

## Difficulties in learning grammar, a study into the Context of University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering

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### Abstract

English grammar learning was still a complex issue for Iraqi students. Despite the numerous studies examined in this case. But there are many aspects that have not yet been explained. Given the importance of this aspect in learning English. Therefore, this research aims to find these problems and try to interpret them and find possible solutions. Through this study we will learn about the errors that made by the students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering in their writings. These errors will be classified and it will identified the reasons for such errors in the writings of students.

**Keywords:** Iraqi Student's, Grammar, errors, English learning.

### Introduction

Grammar is a set of rules and systems for sentences control without these systems, a sentence of clear and explicit meaning cannot be formed (Larsen-Freeman, ٢٠٠١). Learning English grammar helps students understand and knows important language concepts that help them understand many aspects sentences correctly. An example of this is understanding how to use verbs in the right form and formula, the use of adjectives, adverbs, phrases, Prepositions, and other grammatical rules for a particular syntax. (Azar, ٢٠٠٧)

The grammar help the student to write and read correctly. Without studying the grammar, the correct results of learning the language will not be achieved. The grammar are the basis of every language. Its certain methods and organization that must be followed and not ignored in order to achieve the goal of mastering the language and learn the language efficiently and correctly. It is also known that each language has its own words, sounds and systems. It's not just learning the correct language, it is a discovery of the nature of the language (Azar, B. ٢٠٠٧)

The difficulties and problems faced by students in learning the rules of English should not be ignored. Arab students face many problems reading and writing in English. Abdul Haq (١٩٨٢) for example, in Iraq, the student learns English only in the classroom, and because the mother tongue in Iraq is the Arabic language and the lack of English in everyday life, this makes the opportunity to learn English very weak. There are many difficulties Iraqi students face in learning grammar in English. Identifying these difficulties and pointing them out will help teachers find solutions to these difficulties and problems more easily and better and provide better education for students.

### Review of Literature

Grammar is an important aspect of language learning. Therefore, learning English is an important point to practice English correctly. As noted above, students find it difficult to learn

English. There are many studies that have investigated the field of learning towards English and the difficulties and problems that students face in this aspect of learning English, for example (White, ١٩٩٨; Lyster, ٢٠٠٤; Ammar, ٢٠٠٨; and Lyster and Izquierdo, ٢٠٠٩).

Maros and Salehuddin (٢٠٠٧) also found In their study of the difficulties and mistakes of students when writing articles and found a lot of mistakes and grammatical challenges in the writings of Malaysian students the most common errors found by the researchers were articles, subject-verb agreement, the use of determiners, omission of the third person singular –s. In another study, Brog (٢٠٠١) discusses the perceptions of teachers about understanding the English language and their perceptions of how to teach this information in the classroom and the role of teachers in teaching English through their understanding and knowledge of the many aspects of syntax and their knowledge of ways to communicate these aspects to their students and answer their questions about these aspects. In this study, the researcher seeks to discover the difficulties and grammatical problems in the English language faced by Iraqi students at the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering., and try to find answers to the research questions listed below for the purpose of finding appropriate solutions to these problems and challenges.

### **Research objectives**

The present study aims to investigate the errors happened in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering. In addition, it aims to investigate the reasons behind these errors in the writings of students.

### **Research questions**

- ١- What are the errors happened in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering?
- ٢- What are the reasons behind these errors in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering?

### **Methods**

This study was conducted to detect the errors made by students of University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering during writing. A test will be used as a tool in this study. Fifty students from the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering will be participating in this test. Then we move on to how and how the data analysis step involves analyzing errors in existing data and then organizing these errors into categories. These data have been analyzed based on the scheme of categories by (Ja Park et. al ٢٠٠٣).

The division of these errors includes the following: Word Order, Ellipsis ( Ellipsis , pronouns omission and addition, pronouns misapply), Articles (Omission the/a, addition the/a, misapply the/a), prepositions (addition, omission, misapply), Tense (Present form for the past, past tense with present

and infinitive), Verbs (Omission of be, misapply of ing, Omission of ing, addition of to, omission of to), Numbers - Pluralities, and Comparative constructions.

### Participants

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, which were first, its aims to investigate the errors happened in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering. In addition, it aims to investigate the reasons behind these errors in the writings of students. Fifty students studying at the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering will take part in the test. These students study in the first stage. These students were chosen from this stage on the grounds that the students have spent many years studying English before they reach this stage. They will be examined with a written test to analyze errors when writing. The following section discusses the tool used in this research for the purpose of detecting these errors.

### Measurements

In order to achieve the aforementioned research objectives, there are several steps that must be followed in order to achieve these goals. We have previously talked about participants who will participate in this study. In this section we will talk about the tool that used in this research in order to answer the research questions and to investigate the research objectives. The tool that used in this research in order to achieving the objectives of the research is asking the students to writing composition around ٢٠٠-٢٥٠ words on assigned topic. The students were asked to write an essay about "Write a text about your ambitions and what you want to achieve after graduating from college".

### Findings

After the researcher distributed the subject to students and students wrote about the subject that mentioned in the tool. The researcher collected the data from the students and then marked the errors in the student papers using the red pen to identify the errors in the papers. The researcher then sorted out these errors and arranged them in order to organize the analysis process. This sorting was done according to the categories table by Ja Park et. all (٢٠٠٣) which includes the categories listed in the method section. This is why errors are adopted based on these categories. This will identify errors with clear and understandable explain.

#### ١- Word order

Word order principles vary from one language to another. Each language has specific rules for arranging words. When learning a new language mistakes occur by the learner because he thinks that the grammar is the same in both languages and this is certainly not true especially when learning English language. The total errors of word order was (٢٢) errors. An example is a student wrote in his paper "i need to my study complete". The student was supposed to say "I need to complete my study",

we see that arranging words was wrong and there are many reasons lead to the make of such errors, including the lack of knowledge for language rules by the student to be learned. The application of the first language rules when learning the second language may also be the cause of these errors (Gómez, E. G. ٢٠١١)

## ٢- Ellipsis

Some students tend to delete certain words that were supposed to exist if grammatical rules were followed correctly. The total errors of Ellipsis was (١٩) errors. An example of this is the sentence written in a student's paper "and hope a good job for all my friends". We see here that there is a clear deletion of the pronoun "I" since it is possible that the reason is that he wanted to shorten his writing. Negative transfer from mother tongue to second language may also be a cause for do these errors. Although the errors in this aspect were few compared to the rest of the mistakes. However, these errors should not be neglected in the writings of students. Another example "but I am sure I will do the best".

## ٣- Articles

When we look at students' mistakes in Articles we find that there is a great weakness in their knowledge of the rules of the use it. The total errors of Articles was (١٨) errors. For example, a student wrote in his paper "i didn't want to become engineer without job". Here the student ignored and did not add the Article (an) and according to the correct rules of the English language here should be placed the Article (a).

Articles is a word that indicates a particular person or something and there are two types of Articles Indefinite Article and definite Article. We find here in the above sentence that the word (engineer) is not specific and therefore according to the rules of the English language is supposed to be followed by the article (an) because of the presence of the vowel in the first word (engineer), as for the article (the), it is placed only in the case of definite Article (McDonald, A., & Bhattacharyya, P. ١٩٣٠)

### a- Addition Articles

In some of the students' writings, we find that they have added Articles to sites that need not be added according to the correct rules of the English language.

For example "after this four years we should have a more luck to find work"

"I will do a good for the future".

### b- Article misuse

When we looked more closely at the students' writings, we found that there were a lot of mistakes made during the use of the articles. Some students have used incorrect article in many places

of writing, which explains the students' disregard of the concepts and rules of using articles in English.

For example "I don't have a ambition after graduating"

"everybody of us have the dream for himself".

#### ٤- Prepositions

When we read the students' writings, we find some errors related to the Prepositions, but not the large numbers. The total errors of Prepositions was (١٦) errors. There are a few errors found regarding how to use prepositions, whether using wrong Prepositions or ignore them in several locations.

For example "we want help other...."

##### a- Prepositions misuse

We note through students' writings that there are errors in the use of prepositions.

For example "when we meet at weekend everyone talk about..."

"My father always advise me in study ...."

#### ٥- Tense

We find through student writings mistakes in using the tenses. This is due to several reasons, including the lack of knowledge of the student English grammar more precisely, not to highlight the basics of learning the rules of English language in a large extent in schools, teaching in schools is still routine and do not use the modern methods of teaching to find that most of the teaching is not established in the mind of the student to follow Traditional and insufficient teaching methods to master and master the basics of language learning. The total errors of tenses was (١٤) errors.

##### a- Present forms in simple past

There are other sentences that show that the student wrote about an event that is happening now, but he mentioned it in its entirety in the past tense.

For example "we went to college every day....."

"When I was complete my study I will ...."

##### b- Past forms in present tense

The student wanted to mention a particular event in the past, but he mentioned it in the present tense.

For example "i working hard to become in college ..."

"My mother and father saying to me when I was ten years old ..."

## ٦- Verbs

When we read some of the papers of the students, we find that mistakes have occurred in verbs. There are some errors that were with a large percentage, but the rest of the mistakes were with a little number of errors. The total errors of verbs was (٢٦) errors. Lack of proficiency in English grammar and lack of attention to this aspect in the teaching process can be the cause of such errors.

### a- Omission of ing

We find that the students have been wrong to forget or ignore adding the (ing) for the verb was greater than the rest of the mistakes in this regard.

For example "I never think about job"

"because we don't work hard our homework...."

### b- Omission of to

We find that some students through their writings tend to ignore the preposition (to). In many sentences, there is a clear omission of (to) in places where it must exist. There are reasons for such errors to occur. The student finds the preposition (to) just a word that can be overlooked in many cases, the student does not give this subject great importance in terms of adherence to the rules of the correct English language.

For example "I need work to have ..."

"when thinking about make plan achieve our goals...."

### c- Misuse of possessive pronouns

By extracting students' errors in writing, we found that there are some minor mistakes in the use of possessive pronouns and this is due to the lack of students to know the correct rules in the use of possessive pronouns right in the right place of the sentence.

For example "I will work hard for achieve her dreams"

"I want to succeed to get our wishes...."

## ٧- Pluralities

When moving from one paper to another we find that there are errors related to the Pluralities. Pluralities is an important aspect of language. Each language has certain rules and different rules of Pluralities in another language. We find that students have confusion when writing Pluralities Where the students make mistakes in the rules of Pluralities in English, they may find that doing such mistakes may be a simple action and does not effect of the rules of sentences. In some papers these errors were very clear and explicit and this is an important subject indicates the lack of students to understand the basics of simple English, which was studied by the student during school. The total errors of Pluralities was (١٣) errors.

For example "all this dreams need more work..."

#### ٨- **Comparative constructions**

When we look at the students' papers, we find some errors related to Comparative constructions. The use of Comparative constructions varies from one language to another. Where its rule does not apply to a particular language in all languages. The lack of knowledge of the rules of this aspect was one of the other reasons that led to such mistakes by students. The total errors of Comparative constructions was (٧) errors.

For example "I hope graduated from college earlier as possible"

#### **The reasons behind the errors in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering:**

This study aims to investigate the errors happened in the writings of students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering. In addition, it aims to investigate the reasons behind these errors in the writings of students. Through our reading and research in the writings of students, we find that there are several reasons behind the students' action such errors, including the methods of teaching very simple in schools and at all stages and not to give certain aspects of language education the crucial importance of learning language. There is also a lack of students on this subject because we find that most students lack the motivation to learn English because of the lack of use of English language in Iraq in the field of study or in the field of daily life.

Also, some students when writing in English write all that they translate inside literally as read in their native language, the Arabic language. This is what is called the passive language of the student. The learner or the student when writing in the target language literally translates the rules and basics aspects of his mother tongue. The language basics is different from language to other. So we find that there are many reasons for the implementation of such errors. Such as ignorance of the rules of the main English language is the most powerful reason among other reasons.

#### **Conclusion**

This study was form to investigate the errors happened in the writings of students and to investigate the reasons behind these errors in the writings of students. Therefore, this study was carried out. The students of the University of Technology, Department of Materials Engineering were participated in this study in order to answer the current research questions. Writing composition by students was the tool used in this study. The aim of using the students' writings as data in this study was to identify the mistakes that the students make while writing in English and to identify the causes of these errors.

When we carefully examine the writings of the students that were used as data for this study, we find that mistakes were made by the students and as divided into tables according to Ja Park et. all

(٢٠٠٣). We have known the types of mistakes that students committed during their writings. The percentages were different in terms of the preparation of errors, there are errors were found in large percentages in the student papers an example of this is "verbs". We find that students have been wrong in many aspects of the use of verbs, whether in "omission of be" or "omission and misuse of ing". The rest of the mistakes come in a sequential manner after the mistakes of the verbs.

These errors found in the writings of students have many sources and many reasons as we talked about previously. We find that the traditional methods of teaching not enough to learn the language well not to anchor the fundamentals of language in the mind of the student. It require more than the material taught and then test on the next day. There should be plans and methods of teaching new and effective learning all the meanings and essentials of the correct language and not leave any aspect without treatment. The motivational factor should also be found in the students' minds by motivating them to learn English and to benefit from it in many aspects, whether in the field of their studies or in their daily lives. Further research should be conducted in this field to identify the remaining gaps that have not yet been solved for the purpose of Reach the required level in all schools and universities.

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