

THE STRUCTURE OF NOUN PHRASES IN THE CIACIA LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the structure and distribution of the noun phrase in the Ciacia language as part of a contribution to the documentation of the Ciacia language. Noun phrases, in formal linguistics, are a fundamental part of sentence structure since they are the core of a sentence that serves as the subject along with the verb phrase. In the Ciacia language, the subject of a sentence must agree with the predicate, as the number of subjects will affect the conjugation of the verb. However, specific studies focusing on the noun phrase structure of the language remain limited. This study is conducted through three steps. The first step is data collection. The data were collected from 10 texts in the Ciacia Language Text Book, written by Lee Ho Yeong, Hwang Hyu Jeong, and Abidin (2009). Since the texts were written in Hangeul, the manuscript was first transliterated into the Latin alphabet. In the second stage, the data analysis stage, noun phrases were identified using Carnie (2011) manual. A noun phrase in the text can be identified by first locating the noun as the head word, then examining any accompanying elements such as adjectives, numerals, or possessives that modify it, and finally confirming its function in the sentence by checking whether the group of words can function as a subject, object, or complement and can be replaced by a pronoun. In the last stage, the data presentation stage, the data was presented informally by systematically presenting examples of noun phrases based on their structural patterns, accompanied by clear identification of the head and modifiers, translations, and explanations of their syntactic functions within sentences. The result shows that a noun phrase in the Ciacia language can take the form of a basic noun, a noun with premodifiers, or a noun with a postmodifier. Premodifiers include quantifier + N, while postmodifiers include noun + possessive suffixes (-u, -mami, -nto, -mu, -miu, -no), noun + possessive suffixes + noun, noun + determiner (ia, ia ana), noun + adjective, and noun + relative clause. Most forms can function as a subject, object, or complement within a sentence structure. Though the reference of structure noun + possessive suffixes (-u, -mami, -nto, -mu, -miu, -no) needs to be mentioned in the preceding sentence when it functions as a subject.

Keywords: noun phrase, Ciacia language, syntactical analysis

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji struktur dan distribusi frasa nomina dalam bahasa Ciacia sebagai bagian dari kontribusi untuk dokumentasi bahasa Ciacia. Frasa nominamerupakan salah satu bagian mendasar dari struktur kalimat karena merupakan inti dari kalimat yang berfungsi sebagai subjek bersama dengan frasa kata kerja. Dalam bahasa Ciacia, subjek kalimat harus sesuai dengan predikat, karena jumlah subjek akan mempengaruhi konjugasi kata kerja. Namun, studi khusus yang berfokus pada struktur frasa nomina pada bahasa Ciacia tetap terbatas. Penelitian ini dilakukan melalui tiga langkah. Langkah pertama adalah pengumpulan data. Data dikumpulkan dari 10 teks dalam Buku Teks Bahasa Ciacia, yang ditulis oleh Lee Ho Yeong, Hwang Hyu Jeong, dan Abidin (2009). Karena teks-teks ditulis dalam bahasa Hangeul, naskah tersebut pertama kali ditransliterasi ke dalam alfabet Latin. Pada tahap kedua, tahap analisis data, frasa kata benda diidentifikasi menggunakan manual Carnie (2011). Frasa kata benda dalam teks dapat diidentifikasi dengan terlebih dahulu menemukan kata benda sebagai kata utama, kemudian memeriksa elemen yang menyertainya seperti kata sifat, angka, atau posesif yang memodifikasinya, dan akhirnya mengkonfirmasi fungsinya dalam kalimat dengan memeriksa apakah kelompok kata dapat berfungsi sebagai subjek, objek, atau pelengkap dan dapat diganti dengan kata ganti. Pada tahap terakhir, tahap penyajian data, data disajikan secara informal dengan menyajikan secara sistematis contoh frasa kata benda berdasarkan pola strukturalnya, disertai dengan identifikasi kepala dan pengubah, terjemahan, dan penjelasan fungsi sintaksisnya yang jelas dalam kalimat. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa frasa kata benda dalam bahasa Ciacia dapat berupa kata benda dasar, kata benda dengan pewatas depan, atau kata benda dengan pewatas belakang. Yang termasuk ke dalam kelompok pewatas depan adalah numeralia + N, sedangkan pewatas belakang mencakup kata benda + akhiran posesif (-u, -mami, -nto, -mu, -miu, -no), kata benda + akhiran posesif + kata benda, kata benda + penentu (ia, ia ana), kata benda + kata sifat, dan kata benda + klausa relatif. Sebagian besar bentuk dapat berfungsi sebagai subjek, objek, atau pelengkap dalam struktur kalimat. Meskipun demikian referensi akhiran posesif dari frasa nomina dengan struktur N+ akhiran posesif (-u, -mami, -nto, -mu, -miu, -no) perlu disebutkan dalam kalimat sebelumnya ketika berfungsi sebagai subjek.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, words that may refer to people, objects, creatures, and ideas are called nouns (Yule, 2010). However, such a definition is based solely on its meaning or semantics (Carnie, 2011). One way to determine the category of a word is through its distribution in the sentence, along with affixes attached to the word. The common positions of a noun in the sentence are the subject, the complement, and the adverbial. Moreover, subparts of a sentence are called a phrase. A phrase can appear as a single word or as a group of words that function as a single unit. A unit of phrase that is centered around a noun, and has the same distribution as noun is called noun phrase (Gelderen, 2010; Ramlan, 2001). In the Ciacia language, noun phrases show various structural patterns involving both single nouns and modified forms. These patterns demonstrate that noun phrases in Ciacia can be realized through morphological and syntactic processes such as affixation and modification.

The Ciacia language (CL) is an endangered language spoken in four regions of Southeast Sulawesi, including Baubau, Buton, South Buton, and Wakatobi (Mead and Truong 2021). The language belongs to the Muna-Buton subgroup of the Austronesian Family (Hammarström 2026). The language is still used in these areas, but the number of speakers is relatively small. It is estimated that there are about 105,000 speakers of Ciacia (Ebenhard 2026). Many young people may not use the language as often as older generations. Larger languages like Indonesian have a strong influence on daily communication. This situation can cause a language shift over time. Because of this, the Ciacia language needs more attention for documentation and preservation.

The language became the center of attention in Indonesia when an attempt was made to adopt the Korean Hangul script as its writing system in 2009. This idea was seen as a way to help preserve and promote the language (Wright 2009). Many people showed interest in this unique effort. The use of Hangul was an example of using a foreign writing system for a local language. However, some problems with this approach, as Hangul cannot represent some sounds found in Ciacia (Dessiar 2023; Laksono 2017). This means the writing system does not match the language's sound patterns. The Latin alphabet can represent the phonological structure of the language (Havens, 2024), making these sounds clearer. Therefore, the Latin script is considered more suitable for writing the language.

Despite being popular for its writing systems, there are few studies on the structure of noun phrases in the Ciacia language. (Abdullah 1991) states that, based on the semantic relationships between elements in a phrase, the Ciacia language exhibits several types of meaning relations in noun phrases, namely addition, selection, similarity, modifier, restriction, and demonstrative. However, the study does not clearly explain the types of modifiers that can form these semantic relationships between the elements. (Konisi 2001) reveals that morphologically, nouns in the Ciacia language can be formed through the process of affixation. These nouns can occupy various syntactic positions, such as the subject, object, complement, and adverbial positions. Nouns can also be combined with negation words *mincuano* and numbers, and can serve as the object of a preposition. The noun that comes with this modifier can actually be categorized as a noun phrase. However, the discussion of this matter is not the main focus of Konisi's study. Therefore, a more in-depth study of the structure of noun phrases in Ciacia is still needed. In another article (Konisi, 2020), he mentioned that some types of demonstratives may appear with a noun, making them noun phrases. However, again, this topic is not the focus of the article, so more study is needed.

This article aims to examine the structure and distribution of the noun phrase in the Ciacia language as part of a contribution to the documentation of the Ciacia language. Noun phrases in the Ciacia language are important to study because they have the same function as nouns, namely as subjects, objects, adverbs, and complements. The existence of noun phrases plays a major role in forming a clear and systematic sentence structure. Noun phrases that are unclear in their boundaries can lead to a loss of meaning clarity. This happens because there is no grammatical marker that shows the semantic relationship between the core noun and its descriptive element. The number of subjects and objects in the Ciacia language is also important to know because it affects verb conjugations and sentence formation (Fajrhi, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is used to explore and understand meanings, patterns, and structure in depth rather than measure them numerically (Creswell 2009). It is suitable for studying noun phrases in the Ciacia language because the analysis focuses on describing linguistic structures and interpreting relationships between elements in context. The study is conducted

through three steps. The first step is data collection. The data were collected from 10 texts in the Ciacia Language Text Book, written by Lee (2009). Since the texts were written in Hangeul, the manuscript was first transliterated into the Latin alphabet. In the second stage, the data analysis stage, noun phrases were identified using (Carnie 2011) manual. A noun phrase in the text can be identified by first locating the noun as the head word, then examining any accompanying elements such as adjectives, numerals, or possessives that modify it, and finally confirming its function in the sentence by checking whether the group of words can function as a subject, object, or complement and can be replaced by a pronoun. In the last stage, the data presentation stage, the data was presented informally by systematically presenting examples of noun phrases based on their structural patterns, accompanied by clear identification of the head and modifiers, translations, and explanations of their syntactic functions within sentences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings and a discussion of the structure of the noun phrase in the Ciacia language, based on the collected data. The main focus of the analysis is to identify the patterns of phrase formation, including the order of constituents. The findings show that noun phrase may appear as a simple noun, a noun with premodifiers, or a noun with postmodifiers.

A noun phrase is a group of two or more words that has one grammatical function and serves the same grammatical function in the sentence (Ramlan 2001). This view excludes a single noun as a noun phrase. However, since a single noun in the Ciacia language may serve as a constituent in a sentence, and the nucleus of the phrase is available, a single noun can be considered as a noun phrase. In the Ciacia language, a single noun may appear as a monomorphemic or polymorphemic form. For example:

- 1) *Ia aipo na-bhembe pocu-no i kaghindi.*
 3sg. may 3sg.ft.-hit head-poss.3sg to wall
 He may hit his head to the wall
- 2) *Au no-bhotaa mai taki ia.*
 Dog 3sg.ps.-laugh with poop that
 The dog is laughing because of that poop.
- 3) *Wawi-no labuntou no-pikalaha Sigung.*
 Pig-poss.3sg forest 3sg.ps-chase skunk
 The wild boar is chasing the skunk.

Example (1) has both monomorphemic and polymorphemic noun phrases. By form, *kaghindi* “wall” may seem like a polymorphemic word, similar to what (Konisi 2001) mentions in his report. However, it is considered the root. *Kaghindi* “wall” serves as an adverbial. The sentence also has *pocuno* ‘his/her head’, which, by form, is a single word, but morphologically it consists of two morphemes: *pocu* ‘head’ and the third-person singular possessive suffix *-no*. The suffix *-no* refers to the subject *ia* ‘she/he.’ In the sentence, *pocuno* ‘his/her head’ functions as an object. Common nouns such as *au* ‘dog’, in sentence (2), and *sigung* ‘skunk’, in sentence (3), are also considered noun phrases.

Phrases and categories can be coordinated as long as they are the same kind (Gelderen 2010). The common noun may be arranged in the plural form by adding a coordinating conjunction between the nouns. For example:

- 4) *Mata, bhobha, lima, mai kake-no mulai noka-bhanga-aso wutono.*
 Eyes mouth hands and feet-3sg.poss begin 3pl.ps-see-bn their self
 His eyes, mouth, hands, and feet begin to see themselves.

There are four nouns in sentence (4), including *mata* ‘mata’, *bhobha* ‘mouth’, *lima* ‘hands’, and *kakeno* ‘his feet’, being coordinated by *mai* ‘and’. From all four nouns, only *kake* is being attached by possessive suffix *-no*. Structurally, the meaning of the suffix also applies to the other nouns. It is only attached to the last one for efficiency. Moreover, the subject agrees with the verb as the verb uses the conjugation *noka-*, which implies that the subject is plural.

Premodifiers accompanying the head noun in the Ciacia language are a numeral.

- 5) *Ia no-terlambat selama tolopulu maniu.*
 3sg 3sg.ps for thirty minutes
 He came lates to thirty minutes.

- 6) *Raja no-utusa kura-kura na-ghumaso akulu kelinci.*
 Raja 3sg.ps-send turtle 3sg.ft.-catch a rabbit
 The king is sending the turtle to catch a rabbit.

In sentence (5), the noun *maniu* ‘minutes’ appears with a compound cardinal number *tolopulu* ‘thirty.’ A compound cardinal number is a cardinal number that consists of two or more words to express an exact quantity (Alwi, 2014). *Tolopulu* consists of *tolo* as the short form for *totolu* ‘three’ and *pulu* ‘tens’. *Tolopulu maniu* ‘thirty minutes’ functions as an adverbial in the sentences. In sentence (6), the numeral *akulu* ‘a’ modifies the noun *kelinci* ‘rabbit.’ *Akalulu* contains the prefix *a-* which means one, and the classifier *kulu* ‘self’. So, phrase *akalulu kelinci* literally means *a rabbit*, and it operates as an object.

Postmodifiers of the noun phrase in the Ciacia language may include patterns such as N-possessive suffixes + N-possessive suffixes, N-possessive suffixes followed by another noun, noun plus demonstrative (ia, ia ana), N + adjectives, and N + relative clauses. The difference may be seen in the following examples.

- 7) *Kakambhobha-no kaana-no hawite akikidhe.*
 Window-3sg.pos. house-3sg.pos only a few
 The house only has a few windows.

Kakambhobhano kaanano ‘his house’s windows’ consists of head *kakambhobhano* ‘its windows’ and modifier *kaanano* ‘his house.’ Even though both of them have possessive suffix *-no*, the meaning of the suffix in each word is different. In the word *kakambhobhano*, the suffix *-no* refers to *kaana* ‘house,’ while *-no* in *kaanano* refers to the owner of the house, which is mentioned in the previous sentence in the text. Phrase *kakambhobhano kaanano* function as the subject in the sentence.

- 8) *Moiya noka-potangku mai mia-no Wolio.*
 3pl 3pl.ps-close to people-3sg.pos Wolio
 They live close to the Wolio people.

The noun phrase in sentence (8) is the most used form in the Ciacia language. The head noun is *mia* ‘people,’ and it is attached by the possessive suffix *-no*. *Wolio* is a noun, referring to a tribe in Buton Island. Without the suffix *-no*, the postmodifier *wolio* cannot accompany the head noun. Some other examples for this form are *wawino labuntou* ‘wild boar,’ *miano Ciacia* ‘the Ciacia people,’ *tantarano raja* ‘king’s soldier,’ *woruno tai* ‘under the sea,’ and *badano Adi* ‘Adi’s body.’

- 9) *Suatu waktu raja ia no-tawae panaki.*
 One time king that 3sg.ps-effect-3sg.ob disease
 Once, the king fell ill.

- 10) *Dhanee janji-u mai Adi i taman wala-wala ia ana.*
 There janji-1sg.pos with Adi in park morning this
 I have an appointment with Adi in the park this morning.

Sentences (9) and (10) are examples of noun phrases with a demonstrative as a postmodifier. In sentence (9), head noun *raja* ‘king’ is specified by adding the demonstrative *ia* ‘that.’ Sentence (10), head noun *wala-wala* ‘morning’ is specified by adding the demonstrative *ia ana* ‘this.’ From those examples, it can be seen that the structure may appear in many positions, including the subject and adverbial positions.

- 11) *Hatono uka mina dhopi monipi.*
 Roof-3sg.pos too from board thin
 The roof is made from thin board.

The head noun does not need to be attached by a possessive suffix when it is being modified by an adjective. In sentence (11), the head noun is *dhopi* ‘board’ and it is not attached by any affix. It is directly accompanied by an adjective *monipi* ‘thin.’

- 12) *Moiya cia-naka-munda na-maa ka-maa nibhadino.*
 3pl neg-3pl.ft-um-unda 3sg.ft.-eat food that they do not like.
 They will not want to eat food that they do not like.

In sentence (12), the head noun is *kamaa* ‘food.’ *Kamaa* itself is derived from the verb *maa* ‘eat’. Prefix *ka-* change the category of verb *maa* into noun *kamaa* ‘food’ (Konisi 2001) The noun *kamaa* can later be attached by the suffix *-no* to *kamaano* ‘his food’ with a possessive suffix and modified by another noun. Moreover, in sentence (12), *kamaa* is accompanied by the postmodifier *nibhadhino* ‘that he does not like.’ The root for *nibhadhino* is *badhi* ‘dislike,’ with the confix *ni--no* that makes the word change into a relative clause (RC). The suffix *-no* may be substituted by *-u* ‘I,’ *-nto* ‘we include,’ *-mami* ‘we exclude,’ or *-miu* ‘you.’

- 13) *Indee mangu-luno berhasil mam-beno jubano mia mihangka-hangkano...*
 Who first open robe-3sg person who is walking
 Who can open the robe of the person who is walking?

Sentence (13) has a quite complicated noun phrase structure. The head noun for phrase *jubano mia mihangka-hangkano* ‘the robe of a person who is walking’ is *juba* ‘robe’. Noun *juba* is then attached with suffix *-no* in order to connect it with the following noun. *Mia mihangka-hangkano* ‘person who is walking’ is also a noun phrase which has the same structure as sentence 12. In sentence (13), it acts as a single entity noun, thus *jubano mia mihangka-hangkano* has the same structure as the noun phrase structure in sentence (8).

- 14) *Isami kelinci ta-pakaluara-e hate-mami.*
 1pl.ex rabbit 1pl.ft-remove-3sg.ob heart-1pl.pos
 We rabbits will remove our hearts.

Sentence (14) is an example of a noun phrase with an appositive. The reference for the noun phrase *isami* ‘we’ is put exactly after it. *Isami* refers *kelinci* ‘rabbits’, and they both agree with the conjugation *ta-* that is attached to the verb *pakaluara* ‘remove.’ The object of this sentence is *hatemami* ‘our heart,’ a noun with the structure N-possessive suffix.

These findings imply that the concept of a noun phrase in the Ciacia language is more flexible than the definition proposed by (Ramlan, 2001). Ciacia's data shows that a single noun can function as a complete noun phrase. It occupies a syntactic position and has a grammatical function. This supports the idea that noun phrases can be minimal, as suggested by (Carnie, 2010).

Analysis also shows that the noun phrase in the Ciacia language is morphologically rich. The formation of noun phrases is influenced by possessive suffixes, numeral constructions, and derivative affixes. The pattern of coordination and modification suggests that noun phrases in the Ciacia language can develop in complex ways. The head-modification structure remains evident in this construction. These findings suggest that the structure of noun phrases in Ciacia reflects universal syntactic principles and language-specific morphological strategies.

CONCLUSION

The result shows that the formation of a noun phrase in the Ciacia language can be a basic noun, a noun with premodifiers, or a noun with a postmodifier. The basic noun can be monomorphemic and polymorphemic, N attached with possessive suffixes (*-u*, *-mami*, *-nto*, *-mu*, *-miu*, *-no*). Premodifiers consist of numeral + N, while postmodifiers include N-possessive suffixes+ N-possessive suffixes, N-possessive suffixes+N, N + determiner (*ia*, *ia ana*), N + adjective, and N +relative clause. Most forms can function as a subject, complement, or adverbial within a sentence structure. Though the reference of structure noun + possessive suffixes (*-u*, *-mami*, *-nto*, *-mu*, *-miu*, *-no*) needs to be mentioned in the preceding sentence.

This study shows that the structure of noun phrases in the Ciacia exhibits considerable variation. Further research can expand the data for this study to a spoken corpus, adding more speakers and varying the context. The study can also be developed by comparing the structure of the Ciacia noun phrase with other languages in the Southeast Sulawesi region to identify patterns of similarity and difference. Further research can also examine syntactic and morphological aspects related to the function of possessive suffixes in more complex sentence structures. Therefore, a more complete and detailed understanding of the Ciacia language's grammatical system can be achieved.

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