Analysing Errors Made by Kurdish EFL Learners in Applying the Rules of Syntactic Structure

Hazhar Ramadhan Ahmed

Raparin University || Kurdistan Region || Iraq

Abstract: This paper intended to investigate and analyse errors by Kurdish EFL learners in applying the rules of syntactic structure. The paper adopted a descriptive-analytical method for data collection and analysis, so a purposive sample of 20 Male students at University Level in the Kurdistan region. The researcher conducted a test consisted of two questions, after that, the responses were statistically treated and analysed. This analysis has shown very important results that were used for the discussion. Finally, the paper concluded findings, also the students of the English Language at Universities have the same problem, however, some of them can learn English and they can speak very well, but they haven't enough grammatical and syntactical ability towards the English Language as a Foreign Language, and researcher recommended that teachers have to give enough information about rules of syntactic structure, and students should do more practice when they applying analysis of rules.

Keywords: Errors, Kurdish EFL Learners, and Syntactic Structure

تحليل الأخطاء التي يرتكبها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية الأكراد في تطبيق قواعد البنية النحوية

هزار رمضان أحمد

جامعة رابرين || إقليم كردستان || العراق

الملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في أخطاء تطبيق قواعد البنية النحوية وتحليلها من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الأكراد كلغة أجنبية وتبنت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتمثلت الأداة في اختبارٍ مؤلفًا من سؤالين تم تطبيقه على عينة مقصودة بلغت (20) طالبًا من الذكور على المستوى الجامعي في إقليم كردستان. وبمعالجة الإجابات وتحليلها إحصائيًا. خلصت الدراسة إلى نتائج منها: يعاني طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات من نفس المشكلة، ومع ذلك، يمكن لبعضهم تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ويمكنهم التحدث بشكل جيد للغاية، ولكن ليس لديهم ما يكفي من القدرة النحوية تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وفي نهاية البحث أوصى الباحث بأن يعطى المعلمون معلومات كافية حول قواعد البنية النحوية، ويجب على الطلاب ممارسة المزيد من الممارسة عند تطبيق تحليل القواعد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل، الأخطاء، المتعلمون الأكراد للغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية EFL، التركيب النحوي.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning a foreign language is not an easy task, especially when it shows considerable dissimilarities to the native language learner. The result is that even at college level, the time is spent on remedial work rather than spending it on widening the scope of the learners knowledge of English Mohammed (1980).

Grammar is designed to help the students to improve the conciseness, clarity and correctness of their writing Willis (1975) so the teacher should explain any error or weakness in the students` writings. For the purposes of error analysis, grammar which aims to relate the semantic structure of a sentence to its surface structure by a set of explicit rules is the most appropriate theoretical model for the description of error Corder (1973).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Some scholars (Corder, 1967; James, 1998) point out that errors made by learners are very significant as they are the indicators of how learners acquire the language. According to Corder (1967), errors made by learners are beneficial to teachers, learners, as well as researchers. For teachers, errors are evidence of learners' progress in language learning. Teachers can refer to it in order to help improve learners' writing skills. For learners, errors can be served as resources for their language learning. Lastly, errors provide evidence to researchers on how learners learn and acquire the language.

To assist these learners, Corder (1967), James (1998), Nonkokhetkong (2013), and Rattanadilok Na Phuket and Othman (2015) assert that the analysis of errors found in learners' pieces of writing can be very helpful. Some scholars employed Error Analysis (EA), one of the famous methods in their writing classes to improve students' writing performance. Presada and Badea (2014), for example, analyzed the causes of errors made by students in their translation classes and asserted that this method could help them sort out the real problems. They confirmed that Error Analysis (EA) could lessen the number of errors in their students' work. Later, Zafar (2016) states that Error Analysis (EA) is an effective tool to improve her Business students' writing ability after a two-month remedial writing course.

The researcher found that Kurdish EFL students in Kurdistan Region, Iraq.at universities concerned various types of errors, such as in applying the rules of syntactic structure, how to apply the rules of syntactic and where put suitable rules in the right place and, how can differentiate between a verb, adverb, noun, and adjective as well as over word. Some of these errors may lead to misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication, Hence the researcher would like to analyze errors in English sentences by Kurdish EFL students. The study chose to focus on sentences because they are the small comprehensible units of language forms that students can produce for their effective written communication.

These findings may result in a more appropriate lesson plan and more effective teaching materials and teaching methods that can contribute to Kurdish EFL students'. More importantly, it is hoped that the findings arisen from this study will help both teachers and students in applying the rules of syntax structure.

2. Method

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method to investigating errors made by Kurdish EFL Learners in applying the rules of syntactic structure.

2.1 Research Questions

The present study aimed at finding the answers to the following questions: 1.What types of errors are frequently found in English Language by Kurdish EFL students?

2. What are the sources of the errors?

2.2 The participants

The participants of the study were 20 Male second year English major students at level of University in Kurdistan Region, Iraq. Whose age ranged from 20 to 22 years old. All of them have learned English as a foreign language for at least Two years.

3. Literature Review and Previous Studies

3.1. Introduction

This Paper will shed light on the topic by investigating what has been stated and mentioned by other grammarians or linguists on the topic to make it clear to the readers and facilitate the process of understanding. It is crucial in the very beginning to highlight the types of errors that can be committed by learners especially the non-native learners studying English as a foreign language. However, before this the researcher presents definition to the term "Error".

3.2 Definition of the term Errors

An error is the use of linguistics for example (word, a grammatical item) in way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faculty or in complete learning. It results from incomplete knowledge.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) state that the analysis of errors is the method to analyze errors made by EFL and ESL learners when they learn a language. Not only can it help reveal the strategies used by learners to learn a language, it also assists teachers as well as other concerning people to know what difficulties learners encounter in order to improve their teaching.

3.3 Theoretical framework

The researcher presents a number of errors types in a theoretical way to narrow the scope and limited on the Syntactic Errors made by Kurdish EFL Learners.

3.3.1 Types of Errors

Grammarians prefer giving practical advice about using straight forward rules to help us avoid making errors. The rules may be oversimplified at times. But they meant to keep us out of terrible the kind of terrible that may distract or even confuse or readers. This paper presents and discusses some types of Syntactic Errors as follows.

3.3.2 Verbal Errors

Morphological and inflection Errors, which seem to be characteristics of most EFL learners Richards (1971), are excluded here. Errors in the use of the tense, phrase and non-finite verbs are discussed in this paper.

3.3.3 Tense

The three types that were recorded are tense sequences, tense substitution, and tense marker deletion.

3.3.4 Tense Sequence

The Kurdish Learners of English Language may use simple present with past simple tense particularly with compound and complex sentences, and it is the same Condition for Arabic English Speakers Scott &Tucker (1974) ; Kambal (1980); Elsayed (1983).

"They came late yesterday and go directly to the hall"

One can argue here that error in tense sequence may not be a negative transfer from the mother tongue since Kurdish one requires that same tense be used across such sentences. Kurdish Learners and Arabic Learners may use the simple present Scott and Tucker (1974). Literature also reported cases that Arab learners failed to use the progressive and used instead of the non-progressive. (EL- Badariu, 1982) (Mukatash, 1986).

A. It is not causing difficulties to us" (Makatash, 1986) mentioned that his subject Arab EFL university students tended to use the progressive in the above example instead of the non-progressive (p.193) (Asfoor, 1978); However, He found that some of his subjects use the progressive aspect (ing) of certain verbs instead of the present tense.

B. I am not understanding the lesson.

The errors in (a) and (b) above are examples of negative transformation, while the verb cause in (a) doesn't occur in the progressive aspect in Kurdish (a) Understand in (b) is allowed to be used in the progressive aspect. Consider the following example which in view clearly shows the Kurd's effect on the English syntax.

C. English "understanding lesson today" Kurdish equivalent: "Mn amro tegaeshtm". English translation (I'm understanding my lesson toady).

3.3.6 Sentence Structure

Scott and Tucker (1974) marked that their student used erroneously, redundant, 'subject' and 'object' in main clause, relative clause, and after the infinitives errors misplace adverbs and participles, and miss ordering adjective were also reported in literature.

3.3.7 Comments

It is believed that the identification of patterns in syntax errors is a possible solution common syntax errors involved part of a sentence rather than its overall structure. This situation is particularly pronounced for syntax errors committed by learners of a second language. The root cause of which is the phenomenon, of language transfer to overcome this issue, perhaps study proposed the concept of "automatic detection of learner's errors during employ detection models that target word or syntax error-many useful methods have already been proposed for the automatic detection of English syntax errors.

Some of these rely on having an excellent grammar parser. If the parser is unable to deconstruct a sentence completely and convert to a parsing tree then some syntax errors in this sentence will fail to be detected and corrected.

Susana (2000) describes syntactic complexity as the ability to produce writing that shows ideas and large chunks of information are represented with the use of subordinate and embedded subordinate clauses. Syntax completely is one of the most difficult structured elements for EFL learners. Scott (1988) identified a number of issues in the study of expressive syntax among these were:

1- Syntactic structures added and developed in this period occur less frequently in the ambient language.
2- The number of discourse contexts for studying syntax increase, (written as well as spoken language and information in addition to that narrative and conversation discourse).

3.4. Kurdish Interference

Kurdish interference may be one of the main sources in committing these Syntactic Errors. The subject directly translates the Kurdish words into English equivalents which lead to the formation of sentences. The following are some of the illustrations:

1- "came to university to record program" to register"
2- the first day at the university was tired day" "a tiring"
3- "although my feel was fearing" I felt scared"
4- "I need to drink water" want"

3.5 Performance Error

The other research which might have caused this syntactic Error was performance Error. Sharma (1981) said that, "an important characteristic of these lapses is that the language user becomes

instantaneously aware of lapse" Even though this error not taken as a serious matter, but still it leads in the ill formation of sentences. The following are clarified of this point:

A. "I don't anyone and any place" "doesn't know"

B. "We got back to the house" "return home"

C. "I bought my brother to help me in booking". "For registration"

D. "I want to get a high mark" "score".

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This is part of the methodology which deals with the procedures, the researcher has gone through. It gives complete information about the method of the research that has adopted the population, the sample of the study, tools for data collection, data analysis, and the collected data is present.

4.2. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was the whole population which consists of (20) Undergraduate Male Kurdish Students of English Language at Universities in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq. They are different in ages. The final sentence explicates the incorrect answers and has little difference between them.

Question (1)

The boy eats the bones.

Table (1) numbers of participant's incorrect answers.

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	3	17	20
Percentage	15%	36%	100

Table (2) incorrect answers made by participants

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	4	16	20
Percentage	20%	80%	100

4.3 Tools for Data Collection

The tool use for data collection is the test

The researcher prepared the test which consists of two questions, the first question is to make tree diagram and made up of four sentences. The second question consists of writing the rules of sentences that have four items.

To know how the students understood the rules of the syntactic structure.

4.6 Tools for Data Analysis

After the administration of the test, then the results obtained from the participants were analysed with the percentage. The collected data were tabled with each sentence presented in the table.

Question One

The agent will go to Madrid

Table (3) the incorrect answers made by 12 students

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	9	12	20
Percentage	60%	45%	100

Question Two

The pretty girl will visit Paris next week.

Table (4) correct and incorrect answers

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	7	13	20
Percentage	35%	65%	100

Question Three

The children played the games outside doors.

Table (5) equal number between wrong and right answers through question three.

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	10	10	20
Percentage	50%	50%	100

Question four

Birds fly

Table (6) correct answers and having problems with this question.

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	9	11	20
Percentage	45%	55%	100

Question three

See the answer

Table (7) correct and incorrect answers that indicate a big problem.

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	5	15	20
Percentage	25%	75%	100

Question Four

Yesterday the child was killed

Table (8) fifteen incorrect answers.

Options	Correct	Incorrect	Total
Frequency	5	15	20
Percentage	25%	75%	100

5. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

This part is to investigate errors made by Kurdish EFL Learners in applying rules of syntactic structure. The significant study in research is important for students of EFL to distinguish between the parts of the sentence, words order, and syntactic rules. The researcher used a methodology analytical descriptive study.

The participants of this study are (20) Undergraduate Male Kurdish Students of English Language at Universities in Kurdistan Region, Iraq. They are different in ages.

5.2 Results

The results of this study showed that many participants can't know how can differentiate between the verb and adverb; also they can't distinguish between the rules of syntax and rules of grammar. Kurdish EFL learners didn't know how to write suitable rules in the right place and how to deal with syntactic structure.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

- The teacher should have the responsibility to teach anything related to syntactic structure.
- The teacher should give enough information about the rules of syntactic structure.
- The students have to realize about the rules of syntactic structures.

- Students must do more practice when applying the analysis of rules.
- If students are following rules of syntactic they can overcome these errors.
- If students read more books, articles, and researches about grammar and syntax they will be able to apply these rules.

5.4 Conclusions

This paper shows the errors made by Kurdish EFL Learners in using and applying the rules of syntactic structure. The researcher tried to show, that Kurdish students EFL learners have negative perceptions for rules in syntactic structure and they have not enough knowledge about it, Linguists believe that the process of learning the rules of syntax is not a part of native speakers, because the native speakers can speak the language fluently, but it does not mean that they know the rules of the structure of Syntax.

References

- Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learner's errors. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (1967). 5(4), 161-170. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161
- Corder, S. P. (1973). Introducing Applied Linguistics. Harmonds worth: Penguinm Books Ltd.
- Dulay, H. C., Burt, M.K., & Krashen, S.D. (1982). Language two. New York: Oxford University Press.
- EL- Sayed, A. M, (1983) Investigation into the Syntactic Errors of Saudi Freshmen English Composition.
- James, C. (1998). Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis. New York: Routledge.
- Kambal, A. (1980).Analysis of Khartoum University Students composition Errors.
- Mohammed, H. (1980). The Problem of Certain Phonological Peculiarities of English for Speakers of Arabic. Idelti Journal. No.20.
- Nonkokhetkong., K. (2013). Grammatical error analysis of the first year English major students, Udon Thani Rajabhat University. Paper presented at the Asian Conference on Language 2013, Osaka, Japan.
- Presada, D., & Badea, M. (2014). The effectiveness of error analysis in translation classes. A pilot study. Porta Linguarum, 22, 49-59.
- Rattanadilok Na Phuket, P., & Othman, N. B. (2015). Understanding EFL students' errors in writing. Journal of Education and Practice, 6(32), 99-106.
- Richard, J. C (1971) non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis.
- Scott, C. (1988), Spoken and Written syntax in m, Nippold.
- Scott, M. S and Tucker, G. R. (1974) Error Analysis and English Language Strategies of Arab Students Language Learning.
- Sharma, V, A. (1981) Syntactic Error as dices of developing language proficiency in Arabic speakers writing English.

- Susana, S. (2000). Discourse Function and Syntactic Complexity in Synchronous and asynchronous communication, language learning and technology.

- Zafar, A. (2016). Error analysis: A tool to improve English skills of undergraduate students. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Science, 217, 697-705. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.02.122