



Syntactic Choices in EFL Writing: The Dynamics of Adjuncts and Complements

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Abstract*

The objective of this research is to find out whether adjunct or complement is the often used in EFL students' with identifying which types of phrases functioning as adjuncts or complements pose the oftenest use for these EFL students and to find out EFL students' difficulty factors in using adjunct and complement in writing sentences. The population for this research consisted of 5th-semester students from the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University, with 36 students from Class B selected as the sample through purposive sampling. This research used a quantitative descriptive method with statistical analysis. Data were collected using test and questionnaire. The result of the data analysis show that: (1) adjunct is the often used than complement in students' writing, with the total frequency of 315. (2) prepositional phrase is often used as adjunct in EFL students' sentences, comprising 71.1% of all adjunct usage. (3). an internal factor is identified as the main difficulty affecting EFL students' use of adjuncts and complements in writing sentences.

1. Introduction

In the realm of linguistics, syntax plays a fundamental and crucial role. Syntax is the study of sentence structure, including word order, phrase structure, and relationships between elements within a sentence (Shakarbek, 2021). Syntax as a study about sentences plays a crucial role in writing, ensuring that sentences are not only grammatically correct but also coherent and meaningful. According to Carnie (2013) and Afifah et al. (2023), understanding syntax is essential to constructing sentences that effectively convey meaning and intent. Sentences are the building blocks of writing, connecting syntax to form. A sentence, in its simplest form, consists of a subject and a verb, which conveys a complete thought. However, the richness and complexity of language come from the various elements that can be incorporated into a sentence, such as objects, adverbs, and complements.

Talking about the elements of sentence, adverbs is one of the elements in a sentence that have an important role in clarifying information in creating sentences. They can be regarded as indicators of clarity since they frequently include clarification-related features in the sentences (Saleem and Gaffori, 2022). Davidson (2002) states that adverbs are word groups that describe when, where, why, and how the action or situation represented by verb in

a sentence represent. The form of adverb can be noun phrase (NP), prepositional phrase (PP) and adverb phrase (AP). Adjunct and complement are the part of word that have function as adverb.

Adjuncts are optional elements that add additional information to a sentence but are not required for its grammatical completeness. As noted by Basri, Bochari, and Hastini (2021), an adjunct is optional, but a complement is necessary. In the context of their function as adverb, Adverbial adjunct is an optional modifier of a verb (Brinton and Brinton, 2010). This element provides additional, non-essential information about the action or state described by the verb. For example:

- (1) We will visit the museum next week.

Example (1) illustrates the use of “next week” as an adverbial adjunct of time. This noun phrase specifies when the museum visit is scheduled to occur.

Complements, on the other hand, are essential components that complete the meaning of the predicate. A complement is normally a noun phrase or an adjective phrase (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik, 1985). In the context of their function as adverb. Adverbial complements are essential elements within a sentence that provide crucial information required to complete the meaning of the main verb. According to Greenbaum and Nelson (2013), adverbials are optional elements in sentence structure. However, some elements that convey the same information as adverbials are obligatory because the main verb is not complete without them. The obligatory element is called adverbial complement. For example,

- (2) "She stayed two hours"

Example (2) shows "two hours" is noun phrase which constructed a sentence as adverbial complements that complete the meaning of the verb "stay".

Noun phrases often function as complements, but they can also be adjunct as their function as adverb to modify verb as shown in example (1). Therefore, the word class of a phrase does not indicate its function (Tallerman, 2015). Both adjuncts and complements can function as adverbs within sentences, enhancing their meaning and structure. Nevertheless, complements serve additional roles beyond adverb functions within sentences. They can also function as subject complements and object complements, providing crucial syntactic and semantic contributions to sentence structure and meaning.

Having examined the specific cases of adverbial adjuncts and adverbial complements, it is crucial to broaden our perspective and consider how these concepts fit into the larger framework of adjuncts and complements in syntactic theory. This wider view not only encompasses adverbials but also extends to other grammatical categories, providing a more comprehensive understanding of phrase structure and sentence formation. The distinction between adjuncts and complements, while particularly nuanced in the case of adverbials, applies across various syntactic elements and is fundamental to understanding the structure of phrases within sentences.

This fundamental distinction is further elucidated by examining the grammatical functions and structural configurations of phrases within sentences. The distinction between adjuncts and complements is not merely semantic but is deeply rooted in the syntactic structure of language. To understand this more clearly, we need to delve into the specifics of phrase structure and hierarchical relationships within sentences. As mentioned by Pavlovi (2015), it is important for discourse structure between adjunct and complement, which complements presenting basic content and adjuncts providing additional information

However, after identifying the students' understanding in distinguishing and using complements and adjuncts, the researchers found that this distinguishing and using of these elements is challenging for students. The inability corrects of the distinguishing and using of these elements caused by some difficulty factor in writing, this relationship is crucial because good writing skills enable writers to make careful choices about adjuncts and complements, allowing them to create sentences that are clear and nuanced. A study by Febriani (2022)

highlights that students often encounter difficulties in their writing, which can be attributed to several factors. These factors are categorized Internal Factors (Psychological factors and Linguistic factors) and External factors (Peer support and Advisor support)

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to explore the use of adjuncts and complements in sentences produced by EFL students. However, there have been previous studies analyzing similar topics but with different focuses. First, Pratama, Susini, and Suarjaya (2018) focused only on various forms of adjuncts and the meanings. Second, Jaya, Bochari, Hastini, and Rita (2023) examined adjuncts and complements on the function of prepositional phrases. Lastly, Amru, Nurjanah, and Dwiastuty (2023) concentrated on the use of adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases, while in this research, by analyzing student's produced sentences, the researchers try to find whether adjuncts or complements is often to use by EFL students' sentences with identifying which types of phrases (noun, prepositional, and adverbial) functioning as adjuncts or complements pose the oftenest use for these EFL students and explore the difficulty factors that EFL students encounter when employing adjuncts and complements in sentence construction.

2. Research Methods

The method of this research relies on quantitative descriptive data analyzed through statistical techniques within a non-experimental design. According to Bhandari (2020) and Hasan (2024), quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify formula, make predictions, establish causal relationships, and generalize findings to broader populations. Barella, Fergina, Mustami, Rahman, and Alajaili (2024) define quantitative research as an essential part of a study that uses research methods based on numbers and statistics to obtain, analyze, and describe data. Additionally, Kotronoulas and Papadopoulou (2023) further classified descriptive research as a subset of nonexperimental quantitative research, which aims to describe and assess situations, conditions, or behaviors. The population for this research consisted of 5th-semester students from the English Education Study Program at Tadulako University, with 36 students from Class B selected as the sample through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves researchers purposefully selecting the sample based on their expertise and understanding of the relevant research topic. The ability to develop a rationale for extrapolating from the sample is one of the benefits of purposeful sampling (Adeoye, 2023). The researchers collected phrases functioning as adjuncts and complements in sentences produced by students through test, analyze the results, interpret them, and report the findings. To understand the difficulties that students face in using adjuncts and complements in sentences, the researchers examined variables through a questionnaire.

1) Analyzing the test

The first step in analyzing the test was the researchers read the students' answers. In the second step, the researchers analyzed and identified phrases in the students' answers that function as either adjuncts or complement. The third step, the researchers listed the correct answer and the incorrect one of phrases on their functioning as adjunct or complement. Fifth, the researchers counted the frequency of that phrases by using Excel program. The sixth step, the researchers determined the phrases as adjunct or complement that students often used in their sentences which would help the researchers answer the first research question. The last step, the researchers analyzed frequency of each type of phrase (noun, preposition, and adverb) that function as adjunct and complement for determine the type of phrase as adjunct or complement that students often used se in their sentences which would help the researchers answer the second research question.

2) Analyzing the questionnaire

In analyzing the questionnaire, the researchers first analyzed the responses from all samples. In the second step, the researchers gave a scale to each choice on the questionnaires

filled out by the students and then analyzed them using the SPSS program to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. In the third step, the researchers calculated the frequency of each valid and reliable item in the questionnaire variables using SPSS. This statistical software was used to determine the validity of each statement within the questionnaire. If the two-tailed significance value is less than the standard significance level of 0.05, the statement is deemed valid. Finally, the researchers would be able to answer the third research question by carefully analyzed the students' responses for each variable in the study.

3. Discussions

The findings of the data are based on the result of data analysis. The data analysis consists of two parts, which are from the test and questionnaire.

The Analysis of The Data Collected from the Test

In order to find out whether adjunct or complement is the often used in EFL students' sentences and to find out the types of phrases as adjunct or complement is often used in EFL students' sentences, the researchers take data from test. The result of the test was explained by the researchers in a detailed description about the frequency by using table and chart.

1) Adjunct or Complement is the Often-used in EFL Students' Sentences

Table 1 Recapitulation of Frequency of Adjuncts and Complements in Students' Sentences

Verbs	Elements		Total Frequency
	Adjuncts	Complements	
read	31	29	60
eat	30	28	58
play	20	28	48
sing	20	24	44
drink	25	21	46
open	18	28	46
give	21	49	70
tell	18	40	58
show	12	38	50
sleep	40	0	40
meet	35	19	54
depart	45	0	45
Total	315	304	619

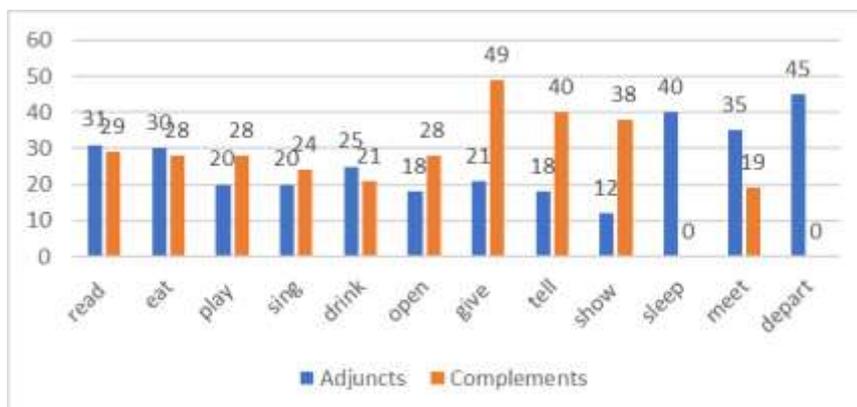


Figure 1. Recapitulation of Frequency of Adjuncts and Complements

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that the researchers found the total frequency of adjunct and complements in sentences produced by the students. Total frequency of adjunct is 315, while total frequency of complement is 304. The result indicates adjuncts are often used than complement. By looking at the often used of adjuncts in the sentences, it shows that the students tend to use adjuncts more than complements as a reflection of the verb's type, whether allows the students to add more information in form of various adjuncts to provide clear context and they are more familiar with expressing contextual details such as the time and the place rather than focusing on constructing complements. Furthermore, adjunct has several possibilities: it can occur multiple times in a sentence, it is not restricted by the verb's transitivity, and it can appear after complements. These possibilities explain why adjunct is more frequently used compared to complements.

According to Pratama et al (2018), adjunct can appear in initial, medial, or final sentence positions, express various meanings related to place, time, process, respect, and contingency. Adjunct related to spatial aspects include position, direction, and distance, answering questions such as "where" or "how far." Time-related adjunct reflect time position, duration, frequency, and time relationships, answering questions like "when," "how long," or "how often." Adjunct may also convey (why something happens), purposeful (for what reason something is done), or concessive meanings (showing contrast or concession). It is often introduced by conjunctions like "because," "for," or "despite." Process adjunct, include manner (how something is done), means (method), and instrument (tools used), along with agentive meanings (by whom/what the action is done). Respect adjunct emphasizes the focus of the sentence's verb, answering "what."

From the data and explanation above, it can be concluded that the adjunct with 315 frequency uses indicates that adjunct is often used than complements in students' writing. This high frequency can attribute because the adjunct provides a wide range of meanings that enrich sentences by adding details related to place, time, manner, and more abstract concepts like cause or concession. Their flexibility in both form and position within a sentence allows for multiple interpretations and a clearer context. By offering additional information without altering the core grammatical structure, adjunct enable speakers and writers to create more nuanced and expressive sentences, making them an indispensable element in language.

2) The Often-used Types of Phrases as Adjunct in EFL Students' Sentences

After determining adjunct is the elements that often used by the students than complements in their writing, in this section the researchers describe the findings about phrase type of those adjuncts. From the sentences that made by the students, the researchers analyzed the adjuncts of those sentences focusing on the type of phrase that functioning as adjunct including Noun Phrase, Prepositional Phrase and Adverb Phrase.

Table 2 Recapitulation of Frequency of Phrase Type as Adjuncts in Students' Sentences

Verb	Types of Phrase			Total Frequency
	Noun Phrase	Prepositional Phrase	Adverb Phrase	
read	4	27	0	31
eat	5	21	4	30
play	6	14	0	20
sing	2	18	0	20
drink	6	17	2	25
open	4	14	0	18
give	6	10	5	21
tell	7	11	0	18
show	3	6	3	12
sleep	7	28	5	40
meet	3	26	6	35
depart	5	32	8	45
Total	58	224	33	315

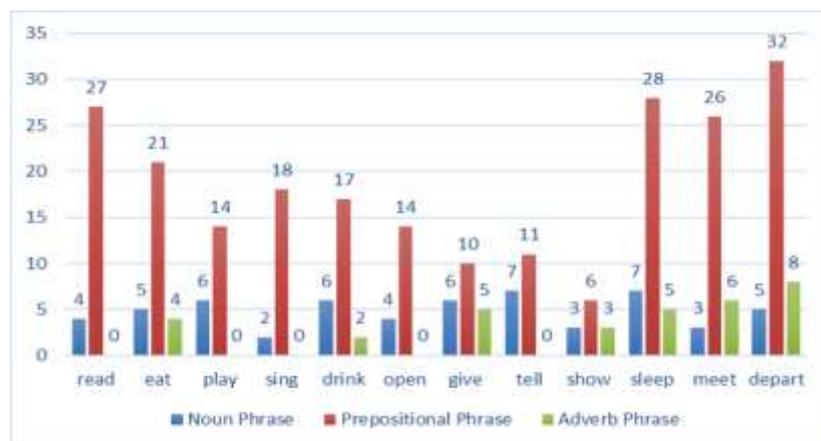


Figure 2. Recapitulation of Frequency of Adjuncts and Complements in Students' Sentences

The total frequency of phrase types functioning as adjunct elements in sentences produced by the students was determined by the researchers, as presented in Table 4.26 and Figure 4.26. Out of 315 adjuncts, they construct 58 noun phrases, 224 prepositional phrases and 33 adverb phrases. The result indicates prepositional phrase is often used than other phrase in constructing adjunct in the students' writing. By looking at the high frequency of prepositional phrases 224, it suggests that students relied heavily on this type of phrase to provide more than one additional information in their sentences.

Putri, Syarif, and Refnaldi (2020) stated, prepositional phrases serve syntactic functions in sentences, which are the grammatical relationships between constituents in a syntactic composition. Prepositional phrases use syntactic functions to express related meanings to adverbs and adjectives, such as where, when, how, and what kind. One of the most functioning of prepositional phrase is as adverbial in a sentences, as mentioned by Rahmanita, Sariyati and Nurulaen (2019), the more widely used of prepositional phrase as adverbial is because it can modify the verb, adverb, and adjectival which are mostly found in

sentences. It is also concluded that in one sentence there could be more than one prepositional phrase through the tree diagram that they have been analyzed.

According to the data and the explanation above, the result can be concluded that 224 frequency uses of prepositional phrase as adjunct indicate that it is more often used than noun phrase, and adverb verb on their function as adjunct in students' writing. The results can be connected to prepositional phrase's flexibility and the typical role in supplying key information about circumstances such as location or time, which are often required to fully understand the action being described. Since prepositional phrase offers a broader range of descriptive possibilities in a sentence, it makes sense that students used it more frequently than noun or adverb phrases when forming adjuncts in their sentences.

The Analysis of The Data Collected from the Questionnaire

In order find out EFL students' difficulty factors in using adjunct and complement in writing sentences, the researchers take data from valid questionnaire. The data for each variable is shown in table below:

Table 3 The Frequency of Students' Answer on Variable 1

Psychological Factors	Frequency	Percentage
a. Strongly Disagree	50	17%
b. Disagree	168	58%
c. Agree	63	22%
d. Strongly Agree	7	2%

There are eight valid statements from the questionnaire regarding variable 1. The Table 3 illustrate that more students disagree than agree with the statements on the Psychological Factors variable. In total, 58% of students indicated disagreement, with an additional 17% expressing strong disagreement. On the other hand, 22% of students agreed with the statement, while only 2% strongly agreed. These results suggest that this factor is not a significant difficulty affecting students' use of adjuncts and complements in their sentences.

Table 4 The Frequency of Students' Answer on Variable 2

Linguistic factors	Frequency	Percentage
a. Strongly Disagree	54	25%
b. Disagree	48	22%
c. Agree	84	39%
d. Strongly Agree	30	14%

The result from the validity test of the questionnaire, there are six valid statement on the variable 2. A review of the data in Table 4 clearly shows students' responses regarding whether Linguistics Factors can affect the using of adjuncts and complements in their sentences. The results indicate that more than half of the students with the total of the agree and strongly agree answers show this linguistics factor is a contributing factor to their difficulties. Specifically, 39% of students agree and 14% strongly agree, while 22% disagree, and 14% strongly disagree.

Table 5 The Frequency of Students' Answer on Variable 3

Peer Support	Frequency	Percentage
a. Strongly Disagree	78	21.7%
b. Disagree	236	65.6%
c. Agree	44	12.2%
d. Strongly Agree	2	0.6%

Variable 3 addresses which Peer Support would affect the using of adjuncts and complements in students' writing. According ten valid statements of this variable, Table 5 shows that, based on students' responses, this factor is not a significant difficulty affecting their use of adjuncts and complements in sentences. This is evident as 65.6% of students disagree and 21.7% strongly disagree with the statements, compared to 12% who agree and 0.6% who strongly agree.

Table 6 The Frequency of Students' Answer on Variable 4

Advisor Support	Frequency	Percentage
a. Strongly Disagree	123	34,2%
b. Disagree	198	55,0%
c. Agree	37	10,3%
d. Strongly Agree	2	0,6%

According to students' responses regarding the external difficulty factor about Advisor Support, as shown in Table 6, the results indicate that most students disagree with 10 valid statement in this variable. Specifically, 55% of students disagree, and an additional 34.2% strongly disagree, contrasting sharply with only 10.3% who agree and only 0.6% strongly agree. This suggests that Advisor support is not perceived as a significant difficulty factor affecting students' use of adjuncts and complements in their writing.

As the results, the researchers carefully analyzed the students' responses for each variable in the study. By examining the students' answers in both the 'agree' and 'disagree' categories about the all negative statements that the research state regarding all variable, the researchers determined that only variable 2 as significant difficulty factors. These variables specifically affected the students' use of adjuncts and complements in their writing.

4. Novelties

The novelty of this research lies in its focus. The focus is on identifying the frequents and the patterns of adjuncts and complements, whether they are noun phrases, prepositional phrases, or adverbial phrases. The finding shows strong preference for adjuncts, particularly prepositional phrases, reflects students' current level of syntactic awareness and their strategies for sentence construction. Furthermore, by identifying the factors contributing to students' challenges with adjuncts and complements, students can improve their study methods and develop more effective approaches to mastering English syntax.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that EFL students more frequently use adjuncts than complements in their sentences, with a total of 315 adjuncts identified, predominantly in the form of prepositional phrases (71.1%). This finding indicates students' preference for providing descriptive details, especially about time and place, in their writing. The EFL students' difficulty factors in using adjunct and complement in writing sentences is only internal factor, specifically linguistic aspects. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations. The study focused on a specific group of intermediate-level EFL students, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to other proficiency levels or contexts. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations. The research limitations of this study are as follows: First, the methodology relies heavily on quantitative descriptive analysis, which provides statistical insights but does not include qualitative perspectives, such as interviews or detailed observations, that might offer a richer understanding of the underlying reasons for students' difficulties. Second, the sample is limited to a specific group of EFL students, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other learner populations or different levels of proficiency. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating mixed methods, which would allow researchers to

combine statistical data with qualitative insights to gain a deeper understanding of students' thought processes, challenges, and strategies in using adjuncts and complements.

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