



## IDENTIFYING ADJECTIVE PHRASES AND GRADABLE STRUCTURE IN THE NEWSPAPER “THE JAKARTA POST”

Yuki Priliani Putri\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Science, Gadjah Mada University,  
Indonesia

\*[prilianiyuki@gmail.com](mailto:prilianiyuki@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

The adjective that can be modified by degree words or degree adverbs is gradable adjectives. Gradable can also happen to adjectives participial, but not all of them. The adjective phrase has three main functions: attributive adjectives (modified before or after nouns), subject complement (complement subject NPs), and object complement (complement of the object of a clause). This paper focuses on identifying adjective phrase structure and its functions, exploring the categories which are modified, and determining the gradable within the adjective phrase. This paper aims to discover phrases, identify the adjective phrase, and analyze it in the tree diagram. It applied qualitative descriptive method to analyze, and documentation technique to collect the data. The data were obtained from the newspaper of ‘The Jakarta Post’ Vol. 37 No. 086 on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The result found that pre-modifier (degree words and degree adverbs) + Adjective is the most frequent gradable adjective occurred in the texts, and then it is followed by an adjective (head), double adjectives, and pre-modifier (determiners) + adjectives.

**Keywords:** Adjective phrase, Gradable, Newspaper, Tree diagram.

### ABSTRAK

Kata sifat yang dapat dimodifikasi oleh derajat kata atau kata keterangan adalah kata sifat gradable. Gradable juga bisa terjadi pada kata sifat partisipatif, tetapi tidak semuanya. Frasa kata sifat memiliki tiga fungsi utama: kata sifat atributif (dimodifikasi sebelum atau sesudah kata benda), pelengkap subjek (pelengkap NP subjek), pelengkap objek (pelengkap objek klausa). Artikel ini berfokus pada mengidentifikasi struktur frasa kata sifat dan fungsinya, mengeksplorasi kategori yang dimodifikasi, dan menentukan gradable dalam frasa kata sifat. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menemukan frasa, mengidentifikasi frasa kata sifat, dan menganalisisnya dalam diagram pohon. Digunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis, dan teknik dokumentasi untuk mengumpulkan data. Data diperoleh dari surat kabar online ‘The Jakarta Post’ Vol.37 No.086 pada hari Sabtu tanggal 10 Agustus 2019. Hasilnya ditemukan bahwa pre-modifier (kata derajat dan kata keterangan derajat) + Kata sifat merupakan kata sifat gradasi yang paling sering muncul dalam teks, kemudian diikuti oleh kata sifat (kepala), kata sifat ganda, dan premodifier (penentu) + kata sifat.

**Kata Kunci:** Diagram pohon Frasa kata sifat, Gradable, Surat kabar,.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of English around the world is quite massive as one of important languages to be mastered in Indonesia. It is part of the world for international communication in any field. Language in people’s life is not able to be separated because it is the media of communication that people may interact with and understand each other (Utami, *et.al.*, 2019; Huda, 2019). They use language to obtain information and convey several kinds of messages such as ideas, emotions, and desires to others. Three functions of language in communication are cognitive, effective, and affective; it depends on the message to be communicated. Furthermore, people communicate written and oral to each other. To make communication effective in written form, a writer has to convey the messages to the reader properly (Fiddienika, 2020). Messages can be understood properly if a writer can build the grammatical structure of sentences systematically and meaningfully. Arranging the structure of the sentence is discussed in syntax. It happens when people do communication, they speak ungrammatically. Some people can be confused about what they talk about without grammatical sentences. People need to speak clearly otherwise the communication will not be effective that may cause a misunderstanding. Even if you talk about something, it does not always have the same meaning as other people got.

Everything has different standards based on its criteria (Bowler and Gluckman, 2021). For example “*the book is complicated*”, people may think ‘*how complicated is it?*’ it can be *very* or *rather complicated*. Many aspects can occur in a sentence; even a word can have a more specific meaning. Adjective is the word or phrase to modify a pronoun or noun (Hasibuan & Simatupan, 2018), which often happens in this case. Hence, it is an important part to learn because it can influence the understanding of texts in delivering information. One of mass media which still exist to provide information is newspapers. A newspaper is one of the language products in which language can be analyzed, and it is still needed for certain purpose in people’s life. One of the popular English newspapers in Indonesia is The Jakarta Post. Accordingly, the writer will focus on identifying the use of the adjective phrase and gradable structure in the newspaper of ‘The Jakarta Post’ Vol. 37 No. 086 on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This paper aims to discover phrases, identify the adjective phrase, and analyze it in a tree diagram. Relating to the purposes, this paper is expected to be able to provide knowledge about gradable structure that focus on adjective phrase, and to assist in maintaining and attracting people attention to read and analyze a subject through newspapers. Accordingly, this current paper elaborates s two questions, as follow:

1. What are the adjective phrases found in the newspaper of ‘The Jakarta Post’?
2. How the phrases are structured by using a tree diagram?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Chomsky (1957), syntax is the study that how to combine words into a bigger linguistic unit, especially to conceive phrases or sentences. Syntax units are words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and passages. The function of syntax units appears in a formation such as word formation in a phrase, phrase formation in a clause, clause formation in a sentence, and sentence formation in a passage. So it can be concluded that syntax is how to build a sentence from a small into a bigger unit and is also part of structure construction. To support this statement, Valin (2003)

emphasized that syntax deals with how sentences are constructed, and users of human language employ a striking variety of possible arrangements of the elements in sentences. The 'structure' means a pattern of grammar. Radford (2009) declared that grammar is traditionally subdivided into two different but interrelated areas of research morphology and syntax. In other words, Grammar is an important part and point of language. Meanwhile, Dinnen (1966) stated that grammar is the knowledge that is mostly used by poets and writers in the technical of language. Grammar focuses on the correct combination of units of language that have meaning. A language needs to be analyzed from the complex set. Thus, grammar functions to get the meaning of sentences and become the role major of language. Based on Delahunty and Garvey (2010) most a sentence begins with a capital letter and then ends with a period or others. Four types of sentences are simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences. A sentence can express a statement or question. Every sentence is not just a group of words but can be seen to be a systematic structure of words formed in phrases, phrases formed in clauses, and so on.

According to Noel (2011), a phrase is a constituent of sentence structure that is made up of a group of words. Regarding this, a phrase is a sequence of words that does not contain a verb and its subject. Thus, *Phrases are grammatical units composed of one or more words that function as unified parts of clauses* stated by Delahunty and Garvey (2010) and Chaer (2007). In other words, Phrase form occurs when combining two words. Greenbaum and Nelson (2009) mentioned that there are five types of phrases: Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjective Phrase (AP), Adverb Phrase (AdvP), and Prepositional Phrase (PP). Each type of phrase is built with a headword. The main 'head' word or phrase can be modified with any other words which can appear after or before the head of the phrase. It is called a Noun Phrase when the head is a noun. When the head is a verb, it is called Verb Phrase. Meanwhile, it is called an Adjective Phrase if the head is adjective. In syntax, an Adjective Phrase is formed by adjectives such as head; an optional modifier can be with pre-modifier which comes before the head and a post-modifier (or complement) which comes after the head (Djamdjuri, 2016). According to Delahunty and Garvey (2010), APs have three main functions: 1) Attributive Adjectives (modify before or after nouns), 2) Subject Complement (complement subject NPs), 3) Object Complement (Complement of the object of a clause). As you know, adjectives can be modified by some the degree adverbs such as *extremely, hardly, etc.* As well as a category of words called degree words which almost have the same meaning such as *very, so, too, rather, or quite*. Adjectives that can be modified by degree words as well as degree adverbs are typically gradable adjectives based on Lobeck (2013). However, degree words sometimes also cannot modify nouns.

To identify adjectives, not all adjectives are gradable. Adjectives that cannot be modified by degree are called non-gradable or complementary adjectives, such as *dead* and *pregnant*. To make sure a word is an adjective, check if it can be modified by a degree or not. On the other hand, there is a participle adjective which means an adjective that is formed by a present participle or past participle. The adjective participle has function as adjective rather than as verb. Real adjectives look very much like verb participle such as *pleasing* and *interested* but if it is gradable and can be modified by degree, they can be noticed as adjectives easily (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). It can

be distinguished from participial verbs by using the degree word test. Based on Noel (2011), tree diagrams represent structure by marking which sequences of words in a sentence are its constituent phrases. A tree diagram is also called a phrase marker. As sentence structure used in texts is very important, especially sentence types in newspapers. It should be noted that some texts produce different types of sentences. It is important on constructing sentences to make the readers obtain the meaning of the text.

Both studies of adjective phrases and gradable have been examined as the subject of researches. Many scholars analyzed them on various object, such as adjectival phrases in English and Kurdish by Abbas (2019) who found that the syntactic and predicative functions of adjectival phrases in both languages are the same, so he can recognize the differences between adjectival phrases, adjective phrases in the preface of Arabic printing works by Fiddienika (2020) who discovered the differences, functions, and forms of adjective phrases in the text, the adjective phrase structure by Preda (2020) who attempted to find solution in the terminological quandary, and adjective phrase error usage in writing text by Utami *et. al.* (2019) who concluded that there were many students who made errors in producing adjective phrases in their writing. According to the previous researches, the writer were motivated to investigate adjective phrase studies focusing on its gradability structures, since it may provide further knowledge about adjective phrase in linguistics scope.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The article applied a qualitative research design for this paper, as Taylor, *et. al.* (2016) said that qualitative methodology produces descriptive data obtained from observation of people's behavior, spoken or written words (p. 7). The data for this paper were obtained in form of a phrase in the newspaper of 'The Jakarta Post' Vol. 37 No. 086 on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The data were collected by the technique of documentation, which can be conducted in flexible time as declared by Creswell (2009). There were some steps in collecting the data by reading the newspaper, giving a mark on the adjective phrase, and listing all the obtained data. For analyzing, the writer identified the adjective phrase, classified the categories, determined the gradable within the adjective phrase, and illustrated it in a tree diagram.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The writer found 16 adjective phrases that related to this study. The writer selected the data on page 1 – 4 and 13 – 16, in each page, consist of 2 – 5 different texts which in each text found 1 – 2 data.

### **A. Page 1**

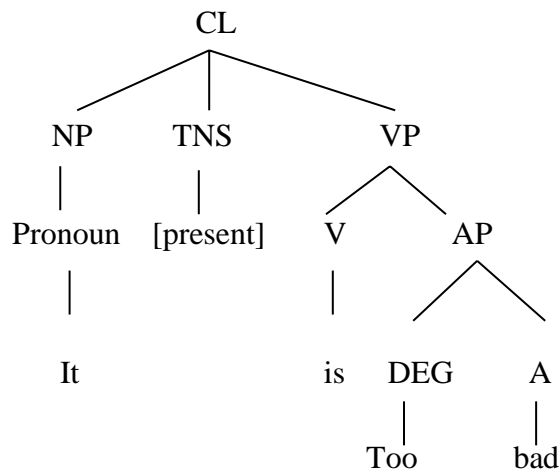
This article shows three data of adjective phrases. The first datum of the adjective phrase was found in the text of '*Gaming Industry Strives to Level Up*'.

Graph 1. Data of ‘too bad

The sentence is in last paragraph:  
 “We would like to have more freedom in developing our products, because it is **too bad** that some people”

The phrase *too bad* stands as the datum which contains an adjective. The word *bad* as the adjective here stands as the head of AP and is modified by degree words *too*. The adjective that can be modified by degree word is typical of gradable adjectives. The adjective phrase (AP) above functions as subject complement which occurs after *being* verb, it is also followed with *that*-. Adjectives play a role to describe a noun or pronoun, and degree words describe the adjective. Hence, *too* describes the adjective *bad*, and *badly* describes the pronoun *it*. Here is the tree diagram or phrase marker of an adjective phrase.

Graph 2. Tree Diagram of ‘too bad



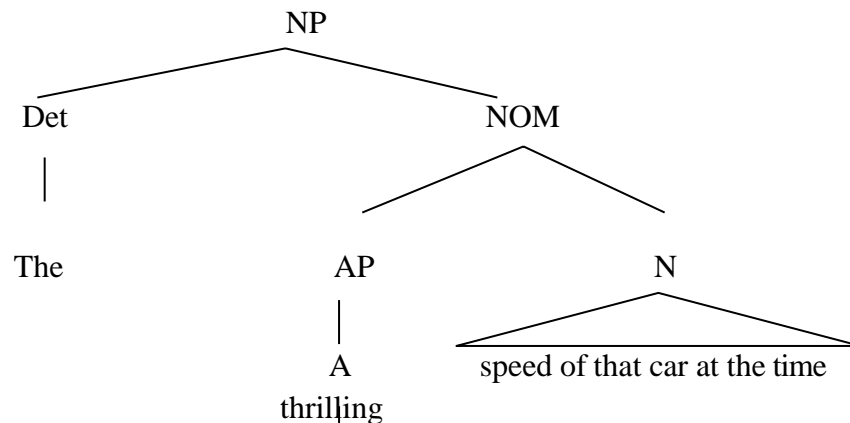
Then, the second datum was found in the text of ‘*Jokowi driven along in Malaysia’s Car Push*’.

Graph 3. Data of ‘thrilling’

The sentence is in 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph:  
 “The **thrilling** speed of that car at the time – it reached 180 kilometers ...”

Adjectives can also be participial which is formed from a present participle, ending with the suffix *-ing*, or a past participle which ended with the suffix *-ed*. Here, *thrilling* is not continuous which from the base verb *thrill* + *-ing* because the word *thrilling* describes the noun. Besides that, it can be modified by degree such *very* so it is an adjective. The adjective phrase above functions as a pre-modifier in a noun because it occurs before the noun that it modifies, or is called in a prenominal position. Here *thrilling* describes the noun *speed of that car*. Drawn in phrase marker as follow:

Graph 4. Tree Diagram of ‘thrilling’



The third datum was found in the text of ‘Parties Accept Megawati’s Cabinet Demand’.

Graph 5. Data of ‘understandable’

The sentence is in 15<sup>th</sup> paragraph:

National Awakening Party (PKB) executive Abdul Kadir Karding said Megawati’s request was **understandable** and the PKB ....

This third datum is not much different case with the second one. In the sentence above, the word *understandable* is an adjective that stands as the head of a simple adjective phrase. It has characteristic endings with the suffix *-able* and also has function as subjective complement because form a predicate that describes the subject.

## B. Page 2

Three data of adjective phrase are obtained from in different texts. The fourth datum was in the text of ‘Fresh Grads Grapple with Salary Question’.

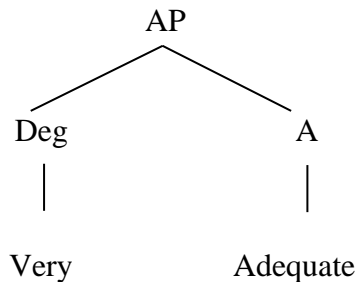
Graph 6. Data of ‘very adequate’

The sentence is in 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph:

“For me, Rp 4 million (US\$281.27) is already **very adequate** for a fresh graduate.”

An adjective phrase can be composed of A complemented by Prepositional Phrase (PP). The phrase *very adequate* is formed *Deg + Adj + PP*. This adjective phrase is typical of gradable adjectives. Based on theory, words are gradable when they can be viewed as being on a scale of degrees. The head of an adjective phrase is the *adequate* class word from adjectives and modified by *very* as the degree of words. It is drawn in the tree diagram below.

Graph 7. Tree Diagram of very adequate’



Next, the writer obtained the fifth and sixth data in the same text of ‘*Singing Donkey Becomes Indian Sensation*’.

Graph 8. Data of ‘generally heavy and sad’

The fifth data in sentence:

“Usually our videos have a lot of sick animals and animals being rescued, and it’s in **generally heavy and sad**”

Adjectives are called gradable when they can be modified by degree, such as degree of words, intensifier, or degree adverbs. Here, one of the adjectives is modified by degree adverbs. As can be seen, there are two adjectives connected with conjunction *and*. Besides that, *generally* has a role as degree adverb which mostly endings with the suffix – *ly*. Even if there are two adjectives in AP connected by a conjunction like this case, without doubt, both adjectives *heavy* and *sad* are the head of the adjective phrase. As modified by degree adverbs *generally*, it is a kind of gradable adjective. Another sample adjective phrase found in the sentence:

Graph 9. Data of ‘inspired’

The sixth datum in sentence:

Roberts said they were **inspired** by Harriet, a singing donkey from Ireland who also...

As theory above, adjectives can also be participial which means formed between presentor past participle. It is formed from the present participle which endings with the suffix –*ing* and the pastparticiple which endings with the suffix –*ed* / –*d*. As *inspired*, it is an adjective as the head of an adjective phrase (AP). Although it looks like a verb form of past tense which has a suffix –*ed* butadjectives *inspired* here is formed from past participle which ending suffix –*d*. Thus, it is called participial adjectives. Besides that, it can be modified by degree such *quite* so it is an adjective.

### C. Page 3

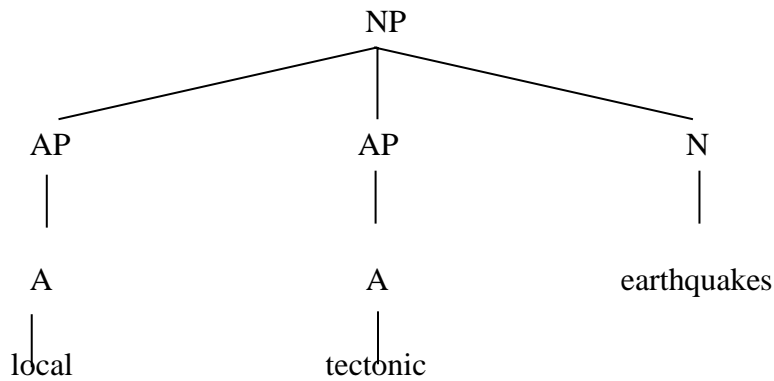
There are two data of adjective phrases that the writer found. The seventhadjective phrase found in the text of ‘*Govt raises alert status for Mt. Slamet*’. The sentence below:

Graph 10. Data of ‘local tectonic’

The alert status was raised after the PVMBG recorded at least 51,511 tremors from June 1 to Aug 8, as well as five **local tectonic** earthquakes and 15 ...

In general, adjectives are phrases that describe nouns. The noun that was meant could be placed after or before adjectives. Based on semantic theory, adjectives in certain classes go before those in other classes. The adjective of certain semantic classes describes how semantics (meaning) interacts with syntax (word order). It means each adjective has different specific classes such as color (red, green, etc), size (big, small, etc), origin (foreign, American, etc), age (old, new, etc), and so on. The data above contains two adjectives *local* and *tectonic* without being connected by conjunctions. According to the Thesaurus dictionary, *tectonic* is the synonym of *big* which means it is included in size’s class, while *local* is in origin’s class. Drawn in phrase marker below:

Graph 11. Tree Diagram of ‘local tectonic’



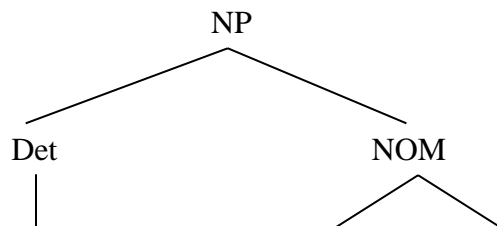
The eighth data of adjective phrase found by the writer is in the text ‘*Papuan Schools Get IT facilities, Novel Curriculum*’. The sentence is:

Graph 12. Data of ‘long-distance’

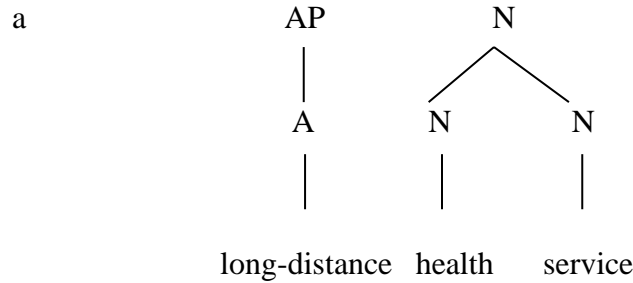
Edward said a **long-distance** health service, also known as telemedicine ...

Adjective phrases also occurred in NPs like the data above. It occurs occurs before the noun that they modify, a theory called *prenominal* position. The word, *long-distance* is an adjective because it also can be modified by degree. Even if it is separated to be two different words, there are ‘*long*’ as adjectives and ‘*distance*’ as a noun. However, some dictionaries have recognized that ‘*long-distance*’ is a kind of adjective. This adjective phrase (AP) here functions as a pre-modifier in a noun phrase (NP), represented as below:

Graph 13. Tree Diagram of ‘long-distance’







**D. Page 4**

The writer found two adjective phrases as data for this study. The ninth datum of adjective phrases found in the text is ‘*Necessary Pain?*’. It is shown in the sentence below:

Graph 14. Data of ‘super comfortable’

All pedestrian facilities are **super comfortable**, the city might see gridlock first.

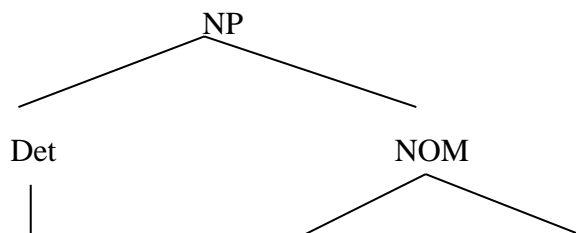
When seeing the datum above, it may happen in an adjective phrase (AP) that adjectives occurred alongside like that. Since adjectives can be modified by other adjectives, *super* itself has a different meaning. Checking some dictionaries, they said that *super* function as an adverb or as an adjective, some of them agree that it has function as both an adverb and adjective. Even if an adjective, it is a synonym for *extremely* which functions as degree adverbs, and *very* functions as degree words. However, adjectives that can be modified by degree words or degree adverbs, it is typically gradable adjectives. Here, the adjective phrase function refers to as subject complement of the sentence. Another adjective phrase found on this page as the tenth data is in the text ‘*Gang rape by Police*’ which is in a sentence:

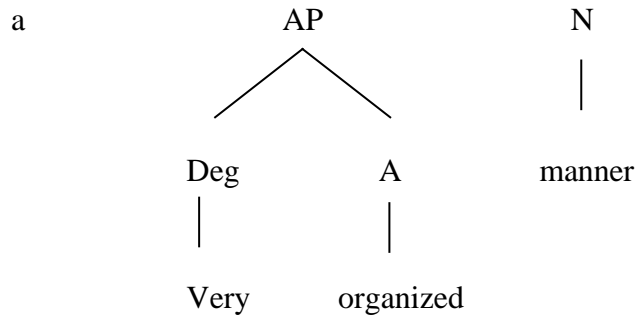
Graph 15. Data of ‘very organized’

From reports, the accused allegedly had committed the crime in a **very organized** manner.

As already explained briefly in the data before, it is not surprising that adjectives can be formed by a participle. Adjectives that have the suffix *-ed* are formed from the past participle, which have the suffix *-ing* are formed from the present participle. They are not as a verb but as participial adjectives. It is proven by the data above as evidence that participial adjectives can be modified by degree words *very*. The adjectives *organized* as the head of the adjective phrase above function as pre-modifiers in a noun phrase (NP). Because of appearing before a noun that it modifies, also called *prenominal* position. Here is the phrase marker:

Graph 16. Tree Diagram of ‘very organized’





**E. Page 13**

There are two adjective phrases that the writer found as data indifferent texts. The eleventh datum is in the text of ‘*Huawei Launches Own OS to Rival Android*’, represented in a sentence:

Graph 17. Data of “completely different”

Which he said was “**completely different**” from Android and iOS

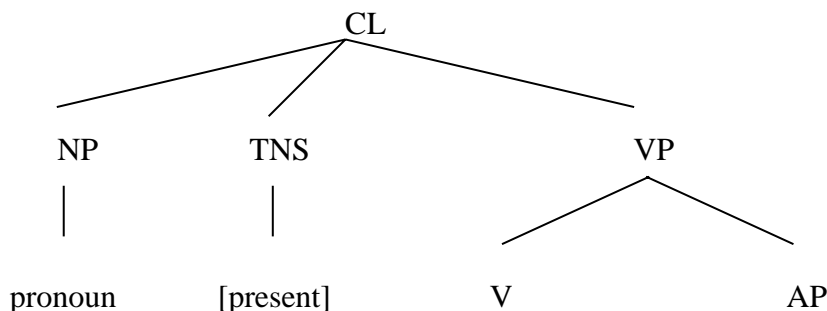
Besides modifying by degree words, an adjective can also be modified by adverbs which are called degree adverbs. However, not all adverbs express this a degree. When adverbs do not express as degree, it is as adverb phrase modifiers of adjectives. It is a little bit difficult to distinguish adverbs whether as a degree or not. In the case above, *complete* is an adverb ending with the suffix *ly-*, and the root is from *complete* can be an adjective and verb. Mostly, adverbs that express degree are formed from adjectives rather than verb class. In the dictionary, *completely* is the synonym for *quite* which functions as degree word. Then it can be said as gradable adjectives. Next, the twelfth datum of an adjective phrase is in the text of ‘*Smart Home Tech Makes Inroads into China’s Emerging Elderly Care Market*’ represented in a sentence:

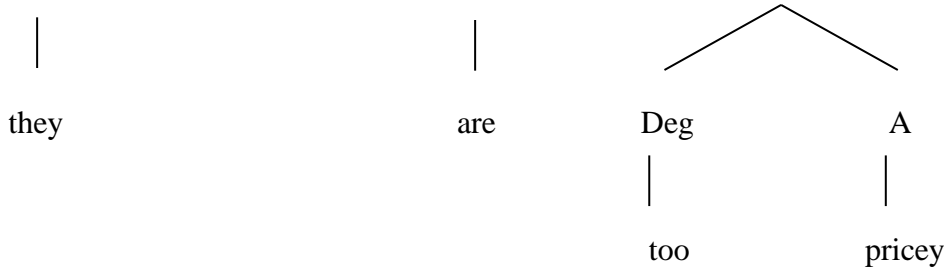
Graph 18. Data of ‘too pricey’

Retirement and nursing homes are on the rise, but they are **too pricey** for most families ...

The data above is the type of gradable adjectives. As an adjective phrase that can be modified by degree words or degree adverbs, it is called gradable. Word *pricey* is an adjective and *to* is one of the degree words other than that are *very*, *quite*, *so*, and *rather*. Here, the adjective phrase has a function as a subject complement because it occurs with a certain set of verbs, or is called a linking verb. It appears together with be verb *are*, forms a predicate that describes the subject. Here is the phrase marker:

Graph 19. Tree Diagram of ‘too pricey’





**F. Page 14**

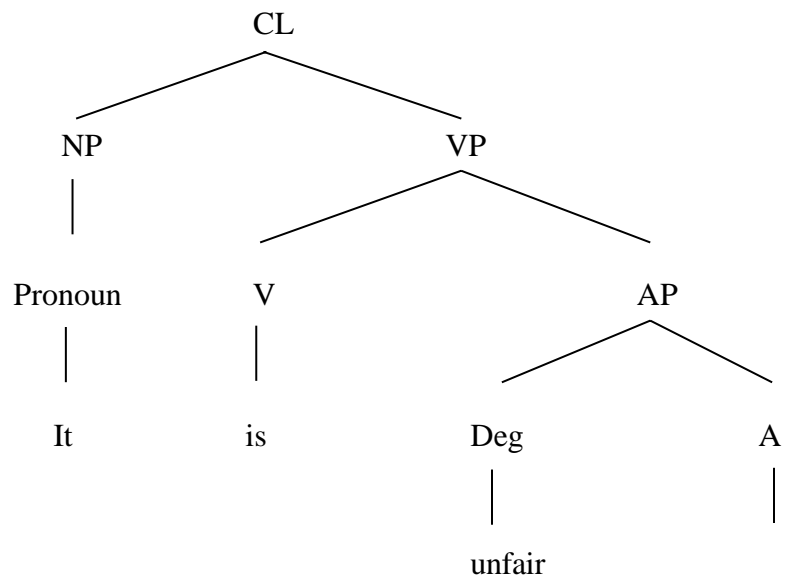
The writer found one adjective phrase as data that relate to the study. The thirteenth datum is in the text of ‘*Born in Israel, Filipinos Risk Expulsion*’, represented in a sentence:

Graph 20. Data of ‘really unfair’

“It’s **really unfair** that after being born here and having a family

An adjective can form a new adjective. That is by attaching different derivational affixes to root words, but it can change the meaning of the root word. The adjective *unfair* is from the root *fair* which positively has meaning, and then when attached by the prefix *un-* it changes the meaning to a negative way but it does not change the word class. Whereas, *really* stand as degree adverb, it has the same meaning as *very* and *so* which are degree words. Both degree adverbs and degree words that can modify adjectives are called gradable adjectives. This adjective phrase also functions as subject complement cause occurs after *being a* verb. Here is the phrase marker below.

Graph 21. Tree Diagram of ‘unfair’



**G. Page 15**

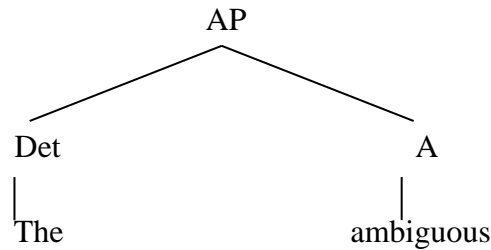
There are two data of adjective phrases found on this page. The fourteenth data is in the text ‘*Can we eat meat and still Avoid Climate Chaos?*’, It is represented in a sentence of the second paragraph as follow:

Graph 22. Data of ‘the ambiguous’

That is **the ambiguous** and – for many on either side of this ...

Mostly, an adjective phrase is modified by a degree or modifies a noun. However, adjective may occur with and follow determiners such as *the those, a/an, that, this,*, etc. It is a simple adjective phrase that functions as a subject complement that describes the subject. The head in this case is the adjective *ambiguous*. The phrase marker is as follows:

Graph 23. Tree Diagram of ‘the ambiguous’



The fifteenth adjective phrase as data found in the text of ‘*Politics vs Pilgrimage: Some Muslims call for Haj Boycott*’, represented in a sentence:

Graph 24. Data of ‘incompatible’

For Ella, attending haj now would be **incompatible** with Islam’s wider obligations

There are a large number of suffixes; they can be from nouns or verbs to adjectives. The word *incompatible* above is one of the adjectives that endings with the suffix *-ible*. The root word is from the verb *compete* followed by the suffix *-ible* and prefix *in-* which make the adjective has a negative meaning. The adjective phrase here has function as a subject complement.

**H. Page 16**

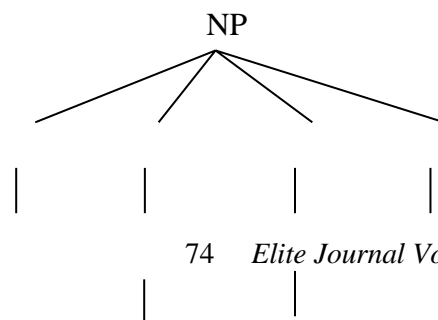
The writer found one adjective phrase as data for this study. The last datum is in the text of ‘*A Much Awaited Thrill – Going to Work in A Sarong*’, represented in the sentence below:

Graph 25. Data of ‘mere political’

This proposition is a **mere political** gimmick that Jokowi aimed to please Nahdlatul ....

Two adjectives occur in this data *mere* and *political*. Based on theory, the adjective phrase has also restrictions on *which* adjectives occur *where*. Not all adjective phrases can occur as complements. Adjectives such as *mere* can only occur in a prenominal position which is occurring before the noun they modify. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *mere* is the synonym for *very* so it has the same meaning as the degree word *very*. Here, the adjectives *mere* and *political* modify to the noun *gimmick*. Besides that *political* is an adjective that is attached by the suffix *-al*. Here is the phrase marker:

Graph 26. Tree Diagram of ‘mere political’



Det	AP	AP	N
a	A	A	gimmick
	mere	political	

## CONCLUSION

Messages can be understood properly if a writer can build the grammatical structure of sentences systematically and meaningfully. Many aspects can occur in a sentence; even a word can have a more specific meaning. Adjective is the word or phrase to modify a pronoun or noun which often happens in this case. It is an important part to learn because it can influence the understanding of texts in delivering information. The adjective that can be modified by degree words or degree adverbs is gradable adjective. Gradable can also happen to adjectives participial, but not all of them. The result of this research which conducted in the newspaper of 'The Jakarta Post' Vol. 37 No. 086 on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 showed that *pre-modifier (degree words and degree adverbs) + Adjective* is the most frequently occurred in the texts with 7 data, and then it is followed by an *adjective (head)* in 4 data, *double adjectives* in 3 data, and *pre-modifier (determiners) + adjectives* in 2 data. Therefore, it revealed that not all adjectives are gradable. Moreover, it is suggested to study gradability structure through other phrases on different media mass considering the distinction in the views of gradability in the future studies.

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