

## Investigating University Students' Understanding of the Effect of Verb Types on Sentence Structure

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### ABSTRACT:

This study aimed at investigating the university students understanding of the effect of verb types in sentence structure. A descriptive method was used. Data was collected through a test for (80) students of Bachelor degree in English language at AL Mughtaribeen University and analyzed statistically by using statistical package for social science (SPSS) program. The findings showed that Bachelor degree students of English language students do not understand the effect of verb types in sentence structure due to many reasons among them, the students are not aware of different types of verbs to complete sentences. Moreover, they encounter difficulties of understanding the main verb when followed by gerund. This phenomenon led them to ignore adding (ing) to the main verb. Some of students are unaware of using subject, verb, direct object, indirect objects; therefore, they misplace words in using sentence structure. It's recommended that students should learn verb types accurately and increase their knowledge of transitive and intransitive use of verbs so as to use the verbs correctly in sentences.

**Keywords:** Verb type - Sentence structure - Understanding - University Students.

### المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التقصي على أثر فهم الطلاب الجامعيين نوع الفعل عند بناء الجملة، استخدم الباحث في هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي، وقد جمعت البيانات باستخدام الإختبار لثمانين طالباً من طلاب السنة الثالثة بكالوريوس لغة انجليزية من جامعة المغتربين. وطلت البيانات إحصائياً، وتوصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج أهمها أن طلاب السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية يواجهون مشكلة عدم الإدراك على نوع الأفعال لبناء جملة مكتملة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك أنهم يواجهون صعوبات في فهم الفعل الأساسي عندما يسبق بفعل الحال في الجملة. تلك الظاهرة تؤدي إلى تجاهل الإضافة في الفعل الأساسي. لم يدرك بعض الطلاب على استخدام الفعل، المفعول به المباشر، المفعول به غير المباشر، لذلك يخطأ الطلاب وضع الكلمات في مواقعها الصحيحة لبناء الجملة. وأوصت الدراسة بأن يجب تعلم الطلاب على نوع الجملة بدقة و رفع قدراتهم بمعرفة الفعل اللازم والفعل المتعدى مما يمكن الطلاب استخدام الأفعال بطريقة صحيحة في الجملة

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** نوع الفعل – بناء الجملة - الفهم - الطلاب الجامعيين.

### Introduction:

English Language is a means of communication and links people from different countries and cultures all over the world and provides employment opportunities, it supports people in trading, science, education and so on. University students should aware of verb

and sentence pattern that enables them to understand and build completed sentence, and using correct verbs in their positions. Students are significant how to arrange subject, object, predicate, and modifiers. As explained by Dr. Murray and Anna C. Rockowitz (2004) stated that:

A sentence must consist of a subject and predicate that combine to form an independent clause. The subject of a sentence names “who” or “what” the sentence is about and refers to the person or thing doing or performing an action. The simple subject of a sentence is always a noun or pronoun used without single-word modifiers, phrases, and subordinate clauses; the complete subject includes the simple subject and any modifying words or word groups. A predicate is the part of a sentence that contains the verb and its modifiers and that makes a comment or assertion about the subject.

University students need huge vocabulary of verbs in order to build correct sentence and communicate confidentially, as stated by (Coady, 1997; Huckin & Coady, 1999) suggest that learners need at least 3,000 word families, and 5,000 to 10,000 word families for university-level texts to achieve accurate contextual guessing, while Schmitt & McCarthy (1997) claim that a learner knows 80 per cent of the words in a text with a vocabulary size of 2,000 words.

## 2. Statement of the problem

University students’ understanding of the effect of verb types in sentence structure is a real problem facing every university student. The researcher noticed that university students do not understand different types of verbs in order to create complete sentence structure, most of the students do not aware of how to use the verbs in the correct sentence space, for example: the students say (he likes watches Television) instead of (he likes watching television), they don’t understand the gerund verb (like) whether it is gerund verb or main verb. Therefore, students

don’t understand how to add (ing) to the main verb to build sentence structure correctly.

Some students face problems of the (ing) form after preposition, they depend on the subject only, this phenomenon leads them to build incorrect sentence. For example: students say (they are good at paints) instead of (they are good at painting)

In addition, students lack knowledge of different types of verbs whether they are: helping verb, linking verb, action verb, etc.

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), due to lack knowledge of using auxiliary verb. 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.

So, this study is intended to investigate students’ level of understanding verb types and their role in sentence structure. It aims to find out the reasons behind such difficulties of using the sentence, and to recommend some solution to help learners to overcome such these problems.

## 3. Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate university students understanding of verb type in sentence structure. So, it is intended to:

1. Investigate university student's knowledge of understanding verb type in sentence structure

2. Explore the nature of problems faced by university students in understanding of verb pattern in sentence structure

#### 4. Questions of the study:

1- To what extent do university students in understanding verb types in English?

2- What are the main problematic areas encountered by university students in understanding of the effect of verb types on building?

#### 5. Hypotheses of the study:

1- University Students are not aware of verb types

2- University Students lack knowledge of the effect of verb types on building sentences

#### 6. Importance of Sentence Structure

Sentence Structure is important because it provide us with the framework for the clear written expression of our ideas. The aim in writing is always to write in complete sentences which are correctly punctuated. Sentences always begin with a capital letter and end in a full stop, exclamation or question mark.

<https://prezi.com/vhuqlxcoiava/the-importance-of-sentence-structure>

Building complete sentence structure enables students to write composition properly, communicate confidentially, and to perform different types of structures by their own knowledge. Also the verb type is significant in sentence structure, because the sentence will not be completed without correct using of verbs in sentence structure. Students awareness of verb type supports them to understand the sentence whether it is in the present, past, future time..... ect.

#### 7. Limits of the study

This study is limited to the INTACT group, third (3<sup>th</sup>) year university

students of English language. The students were given a test to investigate the real problems of understanding of the effect of verb type in sentence structure. The researcher conducted the study during the academic year 2018 – 2019, at Khartoum state – AlMughtaribeen University.

Methodology of the study:

#### Research Method

This study is carried out through an analytical descriptive method as a convenient way to reveal the level of university students' understanding of the effect of verb type on sentence structure.

#### Participants:

The researcher chose the sample randomly from the population. The sample of the study consists of (80) third (3<sup>th</sup>) year students from both, male and female, AlMughtaribeen University, college of languages.

#### Instruments:

Instruments of this study are the tools for the required data of the study. In this study, the researcher used a test to collect data. It was conducted third (3<sup>th</sup>) year university students. The researcher targeted both the male and female students regardless of their age from AlMughtaribeen 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 aware of the types of verbs so as to construct sentence properly.

#### Students' Test:

A tool used in this study is the test which consists of two questions, each question has different multiple choices to investigate university students' understanding of the effect of verb type on sentence structure.

The first question contains ten items, it asks the students to put the verbs in a suitable space to make complete sentences. The second question consists of ten items. It asks the students to identify types of verbs from the sentences.

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.

## 2. Literature Review:

In order to create proper sentence structure, university students should have aware of the verbs. Verbs are the action words in a sentence that describe what the subject is doing. Along with nouns, verbs are the main part of a sentence or phrase, telling a story about what is taking place. In fact, without a verb, full thoughts can't be properly conveyed, and even the simplest sentences, such as *Maria sings*, have one. Actually, a verb can be a sentence by itself, with the subject, in most case you, implied, such as, *Sing!* and *Drive!*, explained by <https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/grammar-rules/verbs/>

Students' understanding of sentence structure needs verb types they are: Transitive verbs, Intransitive verb, Auxiliary verb, linking verb, and Modal verbs,

Maggie, Johnson. (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` tense, the arrangement of the words and the selection of the punctuation.

As explained by Dr. Murray and Anna C. Rockowitz Writing Center, In order to be complete, a sentence must consist of a subject and predicate that combine to form an independent clause. The subject of a sentence names "who" or "what" the sentence is about and refers to the person or thing doing or performing an action.

The simple subject of a sentence is always a noun or pronoun used without single-word modifiers, phrases, and subordinate clauses; the complete subject includes the simple subject and any modifying words or word groups. A predicate is the part of a sentence that contains the verb and its modifiers and that makes a comment or assertion about the subject.

Sentences can be classified by their structure (the relationship between the number and types of clauses contained within the sentence), their purpose (the objective of the sentence), and their pattern (the flow from subject to verb to objects or complements). Most sentences follow a subject-predicate order and open with the subject of an independent clause. Other patterns are formed with different types of predicates or inverted word order. Sentences can also be categorized by the writer's purpose in communicating, e.g., whether s/he is asking a question or making a statement, giving a command or showing an emotional response.

The sentence structure requires understanding of its pattern, that can enable students create understandable sentence.

There are some sentence patterns for example:

(verb + ing), he finished reading his book), (verb + to + infinitive), they want to buy a new car), ( verb + preposition + ing), I'm thinking of going abroad) ....etc.

One of the related study is (Muhammad Din 2017), *problems in Sentence Construction at HSSC level in Pakistan, Postgraduate College Burewala, Pakistan.*

Objectives: To highlight the most important syntactic problems faced by the HSSC ESL learners, to analyze the role of literature in enhancing the ESL learners' syntactic competence and to recommend some suggestions to get the maximum from the literature taught at intermediate level for the Development of ESL/EFL learners' sentence construction skill

#### **Research Questions:**

What are the most important syntactic problems faced by the HSSC ESL learners?. what is the role of literature in enhancing the ESL learners' syntactic competence?, and what are the suggestions to get the maximum from the literature taught at intermediate level for the development of ESL/EFL learners' sentence construction skill?

#### **The researcher comes out with many findings:**

The results of the present study show that the learning, practice and use of the grammatical aspects are the most neglected area in the teaching of English through literature. It has also been found that 64% of the respondents can't make a distinction between adjective and adverb whereas 75.8% ESL learners face problems in the use of adverbs. The level

of the ESL learners' grammatical competence can be estimated from the fact that 92.6% students buy guide books to learn the grammar and the grammatical aspects of English language.

The above literature review supports the current study in different ways so as to reach the accurate results.

#### **2.1 Definition of sentence**

Crystal, D. (2000: 277) mentions that the sentence is the largest structural unit in terms of which the grammar or language is organized. A simple sentence is an independent clause with no subordinate clauses: "My sister is a talented musician." [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net) defined that " a sentence is grammatical unit consisting of one or more words that bear minimal syntactic relation to the words that precede or follow it, expresses a thought in the form of a statement, question, instruction, or exclamation, which starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop when written. The sentence has another definition in terms of type as follows:

A compound sentence is composed of two or more independent clauses with no subordinate clauses usually joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or by a semicolon: "My sister is a talented musician, but she doesn't like to practice."

A complex sentence contains an independent clause and one or more dependent or subordinate clauses, which may come before or after the independent clause: "If we are not going to the restaurant, we need to cancel our reservation."

A compound-complex sentence contains two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent or subordinate clause:

“When the package finally arrived, after a delay of more than two weeks, she was anxious to open it, but she decided to wait until we could share the experience with her.”

Knowledge of building sentence also requires Students’ vocabulary, it is necessary in building sentence st. 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’t build sentence correctly and inability to speak naturally.

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 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:

**Reliability Statistics**

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of questions</b>
.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	
		30	37.5%	50	62.5%	Accepted

**Results and Discussion:**

In the light of the final findings in the table No (1) shown above that, there are (30) of the respondents with percentage of (37.5%) answered the questions correctly, while, (50) of the respondents with percentage of (62.5%) 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 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 (University Students do not aware of verb type in 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		
		35	43.8%	45	56.2%	Accepted

From the statistical table above the results show that, there are (35) of the respondents by (43.8%) responded the questions correctly, in contrast to (45) of the respondents with percentage of (56.2%) 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 (University Students lack of grammar leads them poor building in sentence structure) is accepted.

#### Conclusion:

The above results revealed that English language students do not understand different types of verbs in sentence structure as stated in the statistical

results shown above, in the first hypothesis students are inability to put the verb in correct position to make sentence, they don't know whether a verb is gerund, helping verb, transitive or intransitive due to many reasons as stated in the second hypothesis such as, identifying types of verbs among different sentence words in sentence, and put the phrase and clause in its suitable position

As seen in the findings of the study, The researcher recommended that:

1. University Students should intensify courses of the tenses in order to enhance their knowledge of verb type in sentence structure.
- 2- University Students should develop their vocabulary so as to combine words to make sentences properly.
3. University Students should aware of verb using, present, past and future tense
4. University Students should build their grammatical skills so as to enable them in creating complete sentences.
5. Teacher should teach grammar in details particularly types of verbs that enable them to overcome difficulties of understanding verb types.

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