

SYNTACTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF ADJECTIVE CLAUSES AND REDUCED ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

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Abstract

This study examined syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in order to discover the similarities and differences between the two constructions. The dataset of applied linguistics research articles was gathered from Journal of English for Academic Purposes and Journal of English for Specific Purposes due to their indexation in SCOPUS Q1 database. The dataset of novels as written in English was gathered from Peter Pan and The Secret Garden due their best-seller status (www.amazon.com). The dataset of a travel guidebook was gathered from France: Inspire/ plan/ discover/ experience, which is a country where tourists visit the most. A total number of approximately 600,000 words equally divided into the three datasets are made up of 44 tokens, referring to sentences. The analytical framework follows generative grammar to see the system of the two constructions. After the process of the data analysis, three linguists whose mother tongue is English were asked to validate the data analysis in order to ensure validity and reliability. The results in this study show that the adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook in English occur at 64 percent, 75 percent, and 81.82 percent, respectively. This phenomenon is explained by space limitation, pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle and pragmatic aspects of least effort requirement. It is expected that the results of this current study will be useful for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in order to apply the use of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in writing applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook in English correctly and appropriately.

Keywords: Adjective Clauses, Applied Linguistics Research Articles, Novels, Reduced Adjective Clauses, Syntactic Interpretations, Travel Guidebook

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Introduction

Adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses are the controversial structures in English when one should use one over the other, such as (1).

(1a) *Mary, who works as a doctor, is my older sister.*

(1b) *Mary, working as a doctor, is my older sister.*

Example (1a) represents an adjective clause used with the relativizer *who*. On the other hand, *working as a doctor* as in (1b) represents a reduced adjective clause where the relativizer *who* is omitted or deleted and the finite verb *works* is transformed into the present participle *working* (Radford, 2009). Despite (1a) and (1b) being semantically the same, they are syntactically merged in a different way. The different syntactic interpretations between the two are controversial when one variant should be used over the other.

Different genres are likely to have their own preferences of grammatical use. This study selected the materials of applied linguistics research articles. The linguistic expressions in applied linguistics research articles are reliable as there are proofreaders to check the accuracy of language use before each article is finally published/printed. However, not all English language learners can learn language from academic research papers as the linguistic use in academic prose is likely to be suitable for English language learners with an upper-intermediate level or above.

Novels as written in English is optional reading materials that is suitable for everyone. Apart from being read for entertainment, English language learners could learn the form, meaning and use at the same time while practicing reading novels themselves. The readers, especially EFL learners, could select a novel that is particularly suitable for their own English level of proficiency. Also, they can choose their own favorite genres of novels and train themselves to be dependent English language learners without always relying upon their English teachers. In addition, travel guidebooks are also a kind of reading material that is suitable for everyone. Today, we are living in the post Covid 19 era where people come back to travel across territories again. Travel guidebooks left on their bookshelf for several years now seem to become useful if one wants to start a new trip. The usefulness of these materials leads ones to the following research questions and objectives of the study.

Objectives

To investigate the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook.

Literature Review

Syntactic Interpretations of (Reduced) Adjective Clauses in English

Adjective clauses are known as *post-modifiers*, which function to provide supple-

mentary or additional information, such as numerical data, subjectivity and exemplifications (Wongkittiporn, 2021a). Omitting this piece of information does not affect grammaticality of the sentence. If the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses are not the issue of grammaticality, it is supposed to be the issue of language variations or text varieties, as in (2).

(2a) Peter works at Icon Siam, *which is the most up-to-date department store in Thailand.*

(2b) Sam, *who is generous and friendly*, got promoted to shop manager.

With examples (2a)-(2b), The information as provided in the adjective clauses as in *which is the most up-to-date department store in Thailand* and *who is generous and friendly* denotes *subjectivity*, referring to the writers' personal comments or viewpoints toward someone or something. In regard to the use of relativizers, the relativizer *who* is used with a person or a group of people. The relativizer *that* can be used with people, animals and entities.

Aside from adjective clauses, *reduced adjective clauses* are also syntactically classified as post-modifiers (Radford, 2009). The relativizers *who*, *which* and *that* located in the Spec C is syntactically omitted via *syntactic principle of deletion* (Radford, 2009). However, the form of reduced adjective clauses is shorter as the relativizers or the heads are omitted and the main verbs in reduced adjective clauses are transformed into either the present participle *-ing* or the past participle *-ed* (Swan, 2016). Semantically, this post-

modifier is usually used to provide additional or supplementary information as in (3).

(3a) The fruit basket *containing apples, pomegranates and pomelo* will be brought to our picnic tomorrow.

(3b) Antibiotic drugs *taken twice a day* should be taken after meals.

Example (3) represents reduced adverbial clauses. *Containing apples, pomegranates and pomelo* is an example of reduced adverbial clause with the present participle. On the other hand, *taken twice a day* is an example of a reduced adjective clause with the past participle.

Given the explanation and exemplification above, there is an issue with these two constructions as it is not clear cut to judge whether the two constructions are the same or not. From a syntactic perspective, adjective clauses are different from reduced adjective clauses. However, they are semantically the same, as in (4).

(4a) The fruit basket *containing apples, pomegranates and pomelo* will be brought to our picnic tomorrow.

(4b) The fruit basket *which contains apples, pomegranates and pomelo* will be brought to our picnic tomorrow.

Semantically, the two structures in (4) are the same. However, their syntactic structures and pragmatic aspects seem to be different. Due to this variation, it has become an issue to be discussed when one variant should be used over the other.

Pragmatic Aspects of End-Weight Principle

Pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle refer to the placement of longer and heavier information at the final of the sentence (Smolka, 2011). The placement of longer information which is additional information means the readers could continue to read if they want to gain supplementary information, as in (5).

(5a) When the new year comes, Mary usually brings her boss a fruit basket *containing apples, pomegranates and pomelos*.

(5b) When the new year comes, Mary usually brings her boss a fruit basket *which contains apples, pomegranates and pomelos*.

Both the reduced adjective clause as in *containing apples, pomegranates and pomelos* and the adjective clause *which contains apples, pomegranates and pomelos* are additional information, which is long and heavy, so they are placed at the final position.

Principles of Formality

Principle of formality refers to the level of officiality in selecting structures to be used in different text varieties. Some text varieties, such as academic texts are likely to prefer more formal structures. On the other hand, other text varieties seem to prefer less formal structures which can be either a reduced form or a less complex structure, as in (6).

(6a) A doctor who works in the field of *Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)* is called an *Otolaryngologists*.

(6b) A doctor working in the field of *Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)* is called an *Otolaryngologists*.

When taking a closer look, it seems that example (6a) sounds rather more formal and more academic than example (6b). To support this with *principle of least effort requirement*, example (6a) requires the writers or speakers to put more effort in producing this structure due to the requirement of subject and verb agreement in English as in the singular subject *doctor* and the finite verb *works*.

Related Previous Studies

As mentioned above, it is believed that different text varieties seem to have different preferences of grammatical use (Wongkittiporn, 2021a). With this standing point, Wongkittiporn (2021a) selected the materials of clinical anatomy texts in English to study the use of adjective clauses. In his study, there are 184 examples of adjective clauses. It has been found that 98.91 percent of the adjective clauses in clinical anatomy textbooks are used with the relativizer *which* where an example is highlighted in (7).

(7) The female pelvic reproductive viscera include the midline uterus and vagina and the adnexa, *which are positioned between the urinary bladder anteriorly and the rectum posteriorly* (Wongkittiporn, 2021a)

The syntactic interpretations of adjective clause in (8) is placed at the final position with the semantic denotations concerning position of organs. The placement at the final position of the sentence is explained by pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle to further explain the word *the adnexa*. The reason as to why this sentence does not use a reduced adjective clause, as in *positioned between the urinary bladder anteriorly and the rectum posteriorly*, could be due to the formality of medical texts.

At the same year, Wongkittiporn (2021b) continued studying adjective clauses in interior design texts. From a total of 138 tokens in his study, the adjective clauses with the relativizer *which* occur the most at 92.76 percent, as in (8).

(8) It's an interior characteristic of his "Wrenaissance" style, *which was inspired by Wren's seventeenth century English Neo-classicism* (Wongkittiporn, 2021a).

The syntactic interpretations of adjective clause in (8) is used with the semantic denotation of historical information concerning *Wrenaissance style*. The additional information about *Wrenaissance* is placed at the final position due to pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle in order to provide supplementary information at the end.

Related previous studies selected the materials of clinical anatomy texts and interior design texts to study the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses in different text varieties. To fill this gap, the current study

aims to contribute to the field by selecting the materials of applied linguistics research articles and novels as written in English to compare between the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses.

Methodology

Source of Data

There are several text varieties in this current study. One of them is applied linguistics research articles as indexed in the SCOPUS Q1 database. Others are novels and a travel guidebook as written in English. The dataset of applied linguistics research articles in this study includes articles taken from *Journal of English for Specific Purposes* and *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. They are reputable publications among scholars in the field of English applied linguistics. The dataset of English novels is made up of *Peter Pan* (Barrie, 2022) and *the Secret Garden* (Burnett, 2021) due to their best-seller status (amazon.com). The dataset of a travel guidebook was gathered from *France: Inspire/ plan/ discover/ experience* (McGill, 2021), which is a country where tourists visit the most.

Data Collection

Purposive sampling method was applied in this study due to a small-scale of the study. The researcher selected the materials he/she expected to get insight into the results (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Approximately 600,000 words contained 44 tokens.

Data Extraction

After the data was collected, part of them is cut to be studied, technically known as data extraction. The extracted data was based upon a sentence level. The data collection is manually extracted. The sentence is made up of an independent clause and an adjective clause or a reduced adjective clause. Although the independent clause is not the main part to be analyzed in this study, it is considered as useful supplementary information to support the data analysis.

(9) *These tweets, written by the group organizing the conference, served both a self-promotional and networking purpose (Luzon, 2023).*

Example (9) is manually extracted from the data of applied linguistics research articles and it is syntactically classified as a reduced relative clause.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study follows Radford's (2009) generative grammar, as in (10).

(10a) *Conference tweets may also embed slides of other researchers' presentations to comment on them in the tweet, evaluate them or initiate a discussion or conversation with the presenter based on the visuals, which helps the tweeters to assert their authority as experts (Luzon, 2023).*

(10b) *These tweets, written by the group organizing the conference, served both a self-promotional and networking purpose (Luzon, 2023).*

Example (10a) is adjective clauses, but example (10b) is reduced adjective clauses.

Results

Reduced Adjective Clauses in Applied Linguistics Research Articles

This section presents the quantitative results of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles as in Table 1.

Table 1 Frequencies and Percentages of Adjective Clauses and Reduced Adjective Clauses in Applied Linguistics Research Articles

Syntactic Interpretations	Frequencies (Tokens)	Percentages (%)
Adjective Clauses	16	64
Reduced Adjective Clauses	9	36
Total	25	100

Table 1 presents percentages concerning the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles. When

comparing the two constructions in this dataset, the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses occur higher at 64 percent followed by reduced adjective clauses at 36

percent. This result points out the preference of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles. To gain better understanding regarding their usage, the qualitative results of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles are given below.

(11a) Within the local grammar framework, a sentence of a particular function is analyzed and parsed into two kinds of pattern: the semantic-functional pattern, *which is identified according to the semantic or functional role played by each constituent in the sentence, and the lexicogrammatical pattern* (Li & Ye, 2023).

(11b) One key AT approach, *developed by Engestrom*, provides a framework for examining human behaviors in

collective activity systems (Ren & Zhu, 2023).

Example (11a) represents adjective clauses as placed in the final position of the sentence. There are 16 tokens of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles. All 16 tokens of adjective clauses always occur in the final position of the sentence which is calculated into 100 percent. Example (11b) presents reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles. The use of the reduced adjective clause in (11b) occurs in the final position of the sentence. To calculate this into percentage, 66.67 percent of reduced adjective clauses occur in the medial position.

(Reduced) Adjective Clauses in Novels

This section presents the quantitative results of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in novels, as in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentages Adjective Clauses and Reduced Adjective Clauses in Novels

Syntactic Interpretations	Frequency (Tokens)	Percentage (%)
Adjective Clauses	6	75
Reduced Adjective Clauses	2	25
Total	8	100

Table 2 represents frequencies and percentages of the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in novels as written in English. When comparing the two constructions, the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses in novels occur the most at 75 percent followed by reduced adjective clauses at 25 percent.

The qualitative data of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in novels is given below.

(12a) They examined the mushroom, *which was a size and solidity unknown on the mainland* (Barrie, 2022).

(12b) That, Peter had told Wendy, was

the way to the Neverland; but even birds, *carrying maps and consulting them at windy corners*, could not have sighted it with these instructions (Barrie, 2022).

Examples (12) represents the use of adjective clauses in novels as written in English. They are always used at the final position of the sentences at 83.33 percent. As illustrated

above, the use of reduced adjective clauses in English novels occur in the medial position of the sentence at 100 percent.

(Reduced) Adjective Clauses in Travel Guidebook

This section provides the results of syntactic interpretations of adverbial clauses and reduced adverbial clauses in a travel guidebook as in Table 3.

Table 3 Percentages of Adjective Clauses and Reduced Adjective Clauses in the Travel Guidebook

Syntactic Interpretations	Frequencies (Tokens)	Percentage
Adjective Clauses	9	81.82
Reduced Adjective Clauses	2	18.18
Total	11	100

Table 3 presents frequencies and percentages of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in a travel guidebook. The syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in a travel guidebook are 81.82 percent and 18.18 percent, respectively. The example of adverbial clauses in the travel guidebook is given in (13).

(13a) The project was taken in 1875 to Paul Abadie's designs, *which were inspired by the Romano-Byzantine church of St-Front in Perigueux* (McGill, 2021).

(13b) Painting from Claude Monet's crowning work, *representing part*

of his Water Lily series, fill the two oval upper floor rooms (McGill, 2021).

Example (13a) represents the syntactic representations of adjective clauses in the travel guidebook. A total number of nine tokens as calculated into 100 percent of adjective clauses in the travel guidebook are used in the final position of the sentence. Example (13b) represents the syntactic interpretations of reduced adjective clauses in the travel guidebook. A total number of two tokens of reduced adjective clauses or 100 percent always occur in the middle positions. The summary of the results in this study is given in Figure 1.

Syntactic Interpretations of Adjective Clauses and Reduced Adjective Clauses in Text Varieties

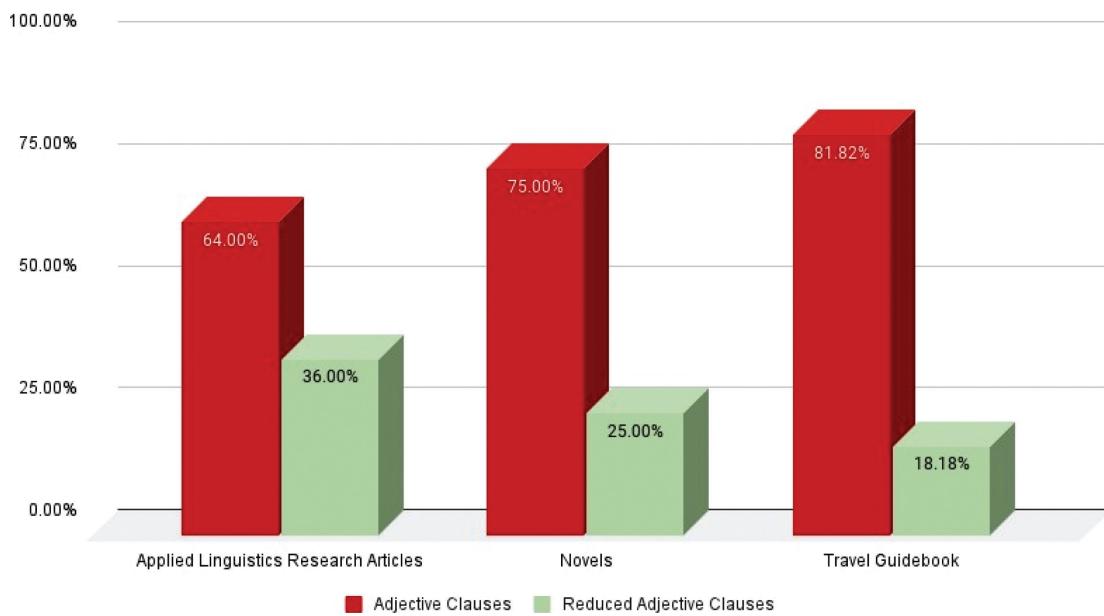


Figure 1 Percentages of syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in text varieties

Figure 1 shows the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook written in English. The syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles occurs at 64 percent and 36 percent, respectively. On the other hand, the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in novels occurs at 75 percent and 25 percent, respectively. The syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in a travel guidebook occur at 81.82 percent and 18.18 percent, respectively.

Discussion

When comparing the result of this study with related previous studies, the current study

goes along the same line with Wongkittiporn (2021a) who found the higher productivity of adjective clauses in the materials of clinical anatomy textbooks in English and interior design textbooks. This is because the textbooks provide more space for the authors to write more than research articles. The structure of adjective clauses is, therefore, preferred to be used.

A total number of approximately 600,000 words in the three datasets are made up of 44 tokens of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses. The tokens of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook as written in English are 25 tokens, 8 tokens and 11 tokens, respectively. They are used in different positions of the sentence as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Positions of (Reduced) Adjective Clauses in Text Varieties

Syntactic Interpretations	Research Articles		Novels		Guidebook	
	(Percentage)		(Percentage)		(Percentage)	
	Medial	Final	Medial	Final	Medial	Final
Adjective Clauses	0	100	33.33	66.67	0	100
Reduced Adjective Clauses	66.67	33.33	100	0	100	0

Table 4 presents positions of (reduced) adjective clauses in different text varieties. In applied linguistics research articles, approximately 66.67 percent of reduced adjective clauses occur in the medial position of sentences. On the other hand, 100 percent of adjective clauses occur in the final position of sentences. In novels, approximately 66.67 percent of adjective clauses occur in the final position, whilst 100 percent of reduced adjective clauses occur in the medial position. In a travel guidebook, 100 percent of adjective clauses occur at the final position of the sentence. Similarly, 100 percent of reduced adjective clauses occur at the medial position of the sentence. With this summary, the discussion of this study is divided into two issues. The first discussion is about the different frequencies of (reduced) adjective clauses in different text varieties. The second issue is concerned with the different frequencies of syntactic positions of (reduced) adjective clauses in different text varieties.

Principle of Formality

As mentioned in the methodology, this current study uses the most up-to-date databases at the time of conducting this

research. For example, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and *Journal of English for Specific Purposes* were published in the year of 2023. The dataset of novels as rewritten in English and published in the year of 2022. The dataset of a travel guidebook by McGill was published in the year of 2021. Therefore, the databases in this study are quite up-to-date. To refer to Figure 1 in this study, the percentage of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research article, novels and a travel guidebook are 64 percent, 75 percent and 81.82 percent. These percentages shows that the most formal texts in this study as in applied linguistics research articles has the lowest percentage of adjective clauses. On the other hand, the less formal texts in this study as in novels and a travel guidebook in this study has the higher percentage of adjective clauses. Academic texts in the present-day English are likely to make their writing to be less formal to become more friendly for the readers. So different target groups, in addition to scholars, as well as English language learners with a lower level of English proficiency are supported to read English academic research articles.

Space Limitations

Aside from principle of informality, space limitation could be another possible explanation of the lower frequency of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles. Space refers to the numbers of pages allowed to be written by the writers. The percentages of syntactic interpretation of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook are 64 percent, 75 percent and 81.82 percent, respectively. The numbers of pages in academic research allowed the writers to write is approximately 15 pages. The number of pages in novels is about 150-200 pages and the number of a travel guidebook is approximately 300 pages. When the space allowed to be written is limited, the writers are likely to apply reduced adjective clauses so as to maintain the same meaning.

Pragmatic Aspects of End-Weight Principle and Least Effort Requirement

The second issue to be discussed is about the syntactic positions the syntactic interpretations of reduced adjective clauses in applied linguistic research articles, novels and a travel guidebook. They are explained by *pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle* (Smolka, 2011), and *pragmatic aspects of least effort requirement*. Examples from authentic texts between adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses are given in (14).

(14) Within the local grammar framework, a sentence of a particular function is analyzed and parsed into two kinds of pattern: the semantic-functional pattern, which is identified

according to the semantic or functional role played by each constituent in the sentence, and the lexico-grammatical pattern (Li & Ye, 2023).

Examples (17) represents adjective clauses placed at the final position of the sentence. This phenomenon could be explained by *pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle* (Smolka, 2011), referring to putting longer and heavier information at the final position of the sentence. In doing this, if the readers need more information, they could continue to read themselves.

The English language is a language that requires to have the subject and verb agreement. Due to this reason, it could affect the use of adjective clauses in two ways.

(15a) One key AT approach, developed by Engestrom, provides a framework for examining human behaviors in collective activity systems (Ren & Zhu, 2023).

(15b) One key at approach which is developed by Engestrom, provides a framework for examining human behaviors in collective activity systems.

In (15b), the first subject and verb agreement are produced as in *one key AT approach* and its auxiliary be *is*. The second subject and verb agreement *is* between *one key AT approach* and the finite verb in the main clause *provide*. Transforming the dependent clause into a reduced adjective clause as in *developed by Engestrom* as in

(15a) can reduce the effort of shooting the fire feature of subject-verb agreement (Radford, 2009) between *one key AT approach* and the auxiliary *be is*.

Along the same line, the results of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses in a travel guidebook show specific and systematic use. The preference of the medial positions of reduced adjective clauses in the travel guidebook is also explained by *pragmatic aspects of least effort requirement*. On the other hand, the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses are explained by *pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle*.

(16a) The project was taken in 1875 to Paul Abadie's designs, *which were inspired by the Romano-Byzantine church of St-Front in Perigueux* (McGill, 2021).

(16b) The Cathedrale NotreDame, *built in Flamboyant Gothic Style during the 15th to 16th centuries*, has a south facade with an exterior stone pulpit (McGill, 2021).

Whilst example (16a) represents adjective clauses, example (16b) represents reduced adjective clauses. The adjective clauses which were *inspired by the Romano-Byzantine church of St-Front in Perigueux* which is a post-modifier to modify *Paul Abadie's design* complies with end-weight principle. The post-modifier provides supplementary information for the readers. In contrast. If the supplementary information is provided in the medial position of the sentence, reduced adjective clauses are applied to be

used instead. The syntactic interpretations of reduced adjective clauses in a medial position are explained by the pragmatic aspects of least effort requirement. In (16b), using the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses in the medial position require the writers to produce tense in the syntactic position of T twice (Radford, 2009) as transformed, as in (17).

(17) *The Cathedrale NotreDame which was built in Flamboyant Gothic Style during the 15th to 16th centuries, has a south facade with an exterior stone pulpit.*

The production of example (17) can be discussed by two major issues. The first issue is the writer's requirement to produce tense twice. The first production is at the position T inside the adjective clauses. The second production is at the finite T *has*. Doing this requires the writers to put more effort regarding his/her production process. Second, it makes the sentence become long unnecessarily. Due to this length, this could be one of the causes to affect the accurate production of subject and verb agreement by learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Conclusion

This current study examines the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses. Despite a variety of possible explanation, the most convincing explanation concerning the syntactic interpretations of adjective clauses in applied linguistics research articles, novels and a travel guidebook available in this study is

the reason of *space limitation* allowed to be written by the writers. Space of writing has an influence on a certain structure selected to be used. When the space is limited, the choice of reduced adjective clauses is applied to communicate the same meaning. Within the same meaning, applied linguistic research articles' researchers prefers reduced adjective clauses, while novels and travel guidebooks' writers preferred to use adjective clauses.

One of the most convincing reasons to explain the higher percentage of adjective clauses in the final position in the three datasets is linguistically due to pragmatic aspects of end-weight principle. The writers in different text varieties tend to put extra, unnecessary and long information at the end of the sentence. On the other hand, using reduced adjective clauses in the medial position of the sentence is supported by

pragmatic aspects of least effort requirement. Instead of making the subject and verb agreement twice, using a reduced adjective clause minimizes the production of tense.

However, the results of this study are applicable only to the datasets of applied linguistics research articles, novels and travel guidebooks. Applying the results of this study to other text varieties, such as news and magazines, may not be applicable to the optimal level. For future research, it is recommended that using other text varieties to compare reduced adjective clauses and adjective clauses would contribute something new to the field. Another recommendation for future research studies is that the comparison of adjective clauses and reduced adjective clauses could be further examined in different English varieties, such as the varieties of American English and British English.

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