The Performance of Iraqi EFL University Students in Modifying and Qualifying Predication

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Abstract

Modification is the grammatical ties that exist between an adjective and its noun or a verb and its adverb. It is a largely optional function performed for instance by adjectives in the noun phrases or intensifying adverbs in the adverb phrases. A modifier is an optional element in phrase or clause structure that adds descriptive information to the head.Qualification is a term used in syntax to refer to certain types of structure dependence of one grammatical unit upon another and it expresses some quality that is assigned directly to the person or thing. It could be used with adjectives, nouns, and adverbs. Predication is an act of saying something about a subject and the predicate must contain an adverb that requires another sentence element to complete it. There are different type of predicates e.g. verbs only predicate, objects , and adverbs.

١-١ The Problem

Most Iraqi EFL learners are not able to differentiate between modifying and qualifying predication . In addition , they do not know that the qualification is used to show quality or quantity in sentences and that modification is used to replace some words by another to modify these words.

١-٢   Aims of the Study

The present study aims at :

١- Investigating the difficulties as learners attempt to make use of qualifying and modifying predication that will help to understand the foreign language rules.

٢- Identifying Iraqi EFL university students' performance in recognizing and producing modifying and qualifying predication.

٣- Finding out the subjects' errors and giving description to the types of these errors through the analysis of the results.

٤- Illustrating the main areas of errors.

١-٣ **Hypotheses**

View the preceding aims , it is hypothesized that :

١- Most of Iraqi EFL learners lack the linguistic ability to differentiate between modifying and qualifying predication.

٢- They do not know the types of modification and qualification.

٣- They can not utilize them effectively and accurately in different positions.

١-٤ **Procedures**

The researchers adopt the following procedures:

١- Presenting modification, qualification and their types.

٢- Selecting a sample of Iraqi EFL university students for conducting a test to investigate their performance in producing and recognizing modification and predication.

٣- Identifying the learners' erroneous responses and making analysis to these errors.

١-٥ **Limits of the Study**

The study is limited to :

١- The third year students, Department of English,   College of Education, University of Babylon during the academic year ٢٠٠٩-٢٠١٠ are the sample of the study.

٢- Investigate the use of modifying   and qualifying   predication in both recognition and production levels.

١-٦ **Value of the Study**

It is hoped that the findings of the study will be useful for researchers, teachers, learners and syllabus designers.

٢- Modification

Modification is a word or a group of words that refines the   meaning of another word (Richard et al. ١٩٩٢: ٢٣٤).

١- She is a *very* good lecturer.

'**very** '   is an adverb that modifies (a good lecturer).(Leech and Svartvik,١٩٩:٢٥٩)On his part, Crystal (١٩٩٧:٢٤٥-٦) declares that modification is a term used in syntax to refer to the structural dependence of one grammatical

unit upon another.

٢- He is a *good* man.

'**good**' is an adjective that modifies the noun (man). (Gucker, ١٩٦٦:٢٦)

٢-١ Types of Modification

٢-١-١ Nouns as Modifiers

A noun can be used as a modifier of another noun when it is singular.

٣- It is a *vegetable* soup.

'**vegetable**' is a noun that modifies the noun (soup).(Azar; ١٩٨٩:٢٠٣)

٢-١-٢ Adverbs as Modifiers

Quirk et al. (١٩٨٥:٤٤١) point out that an adverb could be used as a modifier of an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs may modify different elements.

٢-١-٢-١ Modifier of Adjective

An adverb may premodify an adjective. Most commonly, the adverb is an intensifier or emphasizer.

٤- It is *really* beautiful.

'**really**' is an adverb that modifies an adjective (beautiful).(Greenbaum and Quirk, ١٩٩٠:١٤٩)

٢-١-٢-٢ Modifier of Adverb

An adverb may premodify another adverb.

٥- It rains *very* heavily.

'**very**' is an adverb that modifies (heavily) which is also an adverb. (Greenbaum and Quirk, ١٩٩٠:١٥٠)

٢-١-٢-٣ Modifier of a Noun Phrase

An adverb is used to modify a noun phrase.

٦- He had *quite* a party.

'**quite**' is an adverb that modifyies a noun phrase (a party). (Greenbaum and Quirk, ١٩٩٠:١٥٠)

٢-١-٢-٤ Modifier of Preposition

Intensifying adverbs, especially (right and well) premodify prepositions.

٧- The nail went *right* through the wall.

'**right**' is an adverb that modifies the preposition (through). (Ibid.)

٢-١-٢-٥ Modifier of Pronoun

Intensifying adverbs can premodify indefinite pronouns.

٨- *Nearly* everybody came to our party.

'**Nearly**' is an adverb that modifies pronoun (everybody).(Ibid.)

٢-١-٢-٦ Modifier of Predeterminer

Intensify adverbs can also premodify predeterminer.

٩- They recovered *roughly* half their equipment.

'**roughly**' is an adverb that modifies predeterminer 'half'.(Ibid.)

٢-٢ Qualification

According to Crystal (١٩٩٧:٣٨٢) and Mathesius (٢٠٠٧:١١٤-٧), a qualifier is a term used in syntax to refer to certain types of structural dependence of one grammatical unit upon another. Qualifying predication expresses a qualification by which some quality is assigned to the subject and it could be used with an adjective, noun , and adverb.

١٠- Jack is *my cousin*.   (Gucker ,١٩٦٦:١٥)

'**my cousin**' is a noun and it is a complement to the subject (Jack) i.e. it qualifies the subject. (Gucker ,١٩٦٦:١٥)

١١- He is a *good* man.

'**good**' is an adjective that qualifies the subject 'he'. (Ibid.)

٢-٢-١ Types of Qualification

٢-٢-١-١ The Copulative Qualification

Mathesius (٢٠٠٧:١١٣) mentions that copulative qualification is one type of qualification in which the subject is qualified to the predicate by means of verbs (to be).

١٢- He is a *dreamer*.

'**dreamer**' is a noun and it denotes quality which qualifies the subject 'he'.

٢-٢-١-٢ Copulative Adjective Qualification

Mathesius (٢٠٠٧:١١٩) declares that copulative adjective qualification denotes a temporary quality in which the subject operates.

١٣- Mrs. Smith was a *clever* woman.   (ibid.)

'**clever**' is an adjective and it denotes quality which qualifies the subject 'Mrs. Smith'.

٢-٢-٢ Qualities and States

Quirk et al. (١٩٨٥:٢٠٠) point out that qualities are permanent of the subject referent that can be presented by using verbs (be and have); sometimes qualities are used to introduce less permanent types called states.

١٤- Mary is *Canadian*.

١٥- Mary is *tired*.   (ibid.)

'**Canadian**' is a noun preceded by the verb (be) to show quality to the subject 'Mary'; '**tired**' is an adjective and it is also preceded by the (be) but it is known as state not quality.

٢-٢-٣ Quantifiers

Leech and Jan (١٩٩٩:٣٥٩) state that quantifiers are words such as *all*, *any*, *some*, *nobody*, *a lot of* which express contrast in quantity.

١٦- They have *a lot of* charm.

'**a lot of**' is a quantifier and it is used before the noun 'charm' which is uncountable. Additionally, Parrot (٢٠٠٠:٥٤) views quantifiers as words or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun phrase and signal whether the information is new or familiar or tells something about quantity.

١٧- I have got *some time*.

'**some**' is a quantifier and it is used before the noun 'time'.

٢-٢-٤ Quantifiers with Countable and Uncountable

       Nouns

Shephered et al. (١٩٨٤:٢٣١) state that quantifiers are terms used to show quantity;some of them could be used with countable nouns only such as (*few*, *many*), others could be used with uncountable ones such as (*little*, *much*) and some quantifiers could be used with countable and uncountable nouns.

١٨- Your English is very good. You make very *few* mistakes.(Murhpy,٢٠٠٢:١٧٠)

'**few**' is a quantifier and it is used with countable noun 'mistakes' which means not all her/ his speech wrong.

١٩- They are very poor. They have very *little* money.   (ibid.)

'**little**' is a quantifier and it is used with uncountable noun 'money'.

٢٠- We bought *a lot of* books.

٢١- We bought *a lot of* food.   (Murphy, ٢٠٠٢:١٦٨)

In (٢o), 'a **lot of**' is a quantifier and it is used with countable nouns 'books' ; in (٢١), '**a lot of** ' is used with uncountable nouns 'food'.

٢-٢-٥   Positive and Negative Quantifiers

Shephered et al. (١٩٨٤:٢٣) assert that quantifiers could be either negative or positive according to the speaker's attitude.

٢٢- We have got quite *a few* friends in the village.

'**a few**' friends is a negative quantifier which means the speaker does not have many friends in the village.

٢٣- His ideas are difficult, and *few* people understand them.

'**few**' people is a positive quantifier which means the speaker expects more people to understand them.   (Swan, ١٩٩٥:٣٢٢)

٣- Predication

٣-١ What is Predication?

Quirk et al. (١٩٧٣:١١) say that predication is an act of saying something about the subject or what is being said about it and it usually consists of a verb either with or without an object, or complement.

٢٤- It *rained steadily all day*.

'**rained steadily all day**' is a predication and it predicates the subject 'it'.

Chalker (١٩٩٨: ١٦) adds that predication is a part of a sentence which predicates or asserts something about the subject.

٢٥- She *enjoys going to the cinema*.

'**enjoys going to the cinema**' is a predication which predicates the subject 'she'.

٣-٢ Subject and Predicate

Subject is an element that performs the action denoted by the verb.

٢٦- He writes well.

The subject (he) performs the action of writing well (i.e.) (writes well) is explained what the subject does; while predicate is what is said about the subject and it comprises a verb that may stand alone, or including complements (١).

٣-٣ Types of predication

٣-٣-١ Nominal Predicate

A nominal predicate is a pronoun that comes after a linking verb to identify the subject of the sentence.

٢٧- George III is a **king of England**.   (٢)

'king of England' is nominal predication that predicates the subject 'George III'.

٣-٣-٢ Adjective Predicate

An adjective predicate is the adjective that comes after verb to be or a linking verb to identify the subject.

٢٨- Jeeny is **attractive**.

'attractive' is an adjective and it predicates the subject 'Jeeny'. (٢)

Leech and Jan (١٩٩٩:٢٢٠) assert that adjectives could be used as an object complement of direct object with some verbs such as (consider, believe, make, find,…etc.)

٢٩- It makes me **sick** to see how people spoil the environment.

'sick' is an adjective and it is complement to the direct object 'me'. (٢)

٣-٣-٣ A Stage level Predicate

A stage level predicate can occur in different constructions which is a temporal stage to its object

٣٠- John is **hungry**.

'hungry' is an adjective that predicates the subject 'John' and it means that 'hungry' is lasted for a certain time. (٢)

٣-٣-٤   An Individual Level Predicate

An individual level predicate is used through the existence of an individual.

٣١- John is **smart**.

'smart' is an adjective and it predicates the subject 'John'. (٢)

٣-٤ Elements of Predication

٣-٤-١ Verb Only Predicate

A verb only predicate is a verb that takes no object and it is sufficient by itself.

٣٢- The baby **cried**.

'cried' is an intransitive verb that takes no object. (٣)

٣-٤-٢   Objects

Kuiper and Scott (١٩٩٦:٢٤٣) state that an object and a verb are closely related and the object denotes the person or thing affected by the action. The object is divided into three types: direct, indirect and object complement.

٣-٤-٢-١ Direct Object

Leech et al., (١٩٨٢:٧٦) suggest that the object is very closely tied to the predicator in terms of meaning and typically refers to the person or thing most intimately affected by the action or state.

٣٣- The girl bought *a dress*.

'a dress' is the direct object of the verb 'bought' that is affected by the

verb directly. (Stageberge,١٩٧١:١٨٠)

٣-٤-٢-٢ Indirect Object

According to Kuiper and Scott (١٩٩٦:٢٤٣), indirect object is the thing or person that is given for and it is affected by the action indirectly.

٣٤- The mother bought *the girl* a dress.

'the girl' is an indirect object and it is affected by the action of the verb indirectly. (Stageberge,١٩٧١:١٨٥)

٣-٤-٢-٣ Object Complement

Leech et al. (١٩٨٢:٧٦) point out that complement can look superficially like an object (both can be noun phrases), but in terms of meaning it provides a definition or characterization of the subject or object.

٣٥- He appointed Ruth *secretary*.

'secretary' is an object complement and it completes the direct object 'Ruth'. (Stageberge, ١٩٧١:١٨٧)

٣-٤-٣ Adverbials

Kuiper and Scott (١٩٩٦:٢٤٨) assert that adverbials are used to describe an event about certain action. They follow the subject and the verb in SVA, the adverbials follow the direct object in SVOA, and other predication adjuncts normally at the end of the clause. Kuiper and Scott (١٩٩٦:٢٤٨) add that adverbials are subdivided into different types: time , place, manner and reason.

٣-٤-٣-١ Time Adverbials Time adverbials deal with time in which an event takes

place.

٣٦- He was there *last week*.

'last week' is an adverb of time. (Quirk et al. ١٩٨٥:٤٨١)

٣-٤-٣-٢   Place Adverbials Place adverbials deal with the events that takes place in certain location.

٣٧- He lay *on his bed*.

'on his bed' is an adverb of place. (Quirk et al. ١٩٨٥:٤٧٩)

٣-٤-٣-٣   Manner Adverbials Manner adverbials deal with how to express certain events that are performed.

٣٨- She did it *legally*.

'legally' is an adverb of manner which expresses how she did it. (Quirk et al. ١٩٨٥:٤٨٣)

٣-٤-٣-٤   Reason Adverbials Reason adverbials deal with the reason behind certain events.

٣٩- He bought the book *because of his interest in metaphysics.*

'because of his interest' is an adverb of reason which expresses the reason for buying the book (Quirk et al. ١٩٨٥:٤٨٣).

٤- Data Analysis It is generally agreed upon that errors are indicators of difficulties encountered in certain structures and the percentage of errors shows the degree of that difficulty (Johanson, ١٩٧٥:٢٢٥).Fifteen students are the sample of the test. As shown in Appendix (A), the test consists of two parts, the first part (Q١+Q٢) measures the subjects mastering of modifying and qualifying predication in recognition level respectively. The second part (Q٣+Q٤) is designed to find out the subjects abilities to produce meaningful sentences with modifying and qualifying predication in production level respectively.The analysis of (Q١) reveals that (٢٠,٨٪) of the answers are correct whereas (٧٩,٢٪) are erroneous responses. The percentage shows that the subjects failed to recognize the modifying prediction by underlying it although they had been taught it in the last two years. As far as (Q٢) is concerned, the percentage of the correct answers is (١٧,٢٪) which is uncourageous in contrast with the courses been given. The decreasing percentages show that the subjects were not exposed to enough examples or were not use them constantly. In the recognition question,

subjects answer by guessing so the percentage of incorrect answers is (٨٢,٨٪).In the second part (Q٣+Q٤), subjects are asked to produce five meaningful sentences in each question. The answers of (Q٣) show that the subjects give incomplete sentences or wrong ones as a result the percentage of correct sentences is (١٥,٤٪) and the percentage of the incorrect ones is (٣٢,٤٪) and this reveals that the subjects may not expose or study them effectively. The answers of (Q٤) show that the percentage of correct answers is (٢٥,٢٪) and the percentage of incorrect ones is (٢٤,٨٪). Many of the subjects give erroneous sentences to express modifying and qualifying predication but the researchers take in their consideration correct ones. Most of the correct sentences were (SVO, SVA, SVC).Other correct sentences which are not used by the subjects are out of their use or they did not master them so they try not to use them so this causes the misunderstanding in recognition and production such types of sentences.Due to the limited exposure to the language or insufficient practice of English language rules, the subjects are seen to adopt the wrong hypothesis or build the wrong rules about the second language. Inadequate information about modifying and qualifying predication may be the main reason behind making more erroneous responses in recognizing and producing them.

٥- Conclusions

In the light of the preceding analysis, the following conclusions have been drawn:

١- Most of Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in using modifying and qualifying predication and they can not differentiate between them.

٢- The subjects are unaware of the types of modification and qualification and they did not know how to use them in different positions.

٣- The subjects mix between modifying and qualifying predication on one hand and predication and other grammatical items (adjectives, adverbs,…) on the other hand.

Appendix A

Q١/ Underline the modifying predication in the following sentences.

١- My uncle bought a boat with a flat bottom.

٢- They are smoking very heavily.

٣- There is a house that stands by the church.

٤- George was wearing a sport shirt.

٥- She has a really beautiful face.

٦- This is a very interesting book.

٧- There is a land which is suitable for all seasons.

٨- At the station we were met by a man carrying a copy of the times

٩- He is such a fool.

١٠-His desk was in the faculty.

Q٢/ Underline the qualifying predication in the following sentences.

١- Do you need much space?

٢- Mr. Brown was a young teacher.

٣- They made little progress.

٤- I taught them some vocabulary.

٥- He is a dreamer.

٦- Did you examine each side of the coin?

٧- There are a lot of people outside.

٨- He was not enough of a doctor not to feel with his patient.

٩- He took a few biscuits.

١٠- People raised many doubts.

Q٣/ Give five sentences using modifying predication.

١-   ٢-   ٣-   ٤-   ٥-

Q٤/ Give five sentences using qualifying predication.

١-   ٢-   ٣-   ٤-   ٥-

Note: The sentences must be different from those in Q١ and Q٢.

Appendix B

Q١/ Underline the modifying predication in the following sentences.

١١-My uncle bought <u>a boat with a flat bottom</u>.

١٢-They are smoking <u>very heavily</u>.

١٣-There is <u>a house that stands by the church</u>.

١٤-George was wearing <u>a sport shirt</u>.

١٥-She has <u>a really beautiful face</u>.

١٦-This is <u>a very interesting book</u>.

١٧-There is <u>a land which is suitable for all seasons</u>.

١٨-At the station we were met by <u>a man carrying a copy of the times</u>.

١٩-He is <u>such a fool</u>.

٢٠-His desk was <u>in the faculty</u>.

Q٢/ Underline the qualifying predication in the following sentences.

١-Do you need <u>much space</u>?

٢-Mr. Brown was <u>a young teacher</u>.

٣-They made <u>little progress</u>.

٤-I taught them <u>some vocabulary</u>.

٥-He is <u>a dreamer</u>.

٦-Did you examine <u>each side of the coin</u>?

٧-There are <u>a lot of people outside</u>.

٨-He was <u>not enough of a doctor not to feel with his patient</u>.

٩-He took <u>a few biscuits</u>.

١٠- People raised <u>many doubts</u>.

Q٣/ Give five sentences using modifying predication.

Following are the possible answers:

١- The girl is very beautiful.

٢- This is the cat which has green eyes.

٣-He put his car in the dirty street.

٤-She has a red dress.

٥-He was reading a love story.

Q٤/ Give five sentences using qualifying predication.

١- He bought some sugar.

٢-They have little children.

٣-She is a smart baby.

٤-There are a lot of students in the school.

٥-He wants much milk.

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No. of Q.	No. of items	No. of correct answers	Percentage	No. of incorrect answers	Percentage
Q١	١	٦	١٢٪	٤٤	٨٨٪
	٢	٦	١٢٪	٤٤	٨٨٪
	٣	١٤	٢٨٪	٣٦	٧٢٪
	٤	١٠	٢٠٪	٤٠	٨٠٪
	٥	١٤	٢٨٪	٣٦	٧٢٪
	٦	١٢	٢٤٪	٣٨	٧٦٪
	٧	١٤	٢٨٪	٣٦	٧٢٪
	٨	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	٩	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	١٠	١٢	٢٤٪	٣٨	٧٦٪
Total		١٠٤	٢٠,٨٪	٣٩٦	٧٩,٢٪

No. of Q.	No. of items	No. of correct answers	Percentage	No. of incorrect answers	Percentage
Q٢	١	١٠	٢٠٪	٤٠	٨٠٪
	٢	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	٣	٤	٨٪	٤٦	٩٢٪
	٤	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	٥	١٤	٢٨٪	٣٦	٧٢٪
	٦	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	٧	١٢	٢٤٪	٣٨	٧٦٪

	٨	٢	٤٪	٤٨	٩٦٪
	٩	٨	١٦٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
	١٠	١٢	٢٤٪	٣٨	٧٦٪
Total		٨٦	١٧,٢٪	٤١٤	٨٢,٨٪

No. of Q.	No. of items	No. of correct answers	Percentage	No. of incorrect answers	Percentage
Q٣	١	٢٢	٤٤٪	٢٨	٥٦٪
	٢	١٦	٣٢٪	٣٤	٦٨٪
	٣	١٤	٢٨٪	٣٦	٧٢٪
	٤	١٠	٢٠٪	٤٠	٨٠٪
	٥	٨	٣٢٪	٤٢	٨٤٪
Total		٧٠	١٥,٤٪	١٨٠	٣٢,٤٪

No. of Q.	No. of items	No. of correct answers	Percentage	No. of incorrect answers	Percentage
Q٤	١	٢٤	٤٨٪	٢٦	٥٢٪
	٢	٢٦	٥٢٪	٢٤	٤٨٪
	٣	٢٨	٥٦٪	٢٢	٤٤٪
	٤	٢٦	٥٢٪	٢٤	٤٨٪
	٥	٢٢	٤٤٪	٢٨	٥٦٪
Total		١٢٦	٢٥,٢٪	١٢٤	٢٤,٨٪