

## Noun-phrase complexity in the texts of intermediate-level Norwegian EFL writers: stasis or development?

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This paper examines the longitudinal development in noun-phrase complexity in English texts written by Norwegian learners in Years 8-10. The study is based on material from the TRAWL corpus (Dirdal et al 2017), comprising longitudinal data from nine pupils. The study tests the hypothesis proposed by Biber et al (2011) that noun-phrase complexity increases gradually as writers develop: in the early stages of development, writers rely on simple modifiers such as premodifying adjectives and postmodifying prepositional phrases, and in more advanced stages the proportion of such simple modifiers decreases, while there is an increase in the use of more sophisticated modifiers, e.g. non-finite relative clauses. The study thus aims to answer the following research question: To what extent can longitudinal development in noun-phrase complexity in accordance with Biber et al's (2011) stages be traced in the written production of intermediate-level Norwegian EFL writers in Years 8-10?

All noun phrases in the material were identified manually, and they were subsequently categorized according to their structure. The results indicate that there is very little evidence to suggest an increase in sophistication as regards phrasal modification over the three years. Instead, the pupils primarily rely on the types of modifiers that are acquired in early developmental stages, such as attributive adjectives and prepositional phrases. This may be due to the pupils' proficiency level, but there is a possible confounding factor: the writing prompts answered by the pupils frequently did not specify a desired text type or genre, comprising instead the instruction "write a text". Thus, although the findings are in line with those from studies of learner populations of similar ages from Germany and Spain (Kreyer & Schaub 2018 and Díez-Bedmar and Pérez-Paredes 2020, respectively), we cannot actually know whether these Norwegian pupils would have been able to produce the more sophisticated types of modifiers that are characteristic of academic writing if they had been prompted to do so.

### References:

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