This research focuses on the understanding of the inner structure of noun phrases, based on the analysis of the grammatical properties of both English and Japanese. To do this I conducted an analysis of instructional material from textbooks and a field survey of first-grade high school students.

Chapter 1 describes the analysis of the grammatical properties of English compared with Japanese. It is common to both languages that a constituent of a sentence is a phrase and that phrases have a head word which determines the nature of the whole phrase. However, the position of the head word is different in English and Japanese, that is, English is a head-first language, whereas Japanese is a head-last language. Due to this difference in the position of the head of a verb phrase, the canonical English word order SVO is considered to be one of the biggest differences from Japanese, whose canonical word order is SOV.

Given the fundamental differences in English and Japanese sentence structure detailed in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 considers the important grammar points for junior high school students, examined from the perspective of grammatical function and word order. It is very important for students to understand the English canonical word order, and so, this clear difference from Japanese is taught so repeatedly that most students don't find it difficult to understand. However, when a subject and a verb or a verb and an object are separated by various kinds of modifiers of a noun, students find it difficult to understand the structure of the whole sentence. Therefore we should consciously teach the internal structure of noun phrases containing various kinds of post-head modifiers because of the difference in word order from Japanese.

Chapter 3 introduces a previous study in which Kanatani et al. (2006) highlighted the difficulty of understanding noun phrases. They classified noun phrases into five groups noting that the structures of noun phrases are hierarchical. This means that a noun phrase with a more basic structure is included in a noun phrase with a more complicated structure. Based on this hierarchy, they ranked the understanding
of noun phrases in order of increasing difficulty: prepositional phrases, "to" infinitives, participles, and relative clauses.

Chapter 4 describes Study 1. I first investigated the instructional format of noun phrases with post-head modifiers in junior high schools, by analyzing how the structure of these noun phrases is treated in textbooks. The investigation involved the forms of post-head modifiers of a noun, the order of the teaching materials, and the number of times each form is presented. Through this analysis, I found that the instruction of a noun with a prepositional phrase is not systematic and its explanation is ambiguous despite the functions of and the ways to use prepositional phrases being very complicated. In contrast, relative pronoun clauses and participles are taught repeatedly and collectively as post-head modifiers of a noun, and the adjectival function of "to" infinitives is also treated repeatedly as one function of "to" infinitives. All but prepositional phrases are treated as a target language in the textbooks.

Chapter 5 describes Study 2. I attempted to investigate the actual level of understanding of post-head modifiers of a noun by junior high school students. I gave a questionnaire to high school students who had finished the junior high school curriculum. Results indicated that many students find it difficult to understand the adjectival function of prepositional phrases in spite of its simple structure (Kanatani et al.). I believe that one reason is the difference in instruction between prepositional phrases and the others. Through further analysis, I discovered that some students who focused on the adverbial function of prepositional phrases understood the structures of various kinds of post-head modifiers of a noun less than those who inclined to use the adjectival function of prepositional phrases.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 suggests that the level of difficulty in understanding the inner structure of noun phrases varies depending on the teaching content. In particular, learners find difficulty in understanding the structure of noun phrases with prepositional phrases, due to the non-systematic instruction. Despite the complicated functions of prepositional phrases, teaching the usage of them is left to each teacher and in order to enable students to understand the structure of noun phrases with post-head modifiers, one of the most important properties of English, teachers are required to exercise ingenuity.