

The Analogy of Magnet Rules to Practice Main Verbs and Helping Verbs in English Sentence Predicate

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Abstract. The rule of magnet is the basic condition of every magnet. It has north and south poles. When the north pole of one magnet is closed to the south pole of another magnet, they will pull each other. On the opposite, when north pole is closed to north pole, or south pole is closed to south pole, they will repel each other. These basic rules of magnet can be applied to help students to understand developing English sentence predicate, especially when the sentences are the result of translation from Bahasa Indonesia. The translation result is sometimes not accepted grammatically. It seems that our students still making mistakes when it comes to use helping verbs and main verbs in their sentences. This study is to propose the option of using magnet rules as a teaching trick to help students making sentences in English grammatically by using analogy of magnet rules for main verbs and helping verbs in English.

Keywords: Sentence Structure, Main Verbs, Helping Verbs

1 Introduction

For EFL students, making correct sentences requires them to understand the pattern of sentences grammatically and to be mindful of the parts of speech usage in order to put the right word into certain position in sentence. However, making sentences in English nowadays is not as challenging as ten years ago for EFL students. Google Translate and Grammarly help them a lot with vocabulary and sentence structure. They can make numerous sentences without worrying much about making a lot of mistakes. This kind of service helps students significantly with academic writing. By using this service, writing mechanic is more acceptable and writing message is easily understandable.

However, within observation for sometimes in writing class, Google Translate cannot work properly if the input or the native language transformed does not follow sentence structure rule from the native language. For example, if the sentences in Bahasa Indonesia is ungrammatical, the translation result is ungrammatical as well. This can be seen from two sentences below.

- 1) *I am sport at home because in a pandemic time. (*Saya olahraga di rumah karena dalam masa pandemi*).
- 2) *The boy from the next village. (*Anak itu dari desa sebelah*).

The first sentence has two clauses. The main clause shows that predicate should be “verb + noun” because the subject is pronoun “I” while the sub-clause has no subject. So, the sentence could be turned into “I practice sport at home because it is in a pandemic time”. The translation tends to be ungrammatical because the original sentence from Bahasa Indonesia uses noun (*olahraga*) as a predicate, while in English, noun could not be placed as a predicate.

The second sentence has no predicate. It could be revised into “the boy is in the next village.” Similar to the first sentence, the translation is ungrammatical since the original sentence from Bahasa Indonesia put preposition as predicate, while preposition cannot place in the predication position in English sentence

Other examples of ungrammatical sentences from Writing course can be noticed here. All sentences are ungrammatical because of the wrong combination of verb phrases. The ungrammatical part is underlined.

- 3) *I am plants flower in the garden.
- 4) *I am does not like watching horror movie.
- 5) *I am like eat cake and my sister like drink tea.
- 6) *You should wearing your mask, or we will not be able to go to the market.
- 7) *I can traveling with my van and save money on trip.
- 8) *My dream is go to Switzerland, have a big house and be an English teacher.
- 9) *If I be traveler, I can know many things that exist in the world.

Specifically, students are confused to put helping verb and main verb altogether as predicate. It seems that they have no idea about the use of be and modals as helping verbs so that it appears as wrong tenses and mood in sentences. This kind of mistakes dominate the students' mistakes among other mistakes. The grammatical sentences from sentence 3 to sentence 9 could be like this.

- 10) I plant flower in the garden.
- 11) I do not like watching horror movie.
- 12) I like to eat cake and my sister like to drink tea.
- 13) You should wear your mask, or we will not be able to go to the market.
- 14) I can travel with my van and save money on trip.
- 15) My dream is to go to Switzerland, have a big house and be an English teacher.
- 16) If I am a traveler, I can know many things that exist in the world.

The wrong combination of verb could distract the message and idea engaged in sentences. It results to difficulty to understand the whole meaning. That is the reason why writing a grammatical sentence is fundamental to writing because it contributes to its meaning.

So far, students are familiar with the term verbs, modals and to *be*. However, they often use them based on the patterns of sentence or sentence templates given when they study about tenses, voice and mood. They tend to blend the patterns so that the sentences become ill-formed sentences. To help students easier to apply main verbs and helping verbs in sentence, a small study on some literatures is conducted. It resulted to magnet rule demonstration. Then, this study is to propose the option of using magnet rules as a teaching trick to help students making English sentences by using analogy of magnet rules for main verbs and helping verbs in English.

2 Review on Literatures

Before discussing about how to apply magnet rules, it is important to have the same understanding about sentence structure, main verbs and helping verbs as well as the rules of magnet itself.

2.1 Sentence Structure

A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. It begins with capital letter and ends with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark (Hogue, 2008, pp.10-11). It can be derived that sentence must be in S-V order, apply capital letter at beginning and full stop at the end to show that the idea is completed. This explanation is practically used to define grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in academic writing. However, this definition is not enough to be the sentence template for limitless sentences that students going to make since the pattern does not describe the word class for the position of subject and what word is appropriate to accompany verb.

Looking much deeper, sentence definition is explained syntactically by Fromkin, et al. (2011). Sentences have a hierarchical organization; that is, the words are grouped into natural units which is called constituents, corresponding to the subject and predicate of the sentence. The "natural unit" in English sentence can be expressed precisely by using phrase structure rule. The phrase structure rule is in the form of syntactic category Noun Phrase (NP)+ Verb Phrase (VP) (Fromkin et al., 2011, pp. 84-91).

NP is usually as the subject or as an object in a sentence. NP often contains a *determiner* (like *a* or *the*) and a noun, but they are also possible as a proper name, a pronoun, a noun without a determiner, or even a clause. Here are some examples of NP.

- 1) a book
- 2) Abdullah
- 3) we
- 4) the tree in front of the house
- 5) what she said

A verb phrase always contains a verb (V). It may contain other categories, such as a noun phrase or prepositional phrase (PP), which is a preposition followed by an NP. The examples of VP followed by NP or PP can be seen here.

- 6) read the novel
- 7) walk to his school

The previous descriptions indicate that a sentence must have these properties, subject-predicate pattern, a complete thought, and NP+VP pattern. These properties make a group of words easier to be recognized as grammatical or ungrammatical sentence.

2.2 Main Verbs and Helping Verbs

As one of sentence properties is NP+VP, it is potential to have subject and predicate from phrases or clauses. Students can make limitless combination of noun in the place of subject and limitless combinations of verb in the place of predicate as long as the combination is well-formed based on syntactical rules. In this section, the discussion is only focused on verb phrase.

To remind again, verb phrase is a phrase headed by verb. Verb is a word that represent action or event or state of affairs. Verbs includes subclasses of verbs which are closed – the subclasses of auxiliary verbs and modal verbs. They precede the main verb within the verb phrase (Fabb, 2005, pp. 31–35). There are two points that are going to be next discussion, main verbs and the subclasses.

According to Fabb (2005), verb in English can be identified by two morphological characteristics. The first one is that the shape of the verb can encode the tense of the sentence. The second one is that an English verb can agree with its subject if the verb is present and the subject is third person singular.

- 1) My father works at school.
- 2) They work every day as teacher.
- 3) We worked there last year.

The verb *work* in sentence (1) and (2) shows that the sentences are present, and in sentence 3, the verb is past. At the same time, the verb at sentence 1 is added by suffix-s to agree with the subject *my father*. In order to be acceptable in magnet rules, this type of verb will be called as main verb.

The three auxiliary verbs are to *be*, to *have*, and to *do* (Rosen & Behrens, 1992, pp. 240–241). They are usually combined with the main verb to establish tense, mood and voice. Like the main verb, these auxiliaries also must have agreement with the subject and tenses. The use of each are presented at the examples.

- 4) I am studying.
- 5) I am a student.
- 6) They have gone.
- 7) We do not like it.

To be *am* in sentence (4) when it combines with the *-ing* form, it creates progressive tense, while to be *am* in sentence (5) is to link subject to noun phrase or to function as linking verb. To have in sentence (6) functions as auxiliary to create the perfect tense. The last auxiliary, to *do* when it combines with base form verb, it shows negation.

Modal verbs are placed before the main verbs as well. They qualify the main verbs in sentences based on possibility, urgency, obligation, and so on. Unlike to *be*, to *have*, and to *do*, modal verbs do not have the agreement with subject.

- 8) I will visit her sooner.
- 9) She must go right away.

Modal *will* in sentence (8) qualifies verb based on possibility, while modal *must* show qualifies verb based on obligation. So as to make auxiliary verbs and modal verbs fitted with magnet rules, both auxiliary verbs and modal verbs will be grouped as helping verbs. The following table summarizes the features of main verbs and helping verbs.

Table 1 The Function of Main Verb and Helping Verb

Verbs	Description	Function	Usage
Main verb	Words that perform action or event or state of affairs, example: run, read, eat, carry, talk, type, etc.	To indicate directly the activity of subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shape of the verb can encode the tense of the sentence. Must have agreement with the subject and tense.
Helping verb	To be (am, is, are) To have To do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to link a subject to a noun phrase, adjective or prepositional phrase to establish tense, mood, and voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precede the main verb if it is used together with main verb Must have agreement with the subject and tense.
	Modals (must, can, will, etc.)	To express urgency, obligation, possibility, etc.	Precede the main verb if it is used together with main verb.

2.3 The Analogy of Magnet Rules to Main Verbs and Helping Verbs

In this section, the basics of magnet will be viewed back, as how both poles attract and reject to each other. Then the rules will be associated to main verbs and helping verbs. Thus, student will feel easier to see how main verbs and helping verbs work in sentences.

Magnet is a material or object that produces magnetic field. This magnetic field is invisible but is responsible for the most extraordinary property of a magnet: a force that pulls on such as iron, steel, nickel, cobalt, etc. and attracts or repels other magnets. (Wikipedia)

Magnet has two poles, north and south. Both poles have force to pull or to reject each other. When the north pole of one magnet is placed near the south pole of another magnet, they are attracted to one another. On the contrary, when similar poles of two magnets are near each other, such as north to north or south to south, they will reject to each other.

The concept from magnet can be associated to main verbs and helping verbs. In a sentence, helping verb can get along with main verb since they belong to different category. However, auxiliary verb and modal verb cannot get along in the same sentence since they belong to the same category.

- 1) I *will* go to your house tomorrow.
- 2) *I *will can* go to your house tomorrow.

Sentence (1) is the presentation of helping verb can get along with main verb, that is modal *will* precede the main verb *go*. Sentence (2) is the presentation of auxiliary verb and modal verb cannot get along in the same sentence, that is modal *will* and modal *can*.

From the comparison, an analogy can be driven. If south pole is equal to main verb, and north pole is equal to helping verb, then verb which belongs to the same category will repel and verb which belongs to different category will be attracted.

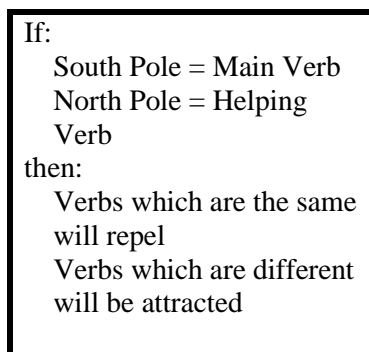


Figure 1: The Analogy of magnet rule

3 The Magnet Rules to the Practice of Main Verbs and Helping Verbs in Predicate

After students are familiar with the analogy of magnet rules to main verbs and helping verbs in sentences, they can be introduced to more details of how to use main verbs and helping verbs. There are five details as described from the following table.

Tabel 2 The Rules of Main Verb and Helping Verb

Rules	Examples	Grammatical/Ungrammatical
1) Main verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We <i>study</i> writing course every Monday. She <i>passed</i> the examination 	grammatical
2) Helping verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I <i>am</i> a student She <i>was</i> here 	grammatical
3) Main verb + Main verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *I <i>go walk</i> every afternoon. *The man <i>eat drink</i> only. 	ungrammatical
4) Helping verb + Helping verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *I <i>will can</i> go to your house this evening. *I <i>am will</i> go there. 	ungrammatical
5) Helping verb + Main verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We <i>must wear</i> must during the meeting. They <i>have studied</i> for two years here. 	grammatical

Basically, there are three points should be considered. First, rule (1) and (2), if a sentence consists only main verb or helping verb, the predicate tends to be grammatical. Second, rule (3) and (4), if a sentence consists of two main verbs in order or two helping verbs in order, the predicate must be ungrammatical. The last one, rule (5), if a sentence consists of helping verb and main verb in order, the predicate is possibly grammatical. The use of the five rules works better when students are also familiar with how to use main verbs and helping verbs as described in table 1.

4 Conclusion

Using magnet rules as a teaching trick can be one option to help students making English sentences by using analogy of magnet rules for main verbs and helping verbs in English. By associating rules of magnet to the use of main verbs and helping verbs in sentences, sentences made by EFL students are expected to be well formed when it comes to the use of both verb categories along in a sentence.

5 References

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