



زانكۆی سه‌لاحه‌دین – هه‌ولێر

Salahaddin University – Erbil

## **An Exploration of modification in English grammar**

Prepared by:

**Muhammad Ziad Mamar**

**Muhammad Othman Ado**

Supervised by:

**Dr. Basima Othman Mahmood**

2022-2023

# **Table of Contents**

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Chapter Two: Types of Modification**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.3 Pre-modification
- 2.4 Post-modification
- 2.5 Multiple Modifications
- 2.6 Summary

## **Chapter Three: Levels of Modification**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Immediate Constituents
- 3.3 Coordination
- 3.4 Multiple Constituents
- 3.5 Summary

## **Conclusion**

## **References**

# Chapter One

## Introduction

The modification is an important grammatical phenomenon. It is a term used in syntax, morphology, and phonetics. Our concern is with syntax. It indicates that one grammatical unit syntactically depends on the other under different restrictions in the scope of the term. The elements of modifications are the modifiers that are used to describe or to modify a head. There are different kinds of modifiers according to the part of speech of these modifiers and according to their position regarding the head (Grald & Sidney, 1991).

Noun phrases which consist of pronouns or nouns (with or without determiners) can be subjects, objects, subjects or object complements. In all those positions, the noun phrase includes the noun as the head with or without its modifiers. So, 'the man', 'my house', 'several pounds' are described as noun phrases Modification is one of the primary functions in grammar.ex: The tall girl standing in the corner who became angry. Verb is the second element of the basic sentence. It can be extended in different ways, i.e., by adding verb modifiers. The verb phrase consists of a verb which is the head and one or more than one modifier: *Mary sang beautifully*. Adjectives and adverbs are modified by intensifiers (adverbs) which are used as pre-modifiers. So, they usually come before the adjective and the adverb except the adverb 'enough' comes after the adjective and the adverb: The fight started quite unexpectedly (Randolph, 1937).

Some linguists define the term modification from different aspects. Modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that modifies—that is, gives information about—another word in the same sentence. For example, in the following sentence, the word "burger" is modified by the word "vegetarian". Example: I'm

going to the Saturn Café for a vegetarian burger. The modifier "vegetarian" gives extra information about what kind of burger it is. A modification is a word or a group of words that adds to the meaning of other words which are usually nouns.” Thus, Modification word is a subordinate element. It is a word or a group of words that affect the meaning of a headword in that it describes, limits intensify, or adds to the meaning of the word that it modifies (Farries, 1952:202) . In the same vein, Leech (2006) indicates that the modifier is a word, phrase, or a clause that is added to another word, to specify more precisely what it refers to. The range of modification, a word or word group, does not specify or limit a headword, usually noun. But the same word or word group may modify sentences as well as other grammatical categories like adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, etc.

The aim of this research is to investigate what is meant by modification, what is effect of modifications on head and showing kinds of the head which can be modified and the main kinds of modifiers. In addition, the last focus of this investigation will be on the levels of modification. Accordingly, in the chapter two, we will work on the type of modifications and explain each of them in detail. Then, we will investigate pre-modification, post-modification and finally multiple modifications. The focus of chapter three will on levels of modification from different angles, the first level will focus on immediate constituents In our treatment of modification up to now we have dealt with only first- level modifiers and their heads. The second level will focus on coordination and subordination. Finally, the second level will focus on multiple constituents, here; we are in a position to account for coordinate items in an IC analysis through exploring immediate constituents, coordination and multiple constituents. Lastly, conclusion will be drawn.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Introduction

A modification is a word or a group of words that adds to the meaning of other words which are usually nouns. modifiers may come before the head word of a certain phrase (pre-modifiers) or after (post-modifiers). Although the first group includes premodifiers, they are preceded by determiners in a noun phrase. From a semantic point of view, descriptive information is given to the head word; specific meaning of the head is shown, and its reference is restricted or limited and modification have five main types. In the situation of having more than one modifier occurring with the head or having more than one head in the noun phrase Modifier define as Multiple Modifications

## 2.2 Types of modifications

**A. Sentence Modifiers** a sentence modifier is an adverbial that modifies, as its head, all the rest of the sentence, and is often set apart by terminals-rising, sustained, or falling. Example: *Naturally, he behaved at the party.*

**B. The Noun Phrase:**

**Prenominal Modifiers** The noun phrase, you will recall, consists of a noun head together with all the modifiers that accompany it, before and after.

Example: *All my many old school friends of other days who have passed away*

**C. The Noun Phrase:**

**Postnominal Modifiers** of the noun headword may be placed after the headword as well

as before it . Example: *The apartment, large and empty*

**D. The Verb Phrase:**

**One-Word Adverbials** A verb phrase, as you have already seen, consists of a verb and all the modifiers and complements that cluster around it. The one-word modifiers are the adverbials, which you have already studied in some of

their characteristic positions. All adverbials in these positions are part of the verb phrase, except those that serve the function of sentence modifiers.

Example : *eats every hour*

**E. The Verb Phrase: Word-Group Adverbials** In the verb phrase we find various kinds of word groups operating to modify the verb headword .

1. Prepositional phrase adverbials: *eats in the kitchen*
2. Noun phrase adverbials: *eats every hour*
3. Clause adverbials: *eats when he is hungry*
4. Infinitive phrase adverbials: *eats to satisfy his appetite*
5. Participial phrases in -ing as adverbials: *came running to the table*
6. Participial phrases in -ed as adverbials: *returned wounded in the leg*

( Norman.1965 )

### **2.3 Pre-modification**

Pre-modification is of less clarity than post-modification. Pre-modifiers Are of various types. The first type is the determinatives. Then a number Of lexical and grammatical items are with infinite complexity and Relations among them to result a noun phrase (Al-Hamash and Abdullah, 1976: 172-4).

Pre-modifiers can either be restrictive or non-restrictive. The modifiers Which are adverbs, other phrases and sentences are restrictive and receive Prosodic prominence than the head of the noun phrase. But as a general Rule, if there is no post-modification, the head of the noun phrase receives The prosodic prominence. As a rule, any item with a prosodic prominence, Should be restrictive. If there is no post-modifier, the prominence is Received by a pre-modifier.

Also pre-modification can either be prominent or temporary. So, because adjectives and nouns are stative and verbs are dynamic, most adjectives and nouns describe prominent features while most participles describe temporary ones (Quirk et al., 1985: 1322-3).

A number of pre-modifying items precede the head of the noun phrase. They are as follows:

### **a) Adjectives**

Two or more adjectives using before the head noun in a noun phrase are ordered on the semantic basis. Generally speaking, in the noun phrase, those adjectives are placed after the determiners (pre-determiners, central determiners, and post-determiners) and the head noun. According to the position where the adjectives are used, they are of four types:

1. pre-central: This type is used after the determiners immediately. They are also described as peripheral, non-gradable.

This special type is the intensifying (emphasizers, amplifiers, and downtoners), such as certain, definite, sheer, complete, slight.

2. central: in this position, the adjectives which meet all four criteria for Adjective status, occur, such as, 'hungry, ugly, funny, stupid, silent, rich, Empty'.

3. post-central: in this position, the participles are used, as in: retired, Sleeping, and colour adjectives like 'red, pink'.



4. pre-head: 'The least adjectival and the most nominal' items are used Here, like the denominal adjectives which refer to nationality, ethnic Background, such as: Austrian, Midwestern, and denominal adjectives Which mean 'statistical, political, statutory'.

So, according to the above classification, adjectives are ordered in the Following way:

1+ 2 certain important people

1+ 3 the same restricted income

1 + 4 your present annual turnover

2+ 3 a funny red hat

2+4 an enormous tidal wave

1+ 2+ 4 certain rich American procedures (Quirk et al., 1985: 437).

**b) The Noun Phrase:** Prenominal Modifiers The noun phrase, you will recall, consists of a noun head together with all the modifiers that accompany it, before and after.

*our sturdy garden fence .*

*That low wire fence.*

*(Norman.1965*

### **C) Genitives**

Another pre-modifier which is used with a restrictive function, is the genitive, as in:

*I visited his fisherman's cottage.*

'Cottage' is the head preceded by 'fisherman' plus 's' with an apostrophe as a pre-modifier. The meaning expressed by such a complex noun phrase is: a fisherman has a cottage

*(ibid: 1335)*

### **d) Nouns**

A head noun can be preceded by a noun as a modifier, as in: city

(modifiers, noun) hall (head noun). the noun modifier can be preceded by

a determiner and an adjective, as in: *the new city hall* (Al-Hamash and Abdullah, 1976: 174- 6)

When a noun pre-modifies the head, it will be too close to the head as if they are as compounds:

'his life story'

(Quirk et al., 1985: 1330).

### **e)–ing participles**

According to whether the present participle refers to a permanent or characteristic feature, it is possible for it to modify the head of the noun phrase. For example,

*She has a very interesting mind.*

'Interesting' is used as an adjectival although it is closely related to the verb 'interest' .

But the active –ing participle does not occur in the pre-modification, as in: *the carefully-hiding spy*, but it can be in the post-modification, as in: but it can be in the post-modification, as in:

*The spy, carefully hiding in the bushes kept watch on the house*

(ibid: 1372).

## **2.4 Post-modification**

## FORMS OF POSTNOMINAL MODIFIERS

### 1. Modified Adjective.

A bare adjective modifying a noun often occurs in the prenominal position. But an adjective in the postnominal position is usually modified by a qualifier.

Ex\ The mailman, exuberantly *happy*, whistled merrily.

He had never seen a woman more *lovely*.

### 2. Compounded Adjectives.

When two or more adjectives modify a noun, they can occur after the noun.

The mailman, *weary* and *wet*, trudged along in the rain.

A woman *old* and *gaunt* stood at the door.

### 3. Uninflected Word.

Nouns may be modified by some of the uninflected words that are often adverbial .

The people *upstairs* .

The poker game *now* .

The uninflected word in this position usually has a place or time meaning.

### 4. Adverb.

An adverb may modify a noun that precedes it.

My meaning exactly

The blue dress *particularly* .

### 5. Noun Phrase Adjectival.

A noun phrase may modify a preceding

noun.

The party *last night*

Our vacation *next summer* .

6. Prepositional Phrase Adjectival

The bend *in the river*

7. Participle or Participial Phrase, -ing, Adjectival

The woman *weeping* was escorted to the door.

The hawk, *spotting his prey*, swooped to the meadow.

8. Participle or Participial Phrase, -ed Adjectival

They refused to pay the money *demanded*.

The snow, *driven by the wind*, sifted through the cracks.

9. Infinitive Phrase Adjectival, to —

I have a lesson *to study*.

10. Relative Clause Adjectival.

A noun may be modified by a relative clause. In the examples that follow the relative clauses are italicized.

1. The trees *that had mistletoe* were half dead.

2. The old carpenter, *who had been laying the floor*, stood up and straightened his back.

( Norman C. stageberg ,1965 )

## 2.5 Multiple Modifications

There can be multiple modification if one or all of the following three conditions, explained below, are provided:

1. if there is more than one modifier occurring with the head. So, the following two noun phrases are combined with each other to get a new noun phrase

Ex\

*the man in the corner and the man talking to John* → *the man in the corner talking to John.*

The –ing participle clause post-modifies the man in the corner and the prepositional phrase post- modifies the head man. There should be a conjunction like 'and' between the two post-modifiers to avoid any ambiguity arisen .

2.there can be more than one head in the noun phrase, as in:

*the man in the corner and the woman in the corner.*

Here, the same post-modifier 'in the corner' can follow one determine *the* and then the two heads are coordinated by *and* so (*the man and woman in the corner*)

3.what there is in (1) and (2) can be combined with each other to result a complex noun phrase like:

*the man and woman in the corner talking to John.*

In addition to those two post-modifiers, there can be a third one like '*nearest the door*' which is an adverb. Thus, [the [man and woman] [in [the corner[nearest the door]]] [talking to John]].

There can be an ambiguity because the –ing participle clause is far away from the head.

But some tend to use a relative clause instead of the non-finite clause, so it will be: *who is talking to John*. This is to avoid the ambiguity since the door is impossible to talk. But the use of the finite relative clause removes such an ambiguity .

( *Quirk et al., 1985, p.1296* )

## 2.6 Summary

There are different kinds of modifiers according to the part of speech of these modifiers and according to their position regarding the head modifications are per- modifier and post - modifier according to their position to the words they modify and all types of modification which they are five type can be pre or post modifications.

A. Sentence Modifiers

B. The Noun Phrase: Prenominal Modifiers\ *Your sturdy fence* .

C.The Noun Phrase: Postnominal Modifiers\ *The weather this morning* .

D.The Verb Phrase: One-Word Adverbials \ *should do it anyway*.

E. The Verb Phrase: Word-Group Adverbials \ *Clause adverbials: eats when he is hungry*.

modifications can be Multiple Modifications :  
if there is more than one modifier occurring with the head , there can be more than one head in the noun phrase or what there is in (1) and (2) can be combined with each other to result a complex noun phrase. *All the potatoes*

## **References**

.Faries, Charles Carpenter (1952).The Structure Of English. London  
Harcourt,and Brace Company, Inc.

Leech, Geoffrey (2006). A Glossary Of English Grammar.*Edinburgh*  
*University* Press Ltd

Randolph, Q (1937). *A University grammar of English*. England:Universit  
London

Grald, N. & Sidney, G. (1991). *An Introduction to English grammar*. Great  
Britain: British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Ellyvan, G (September 24, 2002). **An Introduction to the Grammar of English:**  
Syntactic arguments and socio-historical background. Publication of John  
Benjamins.

NORMAN C. STAGEBERG (1965) **An Introduction English grammar**  
University of Northern Iowa

Randolph Q (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*.  
England University of London

Al-Hamash, Kh. J and Jamal Jalal Abdulla (1976). A Course in Modern English  
Grammar. Baghdad: *The Institute for the Department of English Language  
Teaching in Iraq*.



