



Unpacking Grammatical Metaphors in Native Speaker Online Guest Lectures to Improve Students' Comprehension

Putu Nur Ayomi¹  , Heri Kuswoyo² , and Akhyar Rido² 

¹ Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

² Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia, Lampung, Indonesia

Abstract. Online guest lectures from international educators and experts present great opportunities for university students, especially in developing countries like Indonesia, to be exposed to the most recent development in science. Digitalization allows more guest lectures to be conducted online, which is much more practical and cheaper than traditional offline visiting lectures. However, besides having to cope with some challenges associated with online learning, many Indonesian students still struggle with their English language comprehension, especially in the academic genre. Difficulties in academic English, especially in writing, include abstraction, technicalities, and lexical density resulting from the use of grammatical metaphors. However, to what extent grammatical metaphors are used in spoken online lectures and how they affect students' comprehension are still under-explored. This research qualitatively mapped the grammatical metaphors used in three native-speaker guest lectures on linguistics in Indonesian universities. Interviews were also conducted with 40 students following the lectures to determine their difficulties in understanding online lectures. This research also offers how students' difficulties in understanding grammatical metaphors can be minimized by teaching students to unpack grammatical metaphors into more congruent forms.

Keywords: grammatical metaphor · student's guest lecture · student's comprehension

1 Introduction

Internationalization and globalization require all nations to be able to compete globally. Therefore universities have to facilitate students to have international experience. This is especially important for developing countries like Indonesia, which still need to learn from experts from more developed countries. One of the strategies that can be done is by inviting overseas guest lecturers. Lecturing has been one of the most popular learning methods for most subjects, including in higher education. Inviting guest lecturers is beneficial as it can provide an alternative perspective, hands-on experience, and especially expertise in a certain topic, which can reinforce student's learning and bring relevance to the classroom [1, 2].

However, traditional face-to-face guest lecturing is proven to be challenging and costly [3]. The lecturer may need to organize her busy schedule for traveling for several days, and the university has to allocate a significant amount of money for airfares and accommodations. With the development of information technology in the past decades, which is especially accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic that has forced most educational institutions around the globe to switch from face-to-face learning to online learning for almost two years [4], currently, people are more accustomed to online learning [5, 6]. Online learning provides flexibility in terms of place and time. Teachers and students can meet virtually while staying in the comfort of their places, cutting the time and cost of traveling. This transformation is beneficial, especially when the university wants to invite overseas guest lecturers.

Learning online also has some drawbacks. Lack of social interaction, communication and feedback, difficulties in maintaining focus and self-motivation, lack of supervision which makes cheating and plagiarism easier, and technical issues, such as poor internet connection, are among the problems faced by students [7, 8]. Besides that, students also have problems with the language. Inviting guest speakers from different countries, of course, requires a shared common language. Here English by default is a choice [9], especially in Indonesia.

Despite the status as an international language, students from non-English speaking countries still report a lack of comprehension when having English as a medium of instruction in lectures. This concerns their proficiency level, especially because of the specific vocabulary used in lectures [9]. Some problems in comprehending the lectures, include difficulties in understanding general information, vocabulary, listening comprehension related to pronunciation, accent and speaking speed, and misinterpreting sentences [10]. From that list, the most dominant factor influencing comprehension is vocabulary.

Unlike regular social interaction, academic language is often characterized as static, highly technical, abstract, and lexically dense clauses [11, 12]. This phenomenon is primarily caused by the shift from the dynamic language centralized in verbs into a highly nominalized language where logical connection between phenomena is construed within the clauses instead of between clauses [13–16].

Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereinafter, SFL) views language as a semiotic system in which grammar is seen as functional and a meaning-making tool. This shift from the congruent grammar of the language into the incongruent form is conceptualized as a grammatical metaphor (hereinafter, GM). The same with words that can go through the metaphoric process, grammar also has the potential to be repackaged from its congruent base form. At the beginning of language development, a semantic unit is mapped in a basic form referred to as congruent form; for example, participants are expressed by nouns, processes by verbs, quality by adjectives, logical relationships by conjunctions, and so on. This also applies to the level of linguistic units. An event is congruently conveyed in a linguistic unit of clause instead of a phrase or lexical group. With the emergence of science, which requires a different form of meaning-making, language offers the ability to repackage the semantic unit into different lexicogrammar choices [13, 17].

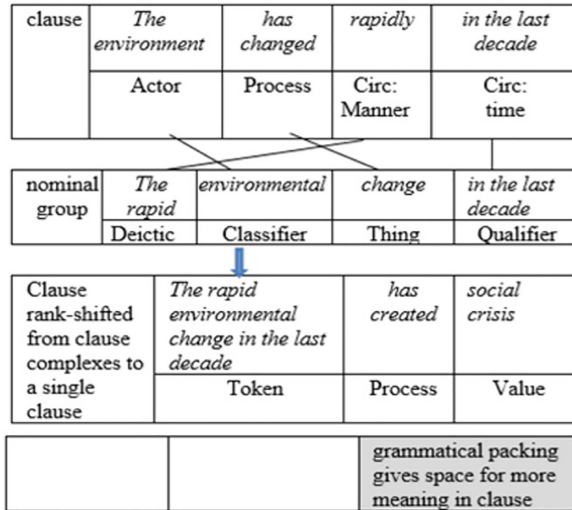


Fig. 1. Category and Rank Shifts in Metaphorical Reconstruction.

The emergence of GM in the first language typically occurs in late childhood and early adolescence, when children have been exposed to formal education and written language [18, 19]. The same has been observed with second-language learners. They should master the congruent form first before the incongruent form. In so doing, the ability to use and comprehend GM requires a higher level of proficiency.

2 Method

This research qualitatively mapped the grammatical metaphors used in three native-speaker guest lectures on linguistics in Indonesian universities. In this case, an open-ended interview was conducted to fully gather the students’ opinions and experiences during online lectures. Interviews were also conducted with 40 students following the lectures to determine their difficulties in understanding online lectures. A list of general questions was prepared to explore some issues related to online lecture comprehension. These questions generally relate to online classes and do not directly address grammatical metaphors.

3 Student’s Difficulties in Online Lectures Comprehension

Studies have discussed several obstacles that impact listening comprehension in the academic setting. These are divided into three main areas: listener factors, speaker factors, and text factors. Among the speaker factors are unfamiliar accent, pronunciation, and speaker’s speed while speaking, while for the listener are anxiety, lack of concentration, memory, and fatigue, and the materials factors include unfamiliar words, intricate grammatical structure, and limited background knowledge [20]. Some researchers also added

about the physical and technical problems that become obstacles to listening comprehension, such as bad audio recording and noises from the surrounding area. In the case of online learning, it includes terrible internet connection and incompatible devices.

There are three phases that affect listening comprehension, which include perception, parsing, and utilization [21]. The perception phase may include the listener and speaker problems previously discussed, as well as vocabulary understanding. The role of syntax and semantic knowledge is highlighted in the parsing phase. Among them are the inability to produce the mental representation of what is heard and the failure to create a logical connection between stretches of information. Further, in the utilization phase, students may need help in getting the intended messages and general idea of the messages [22]. A more linguistic perspective explains the five levels of understanding influencing comprehension, from the lowest to the highest: phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The higher level of the hierarchy can assist and facilitate understanding in the lower hierarchy. For example, understanding a schematic lecture structure can help students predict what is about to explain as the lecture progresses without having to understand every word clearly [23]. However, this may not be helpful when listening to information-packed lectures when details are important.

Besides, there are challenges that students must overcome in listening to lectures, especially in an online lecture that differentiates it from a usual interactive discourse. For example, they must be able to maintain concentration while listening to a long talk duration without many chances to question or ask for clarification and repetition now and then.

In the interview, most students complained that the lecturers often use what they called “high language,” which refers to technical, abstract, formal, and decontextualized language. One student mentioned that listening to academic lectures is like reading a written article, except that they must try to understand the information quickly without so much chance to reread it several times.

In answering how they solve the problems, some students mentioned that they have to do note-taking and memorize what is being discussed in the lecture without being able to contextualize the information into a simpler explanation that they can understand.

4 Grammatical Metaphor Effect in Online Lectures

In this part of the discussion, the identification of GM within the texts serves as the basis of the analysis. How GM plays its role as a feature of academic text, especially within certain stages of the online lecture genre, is examined.

4.1 Anaphoric Referencing

Text usually discusses participants or entities that do something or go through a particular process within a specific time frame. The linguistic tools used to track participants throughout the text in grammar include pronouns, synonyms, substitutions, and ellipsis. In this case, GM also plays an essential role as a means of reference. GM, primarily through nominalization, is a vital language tool in creating a new grammatical entity from a non-entity semantic, e.g., from the process ‘develop’ into the entity ‘development’

so that the process can syntactically behave as participants. How GM is crucial as a means of reference, for example, can be seen in the following excerpt:

*“These are the chapters of the traditional language textbook, culture, food, education, and sport. Every language textbook is the same. They have an absolutely generic topic lesson. They **presume** all the teachers can teach the lesson. They **presume** students are interested in those lessons. And there’s almost a **presumption** that culture and language are monolithic.”*

Nominalization allows the meanings of experiences that repeatedly appear to be packaged into groups of dense nouns and thus more easily linked with other experiences into one clause. Compared with the congruent form’s reconstruction, ‘they presume...’, the nominalized form, ‘presumption’, is more concise as it allows the omission of the Actor or other participants. This concise form reduces redundant repetitions and allows for further explanation and elaboration in the text.

4.2 Abstraction

GM plays a vital role as a means of abstraction. Abstraction here means that the text no longer talks about certain dynamic and context-bound events but builds general concepts or objects that can be used to generalize specific events.

In a congruent form, the events in the text are expressed grammatically as clauses in the order of Participant-Process-Circumstance in a linear timeline. This form of experience realization is commonly found in narrative texts, oral discourses, or texts at the basic education level [18, 19, 24, 25].

The formation of GM, especially nominalization, changes the way of looking at the meaning of processes into entities, from events (the relationship between Participants, Processes, and Circumstances) to concepts or objects. Thus, academic texts prioritize relationships between entities rather than between events. This emphasis on relationships between entities leads to the use of more relational clauses. Relational clauses are imperative, especially in academic texts, because they are used to explain participants’ characteristics, definitions, roles, ownership relationships, models, and other semiotic relationships owned by participants [15, 16]. The creation of abstraction and technical terms in academic language can be seen in the example below:

*“Normally in conversation, we resolve these problems through what’s called the **negotiation of meaning** or **conversational repair**. We make an adjustment to input and interaction...”*

As can be observed in the excerpt above, the lecturer introduces a term, a name of a phenomenon, by using nominalization, ‘negotiation of meaning,’ and ‘conversational repair.’ Rather than expressing the process congruently, by the list of what we must do to solve a problem in communication, e.g., ‘negotiate meaning’ and ‘repair misunderstanding’, academic language opts for a static noun which later can be used to create a taxonomy of knowledge [26, 27], it can be reclassified and explained further.

4.3 Meaning Accumulation in Nominal Group

In conjunction with the means of reference in the text, the events explained in the clauses in the previous sentences can be condensed into one group of nouns for further explanation. The reconstruction of a word from a different semantic category into a noun is also related to the noun's ability to bind many other words as modifiers in one noun group. In high-level academic texts, this creates difficulties for the reader.

*“Let’s talk now about **the goal of intercultural competency dan communication**. **The goal** is to strengthen **personal communication**. **The goal** is to strengthen **personal relationships**, to demonstrate **cultural understanding** to join the global community.”*

As seen in the excerpt above, almost all the processes are abstracted into nominal groups, ‘the goal of intercultural competency dan communication’, which are later broken down into three areas, namely ‘personal communication,’ ‘personal relationships,’ and ‘cultural understanding.’ This incongruent realization by nominalizing the circumstance of a clause which is congruently realized by the prepositional phrase ‘to + verb’ become noun ‘the goal’ and circumstance of manner which is realized by adverb ‘better’ become process ‘strengthen’ and process ‘communicate’ and ‘understand’ become ‘communication’ and ‘understanding’, can hinder comprehension, especially for inexperienced non-native English users and novice learners of the subject. This is because language creates a big gap between reality and concept, especially if these abstract concepts are not elaborated with examples.

The excerpt above occurs near the end of the lecture and is almost conclusion-like. Fortunately, the lecturer has presented many examples and illustrations using simple congruent clauses throughout the lectures, which aid the students’ understanding of the topic.

Although it needs to be used cautiously, nominalization helps create categories and taxonomies of knowledge. Moreover, the nature of nouns, which can be expanded with various other nouns, adjectives, and modifying clauses, allows the speaker to modify existing terms into a more detailed classification to name the phenomenon under study.

4.4 Restructuring of Logical Network

The understanding of logical relations between phenomena or events is critical in the construction and the understanding of scientific knowledge. The logical relation can be an additional, temporal, comparison, or cause and effect. They can be expressed implicitly or explicitly by language. Congruently, logical relation is construed in the language using a conjunction or relator that connects one clause to another. The congruent form of logical relation can be seen illustrated in the excerpt below, where clauses relate to relators:

*“**So** in office in China they will offer you tea. **But** when somebody offers you tea, you are culturally required to say no. **When** they offer you tea, you say no. They offer you again and you say no again **and then** they offer you the third time and you say yes. This is called the art of polite refusal.”*

In the excerpt from a lecture about the relationship between language learning and culture above, we can observe complete clauses are connected with conclusive internal relator ‘so’ (see [28], followed by adversative ‘but’, and explanation about the situation indicated by special temporal conjunction ‘when’, and ‘and then’.

GM enables us to reconfigure the semantic meaning and their realization in a different grammatical category. In most lectures, the use of this form of GM is less pervasive than in the written academic language. However, students admitted that this metaphoric construction of a logical network is more challenging to understand as compared to the congruent construction. However, logical relations between phenomena can also be realized within clauses in academic language. Logical GM always occurs together with the other form of GM, especially nominalization. The example can be seen as follow:

“The reason you have to refuse the offer is you can’t seem really eager or look greedy. You’re supposed to decline an offer.”

*“Not knowing the words that a speaker is using clearly **strikes** us as a problem.”*

In both examples above, causal relation which is congruently realized as conjunction e.g., ‘because’, ‘therefore’, or ‘since’ can be realized as participant ‘reason’, which functions as the subject of the clause and process ‘strikes’ which function as the verb of the clause. This construction can be useful as the speaker can highlight and topicalize logical relations which cannot be done if it is still realized as a conjunction.

5 Unpacking Grammatical Metaphor in Online Lectures

One way to improve student understanding of academic lectures is to teach them about the awareness of grammatical metaphor and their mental ability to unpack the grammatical metaphor into a more congruent construction. [29] emphasizes that students must understand the concept of agnation, i.e., the different lexicogrammatical realization of the same discourse semantic, and they can shift from one form to another without having too many difficulties. However, students must understand that the formation of grammatical metaphors is more likely to occur in syndrome, meaning that it involves not only one semantic category but a series of semantic shifts. Also, as shown in Fig. 1, the congruent and incongruent forms are in the form of cline, meaning there are some possible forms between the most congruent and the least. Meaning there are several ways to unpack GM.

The first step is introducing students to the type of GM in English. Basically, 13 types of GM are classified based on the type of meaning and their possibility for incongruence construction [13]. The movement of the metaphoric process follows the following pattern:

As can be seen in Fig. 2, it can be seen that the dominant pattern is a tendency to shift toward nominalization. It is concluded that: (1) all semantic elements can be constructed as things in the form of nominal group (*stable* > *stability*, *improve* > *improvement*, *to* > *destination*, *because* > *reason*); (2) relator, circumstance, and the process can be constructed as the modifier of thing or as an adjective (*before* > *previous*, *(marks are) on the surface* > *superficial (mark)*, *poverty increases* = > *increasing (poverty)*); (3) relator

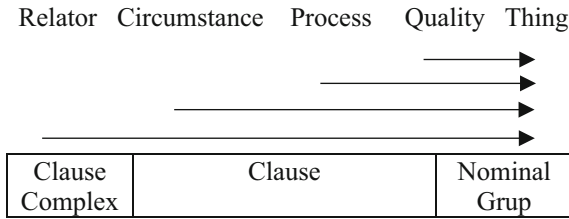


Fig. 2. Patterns of Metaphoric Movements [11]

and circumstance can be constructed as processes (*then > follow, about > concern*); (4) relator can be constructed as a process in the circumstance (*so > as a result*). Thus, there are two dominant motives in MG, namely a shift toward things and the second is a shift toward attributes of things [13].

6 Conclusion

The use of GM, which requires advanced language proficiency, is a problem that is often faced by those learning English. Although the use of GM in public lectures delivered by native speakers is far less when compared to the written scientific articles, mainly because of the nature of the text, which is spoken text, and most speakers also make some adjustments knowing that the audiences are non-native speakers and probably not fully fluent in the language. However, the use of GM in online lectures is still prevalent, especially when speakers have to talk about scientific concepts and read what is in their slides, which often cite theories and tend to use written language form. Therefore, the GM phenomena in guest lecture classes still create difficulties for students.

Nonetheless, GM is a vital linguistic resource that enables the language of science. Therefore, introducing students to the concept of GM and teaching them to pack and unpack GM, to move between the congruent to the incongruent form of language, can significantly assist their language competence, especially in academic settings.

References

1. Varvel Jr., V. E.: Guest Lecturers in the Online Environment. University of Illinois, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/guest-lecturers>. [Accessed: 20-Oct-2022].
2. Nikolayeva, L.: Role of Guest Lecturer in Research Proposal Writing: Students’ Perception. Arab World English J., (1), 24–36, (2018).
3. Tepper, E, Guess who’ s coming to lecture : Using ‘virtual guest lecture’ to support the role of the classroom professor. Canada (2016).
4. Rido, A.: Academic Digital Genre: Schematic Structure of Online Lecture Interaction in English Language Classrooms in Indonesia and Malaysia. In: Proceedings Universitas Riau International Conference on Education Technology, pp. 57–60, Riau (2022)
5. Abidah, A., Hidaayatullaah, H. N., Simamora, R. M., Fehabutar, and Mutakinati, L.: The Impact of Covid-19 to Indonesian Education and Its Relation to the Philosophy of ‘Merdeka Belajar’. Stud. Philos. Sci. Educ.1(1) , 38–49 (2020).

6. Hermanto, Y. B., Srimulyani, V. A.: The Challenges of Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Jurnal Pendidik. dan Pengajaran* 54 (1) , 46 (2021).
7. Randelović, K., Kostić, J. O.: Boredom and Online Learning Motivated Attention and Regulation Strategies During Covid-19. pp. 310–314 (2022)
8. Al Rawashdeh, A. Z., Mohammed, E. Y., Al Arab, A. R., Alara, M., Al-Rawashdeh, B., Al-Rawashdeh, B.: Advantages and Disadvantages of Using e-Learning in University Education: Analyzing Students' Perspectives. *Electron. J. e-Learning* 19(3), 107–117 (2021).
9. Querol-Julián, M., Crawford Camiciottoli, B.: The Impact of Online Technologies and English Medium Instruction on University Lectures in International Learning Contexts: A Systematic Review. *ESP Today*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 2–23, 2019.
10. Putri, W.: LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN VISITING LECTURER PROGRAM FOR NON ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS. *LLT J. A J. Lang. Lang. Teach.*, 25(1), 82–92 (2022).
11. Halliday, M. A. K., Things and relations: regrammaticising experience as technical knowledge,” in *Reading science:critical and functional perspectives on discourses of science*, J. R. Martin and R. Veel, Eds. pp. 185–236, London: Routledge (1998).
12. Hyland,K., *Academic discourse: english in a global context*. London: Continuum, (2009).
13. Halliday M. A. K., Matthiessen, C. M. I., *Construing experience through meaning: a language-Based Approach to Cognition*. London: Cassell (1999).
14. Taverniers, M.: Grammatical Metaphor and Lexical Metaphor: Different Perspectives on Semantic Variation, *Neophilologus* 90 (2), 321–332 (2006).
15. Ayomi, P. N., Dreyfus, S., Hadi, S., Sutrisno, A. THE RESEARCH IS CONDUCTED...’: AN EXPLORATION OF A GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR SYNDROME IN INDONESIAN RESEARCH ARTICLES, *Lingua Cultura* 14(1), (2020).
16. Ayomi, P. N.: Proses relasional dan konstruksinya dalam klausa bahasa Indonesia, I:n *Struktural Seminar’ Universitas Dian Nuswantoro*, , pp. 114–124 (2018).
17. Liardét, C. L. Nominalization and Grammatical Metaphor : Elaborating the Theory. *English Specific Purpose*. 44(2), 16–29 (2016).
18. Derewianka, B.: Grammatical metaphor in the transition to adolescence,” in *Grammatical metaphor: views from systemic functional linguistics*, In: Simon-Vandenberg, A. M., Taverniers, M., Ravelli, L.,Eds. pp. 185–220. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins (2003).
19. Painter, C.: The use of metaphorical modes of meaning in early language development, In:*Grammatical metaphor: views from systemic functional linguistics*, Simon-Vandenberg, A. M., Taverniers, M., Ravelli, L. Eds. pp. 185–220 Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins (2003),.
20. Aldina, M., Dayu, A. T., Haura, R.: STUDENTS’ CHALLENGES IN LISTENING IN VIRTUAL CLASSROOM; CASE STUDY IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM IN COVID-19. *International Conference on Social Sciences & Humanity, Economics, and Politics*, 109–112 (2020).
21. Nowrouzi, R., Tam, S. S. Zareian, G., Nimehchisalem, V.: Iranian EFL Students’ Listening Comprehension Problems. *Theory Practice Language Study* 5(2), 263 (2015).
22. Goh, C. C.: A cognitive perspective on language learners’ listening comprehension problems. *System*, 28 (1), 55–75, (2000).
23. J. Flowerdew, “Research of relevance to second language lecture comprehension – an overview,” in *Academic Listening*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 7–30.
24. P. N. Ayomi and K. D. P. Candra, “Genre dalam Buku Teks Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa inggris di Sekolah dasar: Pendekatan Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik,” in *International Seminar PRASASTI III: Current Research in Linguistics*, 2016, pp. 614–619.
25. Derewianka, B. *Language development in the transition from childhood to adolescence: the role of grammatical metaphor*, Macquarie University (1995).

26. Martin, J. R. "Technicality and abstraction: The language for the creation of specialized texts." in *The Language of science*, M. A. K. Halliday and J. R. Martin, Eds. Athens: Metehmio, 2004, pp. 267–291.
27. Ayomi, P. N., *Metafora Gramatikal pada Artikel Ilmiah Berbahasa Indonesia: Perspektif Linguistik Fungsional Sistemis*. Universitas Gadjah Mada (2021)
28. Halliday M. A. K., Hasan, R., *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman (1976)
29. Irwin, D., Liu, N.: Encoding, decoding, packing and unpacking via agnation: Reformulating general knowledge into disciplinary concepts for teaching English academic writing. *J. English Acad. Purp.* 42, p. 100-782, (2019).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

