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## HUMAN COMPETENCES IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NOUN PHRASES USE

*Розглянуто особливості сприйняття англомовних номінативних фраз, їх морфологічних характеристик та синтаксичних функцій. Проаналізована специфіка продукування та використання іменних фраз англійської мови (NP). Іменник як ядро досліджуваних фраз виступає важливим ідентифікатором інформації, що передається. Створення іменних фраз респондентами свідчить про морфологічну обізнаність мовців, і про певні труднощі при аналізі синтаксичних функцій іменних конструкцій. Помилки у аналізі англомовних іменних конструкцій корелюються із мовленнєвими зразками рідної (української) мови і інтерферують із граматичними нормами англійської мови.*

***Ключові слова:** іменні фрази, морфологічна обізнаність, синтаксична функція, мовні зразки.*

### Introduction

Humans, by developing their abilities to use noun phrases, foster their knowledge of English, to apply it appropriately and proactively. Nomination refers to a special way of lexical and grammatical meaning conveyance. The main means of information transfer in English is a noun. The process of nomination and expression of thoughts facilitates the world's cognition and description. Both, syntactic and nominative functions create an inseparable and harmonious meaningful unity. The language arises from speech and it evokes a new system of relevant features. Language learners should be able to apply a wide arsenal of tools and instruments, which effectively transfer their ideas, help them share the information, and communicate with others.

Noun phrases (NP) represent the **object** of this research paper. The learners of English as a foreign language (EFL students) should be aware of NPs specifics and implement them effectively. Being one of the basic tools of the English language, a noun represents an important identifier of the information sent to the recipient. NP is an integrative step on the way to correct sentence formation. Syntactic and morphological features of NPs are considered to represent the **subject** of this paper. Based on questionnaires, the speech of EFL students is often predetermined by the studied grammar structures, but the students develop their speaking patterns according to their needs, experience, heard/read patterns, or standards. An **innovative perspective** stems from NPs use by EFL learners. Theoretical underpinnings of the Eastern and Western researchers enable to conduct an objective evaluation of the NPs perception, use, and further functioning as one of the most important tools of the world cognition. **Theoretical** integration of the world's leading ideas in the field of nomination, as well as its further practical implementation in the context of the study, signify its wide scope of concern.

### Literature review

The syntactic relationship between the words in the English language represents one of the key issues for the effective communication of students. The main focus of the paper is on EFL students, for whom NP is another challenge in mastering the English language knowledge. There is a special difficulty for them because of their mother tongue interference (Pastor, 2008). First of all, EFL students draw parallels between their native languages and the English language. In one way or another, but they think in their languages and they often memorize words/structures/grammar, etc., but they rarely focus on the theoretical explanation of the used word/form and other grammar tools (Vo Tran Mong Thu). Since nomination plays a crucial role in the English language, a noun is one of the basic grammar tools in the language considered. To know the structure/function of a noun helps the users to facilitate their process of thinking and express their ideas more freely.

The most relevant feature of modern linguistics is the consideration of language as a functional system. Thus, the functioning of nouns is one of the crucial issues for EFL students. It is also important to consider nouns in terms of their systemic paradigmatic characteristics. The functional aspect of linguistic phenomena is taking the forefront of the linguistic science. There are many interpretations of the functional approach in modern linguistics. From another perspective, it is appropriate to understand syntax in its broadest sense as the science about the construction of speech in general. Being the bridge and footer of the language, syntax provides the language with a thread for further beads (language units) stringing. Syntax studies expand the scope of functional linguistics and focus not only on relevant syntactic issues such as the actual segmentation of the sentence, or the problem of constructions of a bigger order but also covers some various linguistic concerns. The communicative function of the language plays a crucial role, while for the speakers it is relevant to use language as a means of reflecting the world in human consciousness and its representation in the linguistic structure (Roland, Dick & Elman, 2007).

Cognitive functions of the language also determine the ability of language users to speak effectively. Also, language serves as a means of expressing our emotions, reflections of the world, daily experiences, ideas and considerations, and many other issues. To know the language and to use the language are often two contrasting concepts.

The development of noun phrases competence is one of the key concerns for English language learners. There is no doubt that speaking/writing in English is not only about putting the words together, combining or using them in one order or another. It is more important to make up sentences similar to native speakers, who often do not think about the theoretical explanation of their usage of nouns or any other speech parts (Hilpert, 2014). “A noun phrase is defined as a phrase that consists of a pronoun or noun with any number of associated modifiers, including adjectives (small, red, lovely), adjectives phrases, adjectives clause, possessive adjectives (my, his, her, their) adverbs (very, extremely, usually), determiners (the, a, an), preposition phrases and other nouns in the possessive case” (Vo Tran Mong Thu).

The noun, if compared with other parts of speech, has the most diverse set of syntactic functions. Its most relevant functions represent the function of a subject and/ or objective complement (Junaid Perspektif, 2018). Further, both subjects and objective complement play the most important role in composing an English sentence. A noun can also be part of a predicate.

According to Junaid (2018), the English noun phrase is potentially constructed by a pre-modifier, a nucleus, and a post-modifier. The clause “Many people will build a school building in my country” contains two NPs that function as a subject (Many people) and an object (a school building) (Junaid, 2018).

A special feature of the English language that distinguishes it from other Indo-European languages is the ability of a noun to act in the function of a prepositional definition in an unchanged form: *a stone wall, the speed limit, the sea breeze*. Such attributive phrases can be identified in different ways (Oliviera, 2013). They can be characterized as disintegrating complex words, while other researchers claim that nouns play the role of an adjective (Börjars & Delsing, 2008). Meanwhile, the

attribute noun does not acquire any other features of the adjective: it cannot convey the degree of quality, cannot be combined with an adverb, and so on.

According to recent studies, “Unlike clauses, noun phrases never stand alone as sentences. They don’t include a verb that can change according to the time reference and in some cases, they do not have subjects either. This is the most important thing that we should take notice of the noun phrases” (Vo Tran Mong Thu). Therefore, it is typical for the users of the modern English language to demonstrate their knowledge about NP as a perfect way for a semantic restriction.

Moreover, noun phrases are the second most common types of prepositional definitions besides adjectival definitions. The share of nouns among all prepositional definitions can reach 40% in some types of texts (Muhammad et al, 2013). Researchers consider the most optimal ways of nouns transfer and they concentrate on the spreading of nouns among the learners of the English language (Hashemi, 2012). For sure, EFL learners should learn the priority of nouns use and the important role they play in the formation of linguistic competence. To convey one’s ideas in the most appropriate and comprehensible way, it is necessary to understand the key elements of language (Adebileje, 2016). From this perspective, nouns are of crucial importance in the process of nomination and they form the basis of any message given or conveyed. It is relevant to consider a noun phrase more in the context of grammar rather than from the perspective of lexicography (Pastor, 2008). The latter point of view highlights lexical features of a noun while focusing on grammar and syntax, it is possible to discuss the role of nouns in the sentence or identify appropriate patterns of use (Childers et al., 2012). According to the researchers, “It is typically the noun, all possessive pronouns (in the function of nouns), a noun phrase that follows the verb, although the indirect object and subject complements can also occupy this position. The direct and indirect object has some characteristics in common, and this fact justifies their sharing term of an object” (Millaku, 2016).

For instance, in an ordinary English noun phrase, an attributive adjective follows the determiner and precedes the head noun, as in *a big shock*, rather than *big a shock*. Importantly, the big mess construction has a certain grammatical systematic nature, which is sensitive to distinctions in terms of dictionary and grammar model. This challenge would be handled by the grammar rather than by the dictionary (Hilpert, 2014).

The reasons for such widespread use of nouns as a prepositional definition and the prevalence of substantive phrases refer to the features of relative adjectives in the English language. The ability of phrases of the N1 + N2 (noun 1 + noun 2) model represents a wide range of semantic relationships, as well as the fact that substantive noun phrases are effective means for information compression (Jill Musgrave, Jean Parkinson, 2014). The tendency of the linguistic restriction can be traced further and extrapolated on the integrative potential of the words used.

If to consider these features of noun phrases in various contexts, it is possible to claim that scientific and technical texts are more saturated with noun phrases for information compression (Ağai-Loçi, 2013). Based on data obtained by different researchers, N1 + N2 is a powerful means of compressing information and decrease of redundant syntactical constructions. This function of information compression is implemented in texts of all styles, although in the majority of cases, the phrase N1 + N2 is used by the authors of newspapers and scientific articles (Ağai-Loçi, 2013).

Being typical of modern English, noun phrases of N1 + N2 type are characterized by the different frequency of use in texts of various functional styles. The differences in the frequency of use of N1 + N2 in the texts of newspaper, journalistic, scientific, and official-business styles can be stylistically specific. Functional styles influence N1 + N2 in complex segments of a text. The widest range of semantic relations and varieties of relations N1 + N2 are used in newspaper and journalistic styles. The predominance of N1 + N2 with certain semantics in the text of a particular style is the result of communication and subject of the text, and may also depend on the use of other syntactic constructions (for example, verb forms of the passive voice, adverbial groups).

Therefore, according to Meerman & Tamaoka, (2008), “native English speakers consistently exhibit a seemingly innate ability to identify or produce noun phrases with correct adjective order. Few, if asked, will attribute their ability to do so to formal instruction, let alone be able to recall if

and when they received such formal instruction in their own schooling experiences. Ordering adjectives instantaneously and correctly seems to necessitate intuitive, semantic reasoning rather than the ability to recall grammatical rules. Rules governing adjective order can be taught and memorized, but not often convincingly explained or understood; it is near impossible to convincingly explain to learners of the language *why* “big black bear” makes more sense than “black big bear”, especially among those whose native language does not require such a semantic adjective order” (Meerman & Tamaoka, 2008). Moreover, noun phrases can be also characterized by temporal features. Since any event or situation is organized by the axis of time, the temporal characteristic of the predicate can be considered one of its essential properties: the five o'clock meeting, tourist day departure, etc (Liu, Liming & Li, Lan, 2016).

An NP is described by Benson (2009) as a noun phrase with two or more modifiers preceding the head noun (head noun: dog—the big brown dog; head noun: friend—a genuinely good friend) or with qualifiers, such as prepositional phrases, appositives, and/or relative clauses following the noun (the dog, a hairy flea-covered mongrel; the friend who is like a sister). This means that a nucleus noun may be modified and expanded. At the beginning of NPs, there can be articles, modifiers, quantifiers, and adjectives, and in post-position of NP, one can find relative clauses to represent and transform information into more efficient, yet more complex, language (Cooper, 2013).

If to consider the syntactic functions of the English noun phrases, it is possible to identify five main syntactic functions.

1. Subject. The role of the subject noun in the English language can act independently or with definitions. *The window is white.*
2. Predicate. In the role of the predicate, the noun must follow the linking verb. *He's a student.*
3. Adverbial adjunct. *His car is in the garage.*
4. Complement. The role of the noun in the sentence is a complement. *I followed his advice.*
5. Definition. *For example, this is an interesting group.*

The problem of N1+N2 is an issue, which evokes critical consideration of various researchers. For users, it is easy to incorporate this pattern, NPs, in their speech or writing as it compresses the information given. Moreover, the role of a verb is also important and the language learners should be sure that this is a key linguistic element, which builds their speech. Hashemi (2012) underlines the important role of nouns in the development of a learner's linguistic competence and their special role in the development and use of collocations. “Lexical collocations may be verb+ noun, adjective+ noun, noun+ verb, adverb+ adjective and verb+ adverb. On the other hand, grammatical collocations are phrases containing a dominant word, such as a noun, an adjective, or a verb and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or clause” (Hashemi, 2012).

If the students are getting a good command of the English clauses and can effectively use them in their speech, they need to know the noun phrases as the basic knowledge and skills because each function of the language, the speaker's intention, and other issues can be expressed with the help of clauses. Therefore, relevant researches are necessary to expand the students' knowledge about English syntax.

### **Methodology**

Based on the following questions, the research highlights the assessment of students' competencies in noun phrase constructions.

1. What are the construction patterns of NP functioning as the subject, object, complement, and adjunct?
2. To what extent the students' competencies in NP constructions are based on the functions, which they represent in the sentences?

Number of Respondents: 40 students (the six-semester students majoring in English, Ukraine)

Instrument: with the help of the writing test the students were asked to write 20 English sentences in their own words.

In processing the data, the sentences, produced by the students, were analyzed following their correct usage, unambiguity, and appropriate context. The use of NP was assessed as a subject, object,

complement, and adjunct. Students focused on Noun phrases use based on their functions in sentences. Syntactic roles of the chosen noun models and phrases were correlated with the frequency of sentences created by the students.

### Results and discussion

According to data obtained from the participants, the noun as an object is the most wide-spread function in the sentence (more than 50 percent of sentences produced). The complement follows it and represents the second group of sentences used (nearly 30 percent of sentences created by the students). The subject is the third group of the number of patterns, and nouns as an adjunct are the least used group (nearly 20 percent of sentences created by the students). Therefore, with the help of nouns students identified a core idea of the sentence to a certain extent. The main role of a complement is to complete the meaning of a sentence or predicate, and it was used by the participants of this study.

Questionary example:

Please, compose 20 sentences using Nouns.

1. *My favorite color is green*
2. *His blue eyes are stunning*
3. *Mary's new car is very beautiful*
4. *Their family who lives near the beach is very friendly*
5. *My college is situated near the embankment*
6. *The greatest experience in my life is my school years*
7. *It was the greatest event ever in my life*
8. *Slang as their daily language is chosen as an option in their communication*
9. *Books are my best friends*
10. *Holiday with my family is very pleasant*
11. *Many bags in my home have been already packed*
12. *Too many short stories are very impressive for me*
13. *Who is the best person?*
14. *The smartest students in my class are my best friends*
15. *The difficult subject in the college is Maths*
16. *The best story in my life is my voyage to Europe*
17. *Every day I wake up and see my family*
18. *Every morning I go to school*
19. *I go to campus by public car.*
20. *We go to the school by tram*

Following the examples provided by the students, the following patterns of NPs are evident:

NP as a subject

*My favorite color*

*Their family who live near the beach*

*The greatest experience in my life*

NP as an object

*Slang as their daily language*

*Holiday with my family*

*Many bags in my home*

NP as a complement

*who is the best person?*

*the smartest students in my class*

*The difficult subject in the college*

NP an adjunct

*Every day*

*Every morning*

*Campus by public car.*

If to focus on the syntactic roles of a noun phrase used, the role of a subject is not mainly preferred by the students. The concept of "subject" should be understood in a broad sense and can denote a person or a group of people, specific items, etc. performing some functions/activities. Respectively, subjective features of a noun phrase can be expressed by nouns, denoting people, proper names, the names of specific objects or substances, the names of states, nations, the names of organizations, and others (Cooper, 2013).

An object attribute focuses on the action or objects described: a girl's prosecution, etc. The content attribute indicates the type or content of the activity of the core denotate. It is also possible to claim features describing locative functions of the noun phrase: her skyrocketing career, a long-time train sleep, etc. As far as we can see, noun phrases are complex in their characteristics and are used for descriptions and identification of various phenomena. Students' competencies of noun phrases creation enable them to practice with the analytical form of the English language.

Despite a large number of papers focused on nouns, their structure, and functions, the syntactic roles of a noun are often underestimated. There is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the use of nouns in sentences with a focus on the speakers' abilities to identify such functions. The syntactic functions of nouns or their appropriate use in special places of a sentence are required for an embodiment of the students' linguistic competence.

Students' competencies of development and use of noun phrases show that they understand these grammar constructions, because daily utterances they hear, are reflected in their coinage of noun phrases and their use in English sentences. The main difference between EFL students and native speakers is that for the latter there is no problem to order words appropriately in one or another NP pattern. For foreigners, it is much more difficult to choose and explain the correct word order. To sound more naturally, be effective and efficient in language use, one should refer to the noun phrases as key determinants of successful language skills demonstration. Supposedly, the number of words in a noun phrase, their advanced level, or complexity may stand for the student's improved linguistic skills (Xu, 2014).

For EFL students, it is of crucial importance to improve their professionalism and knowledge of NP patterns. Thus, Liu and Li claim, "Results of the analyses showed significant underdevelopment of

NP post-modification complexity in recipients' writing relative to published texts explicates the circumstances, which signify the difference. Implications of the findings for the teaching of EFL academic writing were also discussed (Liu&Li, 2016). We can make a similar conclusion and consider that EFL students used NP constructions as objects and complements, but they were not too complicated and transferred the basic information or the main ideas of students. Simple structures of considered NPs underline their prevalent nominative function.

The use of more complex knowledge underlines more proficient students' English language competence. Following the ideas of the modern researchers in this field, the complexity of noun phrases is not developing and certain modifications of noun phrases do not stand for advanced knowledge of the English language. The pre-modification of a noun phrase is a more frequent phenomenon than post-modification. Thus, according to Jin Xu (2014) "From the structural analysis of NPs, we know that the verbs in either form of -ing or -ed can be used in both pre-head modifier and post-head modifier. However, Chinese scholars tend to put verbs in clauses and therefore overuse clauses as the post-head modifier" (Jin Xu, 2014). It depends on the context of the sentence, the situation of communication, the linguistic competence of a student, and other factors if we discuss pre/post-modifiers of noun phrases. In the given study, the students used NP constructions as a means for information transfer and compression. EFL learners use simple NP constructions in order not to overload their sentences with too difficult grammar constructions.

In the majority of cases, the verb identifies the essence of a sentence, but the role of a noun is often neglected. The knowledge of syntax among EFL students is often underestimated too. Mainly, the knowledge of lexical and grammar issues is more in focus for the foreign language learners rather than their competence in the knowledge of syntax or stylistics.

Focusing on syntax as the system providing sentence patterns of language, one refers to the higher level of linguistic competence. Knowing a language also means having the ability to combine morphemes and words to express a particular meaning. That part of linguistic knowledge concerning the structure of sentences is called syntax (Fromkin and Rodman, 1983). Nouns often serve as cohesive means in the text (Mousavi et al, 2014). Therefore, an appropriate correlation of syntactic patterns, or NP in the case of this research, signifies relevant use of the syntactic patterns of the English language with noun phrases.

The development of noun phrases competence is one of the key concerns for English language learners. There is no doubt that speaking/writing in English is not only about putting the words together, combining or using them in one order or another. It is more important to make up sentences similar to native speakers, who often do not think about the theoretical explanation of their usage of nouns or any other speech parts. Thus, the English noun phrase is formed as a particularly close unity of the structural terms, and most often the only formal indicator of the syntactic relationship between the components of the phrase or the word order.

### **Conclusions and Perspectives of the Study**

Noun phrases signify an evident tendency of language means restriction in the English language. These phrases used by the students are a convenient and economical means of expressing content or information because they allow students to provide the information for others in compressed form. The multicomponent structure of these phrases can be considered as the result of decoding the whole sentence and even text in an attributive phrase. To the greatest extent, the effect of the language restriction is shown in noun phrases with several descriptive accompanying words. Noun phrases are positioned as the most common types of phrases in modern English.

Concerning the multicomponent noun phrases, it is relevant to mention that they are rather implicit, and the final interpretation of their meaning is determined by the required background knowledge. Moreover, noun phrases are widely used in scientific-technical and newspaper-journalistic styles. These are genres, which focus on the elimination of redundancy. The use of multicomponent noun phrases enables students to transfer the maximum amount of information with minimal use of grammar communication tools. The most popular form of noun phrases is the one, which consists of two nouns. The multicomponent structure of noun phrases is the result of compressing the whole sentence, the users' ability to describe the sentence in wider terms using the minimal number of words. Moreover, the use of multicomponent noun phrases expands the semantic capacity of the whole sentence. These phrases are convenient means of information transfer. The wide use of noun phrases in the modern English language signifies an analytical way of conveying syntactic relations and improvement of the language restriction tendency. Thus, in English, the process of transforming a phrase into a compound word is extremely intense. For EFL students, the role of NP constructions is very important, because they transfer their ideas in the process of different phenomena nominations in the English language. The participants of the study used NP constructions as key transformative grammar tools and they preferred them as objects and complements more often than in any other syntactic function. It is possible to call this process the integration of a phrase in a sentence, text, or discourse.

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## ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN COMPETENCES IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NOUN PHRASES USE

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### Abstract

**Background:** The research focuses on human competences in English-language noun phrases use. The relevance of the study encompasses not only an isolated concern about nouns and their role in the English-language knowledge, but also focuses on morphological and syntactic functions, which noun phrases perform. Both, Western and Eastern researchers analyzed the given theme in their spe-

cific social and cultural contexts. Unlike native speakers, EFL speakers use noun phrases for nomination, predominantly.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the analysis is to consider the role, which noun phrases play in the English language acquisition by non-native speakers.

**Results:** According to data obtained from the participants, the noun as an object is the most wide-spread function in the sentence. The subject follows this function and the nouns identified as an adjunct are the least used group. For EFL students, nouns did not represent a nucleus of the sentence, rather, they related it to their syntactic function.

**Discussion:** the role of nomination is dominant in the English language use. According to the results of studies obtained, descriptive functions of noun phrases, their functionality as language restriction tool were preferred for EFL students.

**Keywords:** noun phrases, morphological awareness, syntactic function, speech patterns.

#### Vitae

Nataliia Lazebna is PhD in Philology, Associate Professor. Her areas of research interests include discourse studies, terminology, computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and text linguistics.

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### МОРФОЛОГІЧНІ ОДИНИЦІ В ПОЕТИЦІ МИКОЛИ ВІНГРАНОВСЬКОГО

*У статті розглянуто особливості організації морфологічних форм у ліриці Миколи Вінграновського як вияв його індивідуальної творчої манери. На рівні морфологічних одиниць, які беруть участь у поетичному смислотворенні, виявлено поширене в поезії письменника явище співположення спільнокореневих чи однакових слів з елементами авторських новотворів на тісному просторі рядка або строфи. Схарактеризовано випадки морфологічної атракції й селекції службових частин мови. Наголошено на необхідності розглядати подібні явища як елементи загальної ідіостильової парадигми поета.*

**Ключові слова:** граматичні засоби, морфологічні одиниці, співположення морфологічних форм, морфологічна атракція, «згущення» морфологічних одиниць, поетика Миколи Вінграновського.

Питання про поетичні смисли, реалізації яких сприяють ті чи ті граматичні форми й значення та особливості їхньої текстової реалізації, «граматика поезії», здавна перебувають у колі наукових зацікавлень лінгвістів (О. Потебня, Л. Булаховський, В. Виноградов, Р. Якобсон, Ю. Лотман та ін.), і увага до цієї теми не послаблюється дотепер (О. Голікова, С. Єрмоленко, О. Калашник, Н. Мініна, Л. Синельникова, О. Скоробогатова та багато ін.). Дослідники виходять з того, що поетичний текст – це цілісна система і в ньому діє низка особливих закономірностей, одна з яких – закономірність взаємодії одиниць морфологічного рівня в поетичному мовленні як цілісному феномені (Скоробогатова 313).