

Exploring the Difficulties of Recognizing and using the sentence in English by Sudanese University Students

Bashir AbdAlla Adam Ishag, Ph.D., College of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology. Email: bashiradam905@yahoo.com - Tell: 0129864104 - 0905334989
Ahmed Mukhtar Elmardi - Wigdan Ygoub M. Sherif

ABSTRACT:

This study aimed at exploring the difficulties of recognizing and using the sentence in English by Sudanese University Students. A descriptive analytical method was used. Data was collected through a test for (80) Bachelor in English language students at National Ribat University and analyzed statistically by using (SPSS) program. The findings showed that Bachelor in English language students face difficulties of recognizing and using the sentence in English due to many reasons among them, the students were inability to arrange words in order to get grammatical sentences. Moreover, they encounter difficulties of recognizing between tag and interrogative sentence due to question mark (?). It's recommended that students should learn Sentence Structures accurately and avoid depending on question mark.

Keywords: Sentence – Exploring - Difficulties - University Students.

المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى إستكشاف الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب الجامعيين السودانيين في معرفة الجملة الانجليزية واستخدامها، استخدم الباحث في هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وقد جُمعت البيانات بإستخدام الإختبار لثمانين طالباً من طلاب السنة الرابعة بكالوريوس لغة انجليزية من جامعة الرباط الوطنى. وحُلت البيانات إحصائياً. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج أهمها أن طلاب السنة الرابعة لغة انجليزية يواجهون مشكلة ربط المفردات للحصول على جملة نحوية، بالإضافة إلى صعوبات التعرف ما بين الجملة الإستفهامية وتذييل الجملة بسبب وجود أداة الإستفهام فى كل. وأوصت الدراسة بأن يجب تعلم الطلاب على بناء الجمل بدقة وتجنب الإعتماد على أداة الإستفهام (؟).

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجملة – إستكشاف – الصعوبات – الطلاب الجامعيين

Introduction:

English Language plays a great role all over the world. It is a means of communication, and links people from different countries and cultures all over the world and provides an Employment opportunities. Language is a crucial element in our life and has various definitions, as defined by Kwang Hyun Ko* Hanyang (2006: 4) a “*Language as a method of expressing ideas or emotions that are used and comprehended by a group of people, and sometimes refers to the grammar, syntax, or order used for*

its components. Human language includes written symbols, gestures, and vocalizations; however, it is difficult to state universally that language does not appear in other animals”.

Some people whoever are not the English native speakers; so they are in need of learning English as a second language. Language learning requires practice in the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In order to use a certain aspect of English language, we must have knowledge of the language itself; its vocabulary and grammar.

Therefore, it is very important for foreign learners of English language to master these aspects.

The most difficult aspects for second language learners is the English grammar, so it needs appropriate combining or arranging words in order to make complete sentence.

One of the aspects of language is the sentence and its recognition; it is the conventional unit of connected speech. It is a group of words that together makes sense as statement, question, command or exclamation. This research is about Exploring difficulties of recognizing and using the sentence in English

1.1 Statement of the problem

It is inevitable to emphasize that the recognizing and using the sentence in English is a real problem facing every university student. The researcher noticed that the Sudanese university students face difficulties of using sentence and its recognition. The students have not yet developed enough English vocabulary skills to create or make sentences; thus they commit speaking and writing errors. More Students do not know how to compose simple sentence, compound, etc. Also they face difficulties of recognizing sentence: whether a sentence is simple, compound, complex, compound complex...etc. Also they encounter difficulties of recognizing between tag and interrogative sentence due to question mark (?). So this study is intended to explore into this problem in order to find out the reasons behind such difficulties of using the sentence and recognition, and to recommend some solution to help learners to overcome such these problems. using sentence and recognition is a very common problem for non – native speakers of English.

University Students encounter difficulties of incomplete sentence, for example: “while I was wait” instead of (while I was waiting). The majority of students ignore the helping verb and (ing).

As well as, some university students have problem of agreement between subject verb agreement, they choose the wrong verb form and produce sentence. For example, the EFL learners use: the boy drink milk everyday instead of (the boy drinks milk every day), they omit the letter (s) when using singular pronoun, therefore they are inability to make correct sentence.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main goal of this study is to identify difficulties encountered by university students in English sentence structure and recognition. So, it is intended to:

1. Identify the extent of problems encountered by University Students in recognizing and using the sentence in English
2. Explore the nature of problems faced by university students in recognizing and using the sentence in English

1.3 Questions of the study:

- 1- To what extent do the University Students face difficulties in recognizing and using the sentence in English?
- 2- What are the main problematic areas encountered by university students in recognizing and using the sentence in English?

1.4 Hypotheses of the study:

- 1- Most University Students have not yet developed efficient skills in recognizing and using the sentence in English?
- 2- Insufficient vocabulary in English led to (students) poor building performance in sentence.

1.5 Importance of the study

Sentence use and recognition is important for university students; it helps them to develop their grammatical skills, fluent reading, vocabulary and comprehension. It also support students learn how to identify different types of sentences through their structures, and read meaningful chunks of language. It is thus important that students learn how sentences to be constructed and organized well.

Sentence structure and recognition is significant because it makes learners enable to know the grammar of the language. This will help them to interact and communicate confidentially and correctly

1.6. Limits of the study

This study is limited to the INTACT group, four (4th) year university students of English language. The students were given a test to identify the real problems of recognizing and using the sentence in English. The researcher conducted the study during the academic year 2018 – 2019, at Khartoum state – National Ribat University.

Methodology of the study:

1. Research Method

This study is conducted through an analytical descriptive method as a convenient way to reveal the difficulties encountered by Sudanese University Student in recognizing and using the sentence in English.

2. Participants:

The sample of this study was chosen randomly from the population. The sample of the study consists of (80) four (4th) year students from both, male and female, National Ribat University, college of languages.

3. Instruments:

Instruments of this study are the tools for the required data of the study. In this study a test was used to gather data. It was conducted four (4th) year students. The

researcher targeted both the male and female students regardless of their age from National Ribat University , college of languages. The students have studied English grammar as a subject in the first and second year of university. Thus they are supposed to know the types of sentences so as to recognize English sentence.

3. Students' Test:

A tool used in this study is the test which consists of two questions, each question has different multiple choices to explore difficulties encountered by four (4th) year students of English language in recognizing and using the sentence in English. The first question contains ten items, it asks the students to recognize sentences by stating whether they are: simple sentence – compound- interrogative....ect. The second question consists of two parts (A & B), each part has five items. Part (A) asks the students to arrange the words according to their own knowledge to make complete sentences. A test was conducted randomly to (80) (4th) year student of English language, National Ribat University, college of languages.

The students were tested under examination condition, supervised by the researcher himself as a direct supervisor. This was done to make sure that the students did not receive any assistance from inside or outside of the classroom. It should be revealed that no student was prepared for the test.

1.0 Literature Review:

ANN ARBOR (1971:3), the University of Michigan press explained that the history of sentence structure goes back more than a quarter of a century to the early 1940s' , when the Staff of the English Language Institute, under the direction of Charles. C. Fries, began to produce materials to teach English as a foreign language.

Over the years, these materials have been expanded and have undergone several major revisions. During that time the major contributors to the previous editions of the grammar materials were Charles C. Fries, who provided the original inspiration and Robert Lado and Gerald Dykstra, who developed the exercises and the form of the materials. In addition, William H. Buell and Edward T. Erasmus contributed portions of the third edition, English Sentence patterns, which appeared 1958. Maggie. (2011) points out that syntax means sentence construction: how words group together to make phrase and sentences. Some people also use the term grammar to mean the same as syntax. Most linguists follow the more recent practice whereby the grammar of language includes all of its organizing principles information about the sound system and form of words. Syntax is only one part of this grammar. The term syntax is also used to mean the study of syntactic properties of language. Syntax is the way in which words and punctuation are used and arranged to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. This can mean the selection of a word or the word's tense, the arrangement of the words and the selection of the punctuation.

2.1 Definition of sentence

Crystal (2000: 277) mentions that the sentence is the largest structural unit in terms of which the grammar or language is organized.

Innumerable definitions of sentence, exists, ranging from the vague characterizations of traditional grammar (such as the expressions of a complete thought) to the detailed structural descriptions of contemporary linguistic analysis. Most linguistic definitions of the sentence show the influence of the American linguist Leonard Bloomfield who pointed out the structural autonomy or independence of the

notion of sentence: if is not included by virtue of any grammatically construction in any larger linguistic form. Besides, Longknife and Sullivan (2002:1) mentioned that a sentence is means of communication. Sentences express a complete thought and contain at least one subject verb combination.

Knowledge of using sentence and recognition also requires Students' vocabulary, it is necessary in recognition of sentence structure. Kamil and Hiebert, 2004:19 states broadly defined, "*vocabulary is knowledge of words and word's meanings*". Similarly, Hornby (1995) defines "*vocabulary as the total number of words in a language; vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings*". This means that students who have less vocabulary can not recognize sentence and inability to speak naturally.

One of the related studies on syntactic relation specifically sentence structure is Sami (2017). He investigated difficulties facing secondary school students in using English sentences structure. Two tools used in this study to gather data, the test is used for University Students and questionnaire is for University Teaching Staff.

The researcher found some result which emphasized that of secondary school students of English language in Karary locality are not acquainted with some parts of speech, Student's English mistakes are not discussed in class and teachers don't explain to their students how to write correct English sentences. According to the result the researcher recommended that teachers should focus on the types of sentence because students were not able to identify types of English sentences and teachers should teach more lessons of English grammar.

Another study related to the sentence structure is the study of Omara el- Imam (2018) which displays Investigating Grammatical Errors Made by the Students of International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in Writing in Khartoum State. He investigated the grammatical errors made by the students of the IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) schools in writing. The study adopted the descriptive-analytical method of research. As a tool for data collection, the researcher designed a test that consisted of a writing task and some grammatical items in addition to a questionnaire for ELT teachers to measure their opinions about the curriculum and the students' performance in writing. The writing task aimed at measuring the students' abilities in dealing with the difficulties posed by grammatical errors. It was administered to a total sample of 150 students. The ELT teachers' questionnaire on other hand, aimed at assessing the ELT teacher' perspectives and views on the relevance of writing composition and to the learning and teaching writing. It was administered to a total sample of 40 ELT teachers at Int. schools. The above mentioned tools were to use the criteria of validity and reliability. The researcher raised four questions about the grammatical errors in writing composition. Moreover, four hypotheses were formulated to correspond to these questions.

Findings of the study:

The findings revealed low abilities in using the correct grammatical rules in writing skills.

On other words, the study of Muhammad Din (2017), Problems in Sentence Construction at HSSC level in Pakistan, International Journal of English

Linguistics. He explained that the study entitled “ problems in the construction of Sentence at HSSC level in Pakistan” strives to unearth the problems faced by the students in learning sentence structure through literature and the facts regarding role of literature as a teaching tool in teaching English as a second/ foreign language with reference to the construction of sentence at Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) level in Pakistan. This study also investigates how much the students learn English sentence structure through literature. To achieve the set objectives of this study, the researcher went for the quantitative research methodology. So, a questionnaire comprising of 30 items encompassing the different aspects of sentence structure was designed to collect data from 600 subjects (male / female) of HSSC of (Higher Secondary School Certificate) level. The researcher has also conducted an achievement test so that a correlation might be drawn between their attitude towards “teaching English Sentence Structure through literature” and the score of their achievement test.

The collected data were analyzed through software package (SPSS XX) which is commonly used in applied linguistics.

Findings of the study:

The findings of this study explicitly revealed that the EFL learners remain unable to learn and develop both the contraction of sentence and syntactic skills when they are taught English through literature. This study recommends that the teaching of English should be application oriented and task – based strategies and activities should be resorted to by the FL educators. This means that the most of EFL learner encounter the problems of sentence construction.

Therefore, they are inability to recognize its structure.

Statistical Validity and Reliability for Students' Test

The first draft of this test was shown to the direct supervisor who checked it before distributing to the Students, in addition to Ph.D. holders and assistant professors who helped in proof reading and reviewing. The reliability calculated was analyzed by using Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS). The Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of questions
.87	2

Validity and reliability are important aspects of a test, and this will ensure the quality of the instrument which is used throughout this study. The result in the table above shows that the reliability coefficients for the test is (.87) This indicates that the test is characterized by good reliability and validity and makes statistical analysis acceptable.

Table 1: shows the overall statistical percentage of the first hypothesis.

Question	N	mean	SD	T - value	DF	P - value
1	80	3.6	0.3	6.8	79	0.00
Overall percentage of question	pass		Fail		Decision	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage		
	25	31.2%	55	68.8%	Accepted	

Results and Discussion:

In the light of the final findings in the table No (1) shown above that, there are (25) of the respondents with percentage of (31.2%) answered the questions correctly, while, (55) of the respondents with percentage of (68.8%) failed to answer correctly. It's clear that the number of the respondents who failed to answer the questions is higher than those who answered all questions correctly. The calculated value of T-TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondent's answers in the first

reliability coefficient was calculated for the measurement, which was used in the test using Alpha - Cronbach coefficient Equation as the following: For calculating the validity and the reliability of the test from the above equation, the researcher distributed the test to respondents to calculate the reliability coefficient using the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient and the results have been showed in the following table:

question was (6.7) which is greater than the tabulated value of T-TEST at the degree of freedom (79) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (2.34). this showed that, there is no statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. This indicates to the acceptance of the hypothesis related to this part. The results of the first hypothesis which was (Most University Students have not yet developed efficient skills in the recognition of sentence structure.) is accepted.

Table 2: shows the overall statistical percentage of the second hypothesis.

Question	N	mean	SD	T - value	DF	P - value
2	80	3.5	1.4	8.0	79	0.00
Overall percentage of question	pass		Fail		Decision	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage		
		33	41.2%	47	58.8%	Accepted

With reference to the statistical table No (2) the results show that, there are (33) of the respondents by (41.3%) responded the questions correctly, in contrast to (47) of the respondents with percentage of (58.8%) failed to respond them. It's obvious that the number of the respondents who failed to answer the questions is greater than those who answered the questions correctly. The calculated value of T-TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondent's answers in the third question was (8.0) which is greater than the tabulated value of T-TEST at the degree of freedom (79) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (2.34). This shows that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. This means that the second hypothesis which was (insufficient vocabulary in English leads to students poor building performance in sentence) is accepted.

CONCLUSION:

The above results revealed that English language students face difficulties in recognizing and using the sentence in English as stated in the statistical results shown above, in the first hypothesis students face difficulties in recognition of sentence, they don't know whether a sentence is simple, compound...ect, this is due to many reasons as stated in the second Omara, M., A. ,2018, *Investigating Grammatical Errors Made by the Students of International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in Writing. Sudan University of Science and Technology*

hypothesis such as, arranging words in sentence, and put the phrase and clause in its suitable position.

In the light of the findings of the study, it's recommended that:

- 1- Sudanese University Students should intensify courses of the grammar in order to enhance their knowledge of using sentence and recognition.
- 2- Sudanese University Students should develop their vocabulary so as to combine words to make sentences properly.
- 3) Sudanese University Students should aware of building sentence in order to raise their knowledge of sentence and recognition.
- 4) Sudanese University Students should build their grammatical skills so as to enable them in recognition the use of sentence.

References:

- Crystal (2000: 277), the definition of sentence, www.sentencebuilding.com
- Kwang H. K.* H. (2006: 4), definition of English Language
- Kamil and Hiebert, 2004:19 states broadly defined, "vocabulary"
- Longknife and Sullivam (2002:1), the definition of sentences and its characteristic
- Maggie. (2011), the definition of syntax and sentence construction
- Muhammad Din 2017, *problems in Sentence Construction at HSSC level in Pakistan, Postgraduate College Burewala, Pakistan.*

Sami, A., H., M (2017). Investigating difficulties facing secondary school students in using English sentences structure, Sudan university of science and technology