggestions.

In formal conversations, the present perfect tense can also subtly convey a nuanced sense of current relevance and ongoing connections. For example, *We have received the document and have begun the review*. It frames the actions not as isolated past events but as parts of an active process that continues into the present moment. By using this tense, the speaker leaves the conversation open for further discussion or clarification regarding the document. Strategically, the use of the present perfect avoids the finality of the simple past as *we received*.

To sum up, a command of tense and aspect in English is not merely a grammatical exercise. It is the cornerstone of effective rhetorical strategy. Understanding the tense and aspect system of the English language is more than just the change of the verb form. It is also a form of rhetorical mastery. While narratives employ specific tenses to establish a scene and evoke moments in time, academic writing utilizes particular tenses to present arguments, engage in scholarly discourse, and propose future directions for research. Moreover, in professional contexts, effective communication requires navigating social hierarchies and power relations by using appropriate language choices to build consensus.

3. Common Mistakes Made by Indonesian Readers in the Use of Tenses and Aspects

For Indonesian English learners, mastering the tense and aspect system can be quite challenging. This difficulty is not necessarily due to a lack of intelligence; rather, it is the result of fundamental differences between the English and Indonesian (Indonesian) grammatical structures. There are three most common mistakes that Indonesian readers make in the use of tense and aspect.

First, in the absence of morphological verb conjugation, particularly due to tenses, Indonesians are accustomed to using the verb base forms. When referring to specific time markers, Indonesian typically uses lexical markers such as *sudah* (meaning "completed" or "already"), *sedang* (meaning "ongoing"), and *akan* (meaning "will"). *Sudah* means something has been done. It is parallel to the English version of the present perfect and past contexts. For example, *I have eaten the cake*, or *saya sudah makan kue nya*. In this context, the action (*eating*) has been completed, marked by the present perfect tense (auxiliary 'have' + past participle) in English. On the contrary, in Bahasa Indonesia, the completed action is signified simply by the time marker *sudah*, while the verb remains in the base form (*makan*). The meaning is basically similar.

Similarly, Bahasa Indonesia does not conjugate verbs for progressive and future tenses. For example, *expressions like "I am eating the cake" and "I will eat the cake" are translated as "Saya sedang makan kue nya" and "Saya akan makan kue nya" respectively. Here, the verb 'makan' remains unchanged, while temporal meaning is conveyed by adding the particles sedang for ongoing action and akan for future action. These fundamental structural differences often lead to systematic errors and confusion for Indonesian learners when navigating English grammar. For example, a learner might produce: I*

eating the cake, having correctly perceived ‘v-ing’ signals a progressive action but failing to conjugate the auxiliary verb *be*. Another common error is *I have already eaten the cake*, where the adverbs *have* and *already* are correctly used to signal completion, but failing to recognize that the verb is not changed to past participle as it is supposed to be.

Secondly, Indonesian learners are often unfamiliar with the concept of stative verbs, such as “hope,” “believe,” “know,” “want,” and “have” for possession, among others. This confusion is reflected in the use of the progressive tense. For example, *I am hoping you like the coffee*, or *He is having a new coffee machine*. It should be corrected to: *I hope you like the coffee*, or *He has a new coffee machine*.

Another common mistake is related to the use of the auxiliary verb *will*. Indonesian learners sometimes overgeneralize its use. They tend to treat it as a direct equivalent of ‘*akan*’. It ignores the nuanced English system, where *be going to* is used for evidence-based plans and the present progressive can indicate scheduled events. Moreover, they often misuse *will* in complex sentences, particularly in adverb clauses introduced by a subordinating conjunction like *if*. For example, *I will make you a matcha latte if you will buy the matcha powder*. Because both actions are predicted future actions, Indonesian learners often incorrectly use ‘*will*’ in both clauses. The correct one is *I will make you a matcha latte if you buy the matcha powder*. In English, the dependent clause must be in the present tense to refer to the future time.

To summarize, Indonesian learners of English should internalize the rule that tense and aspect often require morphological changes, grasp the unique behavior of stative verbs, and avoid overgeneralizing the verb ‘*will*’ to prevent communicative confusion.

Exercises

Practice 1: Identify the Genre

Read these short passages and answer the questions below.

Text A

"Regarding your email, I have reviewed the proposal. I will be discussing it with my team tomorrow."

Text B

"Maria opened the door slowly. It had been raining all night. She was wondering if she had made the right decision."

Text C

"Climate change presents a significant threat to biodiversity. Studies have shown that many species are already migrating to cooler regions."

Questions:

Which text tells a story? What tenses and aspects do you see?

Which text discusses facts? What tenses and aspects do you see?

Which text is professional talk? What tenses and aspects do you see?

Practice 2: Choose the Right Tense

Complete each sentence with the correct tense.

Narrative

While I _____ (walk) home yesterday, I _____ (see) an accident happen.

By the time help _____ (arrive), the driver already _____ (escape).

Academic Writing

Research _____ (show) that regular exercise _____ (improve) mental health.

Smith (2020) _____ (demonstrate) this effect, but his methodology _____ (be) questionable.

Formal Conversation

I _____ (try) to contact you since Monday. _____ you _____ (receive) my messages?

I _____ (look) into that matter now and _____ (have) an answer for you by Friday.

Practice 3: Common Errors

Underline the errors and suggest the correct answers.

1. She has finished the report last night.
 2. They are discussing it when I have entered the room.
 3. I work here since 2019.
 4. I am not understanding this question.
 5. Are you believing in ghosts?
 6. This food is tasting delicious.
-

Practice 4.

Choose present perfect or past simple.

1. I _____ (live) in Jakarta in 2015, but now I _____ (live) in Bandung.
 2. _____ you ever _____ (try) sushi? Yes, I _____ (try) it last month.
 3. She _____ (write) three emails today, but she _____ (not send) them yet.
-

Exit Ticket

Keep a journal for one week. Write three entries:

- A story about something that happened
- Facts about a topic you're studying
- A formal email to a teacher or boss

Circle all the verbs. Check if you used the right tenses for each context.

CHAPTER 4.

MODALITY AND AUXILIARY VERBS

This chapter explains modal verbs (can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would) and semi-modals (need to, have to, be able to). The nuances of meaning (necessity, possibility, obligation, certainty, probability) were also discussed. Examples are given from legal, academic, and everyday conversation texts.

Learning Outcome:

- Readers are able to identify and analyze modal verbs and semi-modals along with the nuances of their meanings.
- Readers are able to evaluate the use of modalities in legal, academic, and everyday conversation texts.

4.1. Modal Verbs and Semi-Modals

Modality is one of the fundamental dimensions of meaning in the English language. It refers to the speaker's attitude toward an action or state of the main verb. Modal expressions are essential for communicating the speaker's knowledge and sharing their community's rules of social order and cultural norms (Shatz & Wilcox, 1991). They convey concepts such as possibility, necessity, permission, ability, advice, and certainty, all of which are primarily expressed through modal auxiliary verbs. The ability to recognize the different grammatical tools related to modality and auxiliary verbs would help learners interpret the layers of meaning in a text.

Modal verbs are a type of verb that are grammatically unique. They are always followed by the base form of the main verb, and unlike action verbs, they do not change form. Analyze the example below.

*Emma **may drink** only two cups of coffee a day.*

Here, the main verb is ‘drink,’ and it remains in its base form. Although the subject is a singular third person, the modal does not take an -s or -ing ending, nor does the action verb after *may*. There is no such thing as “mays” or “maying.”

Modal verbs can be used in various tenses and aspects. For progress, perfect, and perfect progressive, they are followed by auxiliary verbs *be* for progressive, *have* for perfect, *have been* for perfect progressive. These same combined modal and auxiliary verbs are also used to form passive voice constructions. For practice, analyze the sentences below. Identify which sentence uses the present progressive, which uses the present perfect, and which uses the present perfect progressive tense. Explain your reasoning.

*Emma **may be drinking** her coffee now.*

*Emma **may have drunk** her coffee before leaving for the office.*

*Emma **may have been drinking** her coffee for five minutes by the time you pick her up.*

As previously mentioned, modal verbs can be expressed in either active or passive voice, but the structure differs slightly. While in active voice, the modal is followed by the base form of the verb; in the passive voice, the modal is followed by auxiliary “be” + past participle. This structure is non-negotiable. Consider this example: *Her coffee consumption **must be limited** due to health concerns.* The auxiliary ‘be’ is required in this structure and cannot be omitted. Using

a present participle (v-ing) after 'be' is also incorrect here, as it would create a progressive tense and change the meaning entirely.

Semi-modal verbs, also called quasi-modal verbs, are a group of verbs that share some characteristics with modal auxiliary verbs but do not fully adhere to the grammatical rules that define pure modal verbs. There is no universally agreed-upon number of semi-modal verbs in English, but there are eight most frequently used semi-modals: *used to*, *have to*, *be able to*, *be going to*, *ought to*, *need*, *dare*, and *had better*. While the first five semi-modals in this list are followed by to infinitive, the rest are followed by the base form of the verb. Additionally, it is worth noting that the use of semi-modal verbs, such as "ought to," "shall," and "need," has been in decline (Mair, 2006. For example, the statement *Now I need not worry as I can prepare it in the office kitchen* is no longer common. Instead, speakers are more likely to say: "*Now I don't need to worry about it.*"

Refer to the following table for the list of modal and semi-modal verbs and their common usage in English.

Modal verbs	Semi-modal verbs	Usage
Can	-	To express present abilities, permission, and high probability
Could	-	To express past abilities, lower certainties, hypothetical situations, tentative possibilities To sound more polite, formal, and courteous
Will	-	To express future certainties, predictions, promises, offers, spontaneous decisions, and direct requests
Would	-	To express hypothetical situations, reported past events, and tentative possibilities To sound more polite, formal, and courteous
Shall	-	To express strong obligations or mandatory requirements Primarily used in legal documents To express future intentions

Should	-	To express advice, recommendations, mild obligations, probability, and hypothetical situations, expectations, or likelihood To sound more polite and courteous It's not the past tense of shall.
May	-	To express hopes or wishes, possibilities, grant or deny permission, hypothetical or unreal past scenarios (if followed by have)
Might	-	To express suggestions to do something due to a lack of better alternatives, hypothetical situations (if followed by have)
Must	-	To express obligations or commands
-	Used to	To express past habit or repeated action, past situation, but no longer true, as it has now changed
-	Have to	To express the necessity imposed by circumstances such as laws and other To infer certainty
-	Be able to	To express general abilities, specific past abilities To emphasize overcoming difficulties and finally managing to succeed
-	Be going to	To express evidence-based future prediction, future plan, and intention based on a prior obvious plan or decision
-	Ought to	To express moral advice, weak obligation, probable expectation
-	Need	To express necessity as well as requirement
-	Dare	To express courage to do something To challenge some to do something
-	Had better	To express strong advice or warning, or urgency

The above table shows that each modal and semi-modal verb does not exist as a single definition, but as a group of related meanings. Some may even overlap with others. There are six shared meanings that can be identified:

1. Possibility and ability: can, could, be able to
2. Permission: can, could, may, might
3. Necessity: should, need, ought to

4. Obligation: must, have to
5. Advice or suggestion: should, ought to, had better
6. Future Intent or prediction: will, shall, be going to
7. Politeness: could, would, should

Only the semi-modal verb "used to" is used to express a distinct meaning, that is, to express a past habit or situation that is no longer true in the present. For example, *I **used to skip** breakfast because I did not have time to cook at home.* It means the speaker has a habit of skipping breakfast in the past, but not anymore.

Moreover, when identifying modal verbs, English learners must be critical, as some modal verbs can be ambiguous. For example, the modal "shall" in one context can express predicted future action. In another context, it can be legally binding. The modal "must" in one context can mean an obligation, but in another, it can be used to express logical certainty, like drawing a conclusion, but based on strong evidence. The statement "*You can go*" can also mean different things. On the one hand, it can mean that permissions have been granted, allowing the person (you) to leave. On the other hand, it can simply mean abilities, implying that the person possesses all the necessary capabilities to leave and is not hindered by any obstacles.

The statement "*We must help*" is another prime example of modal ambiguity. Its meaning centers entirely on context. It can convey a strong moral imperative, indicating that it is ethically right for us to help. However, in another circumstance, it can indicate an inescapable requirement or a matter of practical urgency, where external circumstances compel us to help achieve a specific goal. As for the modal verbs 'would', 'could', and 'should', their usage has been

explained in the previous chapter. These modal verbs can be used strategically to make requests more polite and considerate.

Modality and auxiliary verbs are interrelated, as the modality itself is mainly expressed through auxiliary verbs, also known as helping verbs. Though minor, auxiliary verbs are a key element in verb phrase constructions. They do not carry independent lexical meaning but significantly serve a grammatical function. There are three main auxiliary verbs in English: *be*, *do*, and *have*. As already explained in the previous chapter, these verbs play a crucial role in forming various tenses. Additionally, they facilitate the construction of negative sentences, interrogative sentences, and sentences in the passive voice.

4.2. The Use of Modalities in Legal, Academic, and Everyday Conversation Texts

Modality, as the grammatical and linguistic system, does not exist in a vacuum. Its precise meaning is fully realized only within specific contexts. This chapter examines the operation of modal verbs and semi-modal verbs, along with their nuanced meanings, within three fundamental genres: legal documents, academic texts, and everyday conversations.

In legal documents, modality constructs the legal framework itself, precisely defining rights and responsibilities that build the architecture of rights and responsibilities. To evaluate a legal document is to move beyond grammar into the realm of consequence. This process answers the essential questions, such as who is obligated to act? What are they permitted to do? What penalties follow non-compliance? Here, ‘must’ is non-negotiable, while ‘may’ is permissive.

‘Shall’ does not merely refer to future actions, but it is frequently employed in legal documents such as contracts. Refer to the sentences below to see the language structure.

*The Contractor **shall complete** all work in accordance with the specifications in Appendix A.*

*The Tenant **shall pay** the monthly rent of \$800 on the first day of the month.*

Here, ‘shall’ functions as a strong deontic modal, expressing mandatory obligation or duty.

In academic texts, modality functions as the primary linguistic mechanism for expressing intellectual nuance and positioning the writer within scholarly debate. Unlike in legal texts, academic modals are epistemic tools that manage claims, hedge assertions, and acknowledge the contingent nature of knowledge. A skilled academic writer adeptly uses modals such as *may*, *might*, and *could* to avoid excessive generalizations, while strategically using *will* to assert confidence in well-supported findings.

For example, a weak claim such as “*Social media causes depression*” can be appropriately qualified as “*Excessive use of social media may contribute to symptoms of depression*” or strengthened with evidence to “*This longitudinal study shows a significant correlation between usage patterns and depression scores.*” This careful management, particularly through hedging, protects authors from counterarguments, reflects scientific caution, and signals sophisticated engagement with the complexity of the evidence.

For practice, study the following statements. Examine whether the statement is weak, strong, or overly strong. Then explain your reasoning.

1. This chemical reaction may cause cell death.
2. Prolonged exposure might lead to cellular degradation.
3. The data could indicate a causal relationship.
4. These findings must be accounted for in future models.
5. The correlation will hold under rigorous testing.
6. The evidence has to alter our current understanding.
7. More research is needed.
8. This chemical reaction causes cell death.
9. The theory is important.
10. Further studies should investigate this mechanism.
11. Future work ought to consider these variables.
12. Researchers need to address this methodological limitation.
13. These anomalous results could be explained by measurement error.
14. The author's conclusion might not apply to non-Western contexts.
15. This approach could potentially yield more accurate predictions."
16. Given the consistent replication, this effect must be robust."
17. The model will likely prove useful in clinical settings.
18. These historical accounts must have been influenced by contemporary biases.

Last but not least, here are some examples of the usage of modal and semi-modal verbs in everyday contexts.

1. Possibility and ability

e.g. *I **can make** a perfect latte with just this simple espresso machine.* (ability)

*After this training, you **will be able to distinguish** between Arabica and Robusta beans by taste.* (ability)

*If I had a better grinder, I **could brew** a much more balanced cup.*
(ability)

*You **can find** excellent coffee beans in Aceh.* (general possibility)

*We **could try** that new coffee shop downtown tomorrow if you're free.* (general possibility)

2. Permission

e.g. *Sure, you **can grab** a cup of coffee from the pantry*

***Could I get** a refill, please?*

*Guests **may purchase** coffee beans from the front counter.*

3. Necessity

e.g. *This café **should offer** a decaf cold brew option.*

*Do I **need to add** sugar, or is it sweet enough?*

*We **ought to support** ethical farming practices.*

4. Obligation

e.g. *For the optimal espresso, the brewing temperature **must be** between 90°C and 96°C.*

*We **have to clean** the grinder every week.*

5. Advice or suggestion

e.g. *You **should let** the coffee cool for a minute before tasting it to avoid burning your tongue.*

*You'**d better*** drink the coffee now before it gets completely cold.*

Note: *had better is commonly used in its contracted form

6. Future Intent or prediction

e.g. *I think this espresso **will be** too strong for you.* (spontaneous decision)

*What **shall we order** for dinner?* (intent)

*Careful! That cup **is going to spill**.* (evidence-based prediction)

7. Politeness

e.g. **Could I ask** you to watch my laptop while I go grab my coffee?
Would you **mind** if I take the last coffee filter?
I think we **should** probably **get** going before the café closes.

In conclusion, the strategic use of modal and semi-modal verbs is not merely a grammatical formality but a fundamental tool for shaping reality across discursive domains. This chapter demonstrates that true proficiency in English requires recognizing that the meaning of modality is inherently contextual. Mastering these modal verbs equips learners of English with to decode intent and authority in legal documents, academic texts, and everyday conversations.

EXERCISES

Practice

Rewrite these statements using appropriate modal verbs (may, might, could, should, must, will, ought to, need to) to make them academically precise:

- Overly certain : "Social media causes political polarization."
Hedged version : "Social media _____ political polarization."
- Vague obligation : "More studies are necessary."
Precise version : "Researchers _____ this phenomenon."
- Weak speculation : "There's a chance the sample was biased."
Stronger speculation : "The sample _____ biased."
- Overly direct : "This theory is wrong."
Qualified version : "This theory _____ incomplete."
- Absolute statement : "These results prove the hypothesis."
Measured version : "These results _____ the hypothesis."

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Gramm

1. Subj
2. Agr
3. T

store

IRGULMAR QUIZ

Isa went to the store.

- A. on
- B. at
- C. on
- D. by

- at
- F. at
- D: by