



Analyzing the Errors Made by EFL College Students in 'Verb to be' at Recognition and Production levels

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Abstract

The study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL college students' errors in 'Verb Be' at recognition and production levels. The study is restricted to the students in the Department of English, College of Education / University of Baghdad in the academic year 2011- 2012. The population consists of (168) Iraqi EFL students distributed over three sections A, B, C. Thirty students are chosen randomly to represent the main study sample and other twenty students represent the pilot administration.

To achieve the aim of the study , two tests have been constructed. The total number of items in the test is (24). While the first test represents recognition, the second test represents production. Results of the students' errors on the test indicate that most of the students' errors occurred in using be plus ed participle and plural concord at both production and recognition levels simultaneously .This study ends with a number of recommendations .

1. Problem of the study

Nowadays in the 21st century, English language is used all over the world and is spoken by nearly one out of four of the world's population. Moreover, English language is spoken in more than seventy countries all over the world (Svartvik, 2001:9).

Every learner needs to acquire basic grammatical knowledge in order to communicate fluently and effectively in English whether in the written or spoken form (Tan, 2005: 123). However, this proves to be an area of a great difficulty for many students, and the students in Baghdad university where this study was conducted were no exception.

A number of studies have been conducted in the area of errors made and it has been revealed that verb forms, uses, and patterns errors contributed to the highest percentage of errors that students made (Vongthieres, 1974: 210; Bhatia, 1974: 67; Wee et al.,2009: 16).

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When grammar is concerned, the knowledge occurs in different stages in a person's language development. In order to perform certain language tasks, relevant grammatical structures need to be mastered by a learner. He only needs to comprehend some rules enough to use them like the basic rules of 'Verb Be' and to know how to apply the rules in forming sentences. As for students at the upper level, they are not able to distinguish and use the rule in depth and discuss the grammatical problems with their teachers (ibid).

In the topic of 'Verb Be' Singular subject is followed by singular verb; 'is' or 'am' and, a plural subject takes a plural verb; 'are'. This rule only applies in Simple Present Tense. On the other hand, in Simple Past Tense, the main verbs, 'was' and 'were', in future 'be' is used and in passive is, are, was, and were plus 'being and been' need reconsideration. This is the general rule for 'Verb Be' which is also represented by its sub-rules. As a result, based on the observation, it is obvious that students made mistakes in both general and sub-general rules in their writing (Surina&Kamaruzaman, 2009:190).

'**Verb Be**' is said to be the most protean of the English language, constantly changing form, sometimes without much of a discernible pattern. Considering that the use it so often, it is really too bad that 'Verb Be' has to be the most irregular, slippery verb in the language (ibid).

Realizing the issues mentioned above, it is important to obtain data on the problems of '**Verb Be**' in all its forms, uses, and patterns faced by ESL learners as it is one of the important components in grammar and this will determine what action needs to be taken in the teaching and learning ESL grammar. This study can contribute to the teaching and learning ESL grammar. It can be used as a guide for teachers to decide what remedial action has to be taken in order to overcome the difficulties faced by ESL learners in using '**Verb Be**'. In addition, the findings of this study may help teachers to revise and devise more suitable instructional materials and procedures to make teaching and learning of grammar more effective.

Thus, This study intends to analyze the errors made by Iraqi EFL students in using 'Verb to Be' in the forms, uses, and patterns which is regarded as a problematic matter for the Iraqi EFL learners of English. This may be related to the fact that Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in distinguishing and using these verbs.

1.1 Aim of the study



The study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL college students' errors in 'Verb B' at recognition and production levels.

1.2 Limits

The study is restricted to:

This study is restricted to the first year students in the department of English in the College Education/ University of Baghdad during the academic year 2011-2012

1.3 Value of the Study

1. The present study is expected to be of value for Iraqi EFL students at the College of Education / Department of English to pinpoint the difficulties in 'Verb Be'

2. Teachers of English are to devise the essential Classroom and techniques that will help students overcome their errors in this specific area.

2. Verb Be

2.1 Uses of 'Verb Be'

The verb "be" is a main verb. "Be" has two auxiliary functions: as an aspect auxiliary:

Be is unique in having a full set of both finite and non-finite forms in auxiliary function; it is also unique among English verbs in having as many as eight different forms.

It is the only verb in English to have a special form for the 1st person singular of the present 'am' and two distinct forms of the past tense (was, were). In the subjunctive, however the form was does not occur.

There is no completely natural informal contraction of am I not (parallel to isn't she nor is she not) in negative sentences (Quirk, 1985: 129).

Be, occurs before the main verb of the clause: For example

Bill is leaving.

The progressive be is followed by a verb ending in ing.

Basic Clause Patterns followed by a verb in its past participle form.

The passive be must be mentioned here, too. Unlike the progressive be, it is followed by a past participle: For example

Bill was followed by the FBI.

A clause may contain several auxiliary verbs:



Bill may have been being followed by the FBI.

But they will always occur in the order:

(Progressive be) (Passive be)

Each auxiliary is enclosed in parentheses because each is optional. And each clause may contain from zero to four auxiliary verbs.

Although the order of auxiliary verbs is invariant, the position of the first auxiliary verb with respect to the subject of its clause depends upon the type of the clause involved. In indicative clauses, it occurs between the subject and the verb phrase. In interrogatives, the first auxiliary is placed to the left of the subject. In negative clauses, the negator, not, is placed immediately after the first auxiliary verb. Compare the indicative (a), interrogative (b), and negative (c) clauses below:

a. Bill is leaving.

b. Is Bill leaving?

c. Bill is not leaving.

The postcard was mailed yesterday.

b. Was the postcard mailed yesterday?

c. The postcard was not mailed yesterday.

a. Bill should have been being followed by the FBI.

b. Should Bill have been being followed by the FBI?

c. Bill should not have been being followed by the FBI (Endley, 2010:249).

2.2 Verb Form

According to (Quirk, 1998: 130) For English 'Verb Be' has eight different forms as (be, is, am, are, was, were, being and been):

Table 1
Forms of Be

Base			
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Present 1 st person singular present 3 rd person 2 nd person And 3 rd person plural present	am 'm is 's are 're	am not, 'm not is not, 's not are not , 're not	aren't isn't aren't
Past 1 st and 3 rd person Singular past 2 nd person past 1 st and 3 rd person plural past	Was were	was not were not	wasn't weren't
-ing form	being	not being	
-ed participle	Been	Not been	

2.4 Basic Verb Be Patterns

Sentences are sometimes labelled by types (as simple, compound, complex); or by rhetorical structure (as loose, periodic, balanced) or by purpose (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory). Sentences may also be identified by patterns, that is, by the order of their words, or of word groups.

While English embraces many sentence patterns, language features three basic

patterns, as follows:

Pattern 1: Subject – Transitive Verb (S-Vi)

Pattern 2: Subject – Transitive Verb – Direct Object (S-Vt-DO)

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Pattern 3 Subject – Linking Verb – Subject Complement (S-LV-SC)

Variations on these three main sentence patterns appear in negatives, in questions, or in the use of the passive voice. Similarly, complications occur with the addition of adjectives, adverbs, or phrases. Nevertheless, the three basic sentence patterns are common and frequent, and should be recognized by the student of composition (Loberger , 2009 : 48).

Quirk (1998 : 129) points out that the verb To Be is a main verb in:

Ann is a happy girl.

Is that building a hotel?

But Be also has two auxiliary functions : as an aspect auxiliary :

Ann is learning Spanish.

The weather has been improving.

And as a passive auxiliary:

Ann was awarded a prize.

Our team has never been beaten.

The ‘Verb Be’ in all its forms is always a linking verb when used alone (“am”, “is”, “are”, “be”, “been”, “being”, “was”, “were”),

When a word or phrase following the linking verb Be tells where the subject is, such a word or phrase is called an adverb complement (Adv-c) The sentence pattern is S-LV-Adv-c.

For example:

- a. He was in the classroom.
- b. He was home later (ibid).

Munir (1991:90) claims that the subject-verb agreement (especially the number agreement) appears to be the most problematic area faced by students of English. Some examples are:

Their students *isin good health.

Boarding schools *isbetter than day schools.

As the examples show, the learner fails to employ the correct rule of subject-verb agreement. The learner should always remember that a singular subject



requires a singular form of the verb and a plural subject requires a plural verb.

Thus, the learner should write:

The students are in good health.

Boarding schools are better than day schools.

2.3 Verb Be Uses

Endley (2010:249) states that the correspondents are still confused with the use of matching the plural noun or subject with plural verb and to associate the singular noun or subject with the singular verb.

This category is the second most committed errors found in the essays written by the respondents. In subject verb agreement of number, verb may change forms depending on whether its subject is singular or plural (Quirk, 1998: 763).

For example, a singular, first-person subject requires a different form of the verb, to be, than does a plural, first person subject.

Examples: I am from Guatemala. (First-person, singular)

We are from Guatemala. (First-person, plural).

Below is an example of the error constructed by the students.

These changes *is* depending on the current situation.

The example indicates the wrong use of 'be' verb 'is' instead of 'are' because the subject 'changes' is a plural subject.

The proximity principle may lead to plural concord even with indefinites such as each, every, everybody, anybody, and nobody which are otherwise unambivalently singular:

Nobody (was ? were) listening.

Every member of the vast crowd of 50000 people (was ? were) pleased to see him. (Quirk, 1998: 764)

2.3.1 Simple Questions

We create simple yes/no questions by inverting the order of subject and the "To be" verb.



Is your brother taller than you?
Am I bothering you?
Were they embarrassed by the comedian?
The same inversion takes place when 'Verb Be' is combined with verbs in the progressive:
Am I working with you today?
Is it snowing in the mountains?
Were your children driving home this weekend? Endley 2010:253).

2.3.2 The Linking and Existential 'Verb Be'

The 'Verb Be' most frequently works in conjunction with another verb: "He is playing the piano," "She will be arriving this afternoon." Occasionally, though, the verb will stand by itself, alone, in a sentence. This is especially true in simple, brief answers to questions.

"Who's going to the movies with me?"

"I am"

"Who's responsible for this mess in the bathroom?"

"She is."

In such sentences the subject usually receives the intonation stress and the voice falls off on the verb.

An auxiliary can be combined with the base form of 'Verb Be' to provide simple answers to questions that use forms of 'Verb Be'

"Is Heitor in class this morning?"

"Well, he might be."

"Is anyone helping Heitor with his homework?"

"I'm not sure. Suzanne could be."

- Our trip to Yellowstone was fantastic! (Endley 2010:254).

2.3.3 In Passive Constructions

A form of the verb 'Verb Be' is combined with a past participle to form the passive. Passive verb constructions are useful when the subject of an action is not as important as what the subject did (the action of the sentence) or when the subject is unknown. For instance, the police might report that "The professor was assaulted in the hallways" because they do not know the perpetrator of this heinous crime. In technical writing, where the process is more important than who is doing the activity, we might report that "Three liters of fluid is filtered through porous glass beads." Regardless of the verb's purpose, only the auxiliary form of "To be" changes; the participle stays the same. The 'Verb Be' will change form to indicate whether the subject is singular or plural:



The foundation is supported by enormous floating caissons that keep it from sinking into the swamp.

They were constructed by workers half submerged in the murky waters.

Notice how the information about who did the action is frequently found in a prepositional phrase beginning with “by.” Passive constructions do not always include this information:

Wooden caissons were used until fiberglass structures were developed in the 1950s.

Caissons were also designed to function under water in the construction of bridges.

The ‘Verb Be’ will also change to indicate the time of the action and the aspect of the verb (simple, progressive, perfect).

Water is pumped out of the caisson to create an underwater work chamber.
(simple present)

Some caissons were moved to other construction sites. (simple past)

While the water was being pumped out, workers would enter the top of the waterproof chamber. (past progressive)

Many other uses of caisson construction have been explored. (present perfect)

Caissons had been used by the ancient Romans. (past perfect)

Other uses will be found. (future)

The ‘Verb Be’ can be combined with other modal forms (along with the past participle of the main verb) to convey other kinds of information. The wall joints may be weakened if the caissons can't be rebuilt.

Perhaps the caissons should be replaced; I think they ought to be.

These ancient, sturdy structures might have been rotted by constant exposure to water.

When ‘Verb Be’ are combined with modal forms in this manner, the construction is called a phrasal modal. Here are some more examples:

Rosario was able to finish her degree by taking online courses.

She wasn't supposed to graduate until next year.

She will be allowed to participate in commencement, though.

She is about to apply to several graduate programs.

She is going to attend the state university next fall.

Sometimes it is difficult to say whether a ‘Verb Be’ is linking a subject to a participle or if the verb and participle are part of a passive construction. In

“Certain behaviors are allowed,” is “are” linking “behaviors” to “allowed” (a participle acting as a predicate adjective) or is “are allowed” a passive verb? In the final analysis, it probably doesn't matter, but the distinction leads to some interesting variations. Consider the difference between



The jurists were welcomed.
and

The jurists were welcome.

In the first sentence, the participle “welcomed” (in this passive construction) emphasizes the action of welcoming: the smiles, the hearty greetings, the slaps on the back. In the second sentence, the predicate adjective “welcome” describes the feeling that the jurists must have had upon being so welcomed (Endley 2010:257)

2.3.4 Progressive Forms

Progressive forms include a form of ‘Verb Be’ plus a present participle (an -ing ending). Loberger (2009 : 76) categorizes progressive verbs according to the following functions:

to describe actions already in progress at the moment "in focus" within the sentence, as in “I was doing my homework when my brother broke into my room, crying.” or “I will be graduating from college about the same time that you enter high school.”

to describe actions at the moment of focus in contrast to habitual actions, as in “We usually buy the most inexpensive car we can find, but this time we're buying a luxury sedan.”

to express repeated actions, as in “My grandfather is forever retelling the same story about his adventures in Rangoon.”

to describe temporary situations in contrast to permanent states, as in “Jeffrey goes to the University of Connecticut, but this summer he is taking courses at the community college.”

to express uncompleted actions, as in “Harvey and Mark are working on their deck.”

2.3.5 Tag Questions with ‘Verb Be’

‘Verb Be’ can be used in a tag question, the basic formula follows: the verb is combined with a pronoun and sometimes with not (usually in a contracted form). Positive statements are followed by negative tags; negative statements by positive tags.

Robert Frost was America's favorite poet, wasn't he?

He wasn't widely accepted in this country at first, was he?

You were going to skip this poem, weren't you?

There were several typographical errors in this anthology, weren't there? (Be careful here. It's not “weren't they.”)

I am not a very good reader, am I?

I'm a better reader than you, aren't I? (Loberger 2009 : 79)

2.5.4 Order with Adverbs

Svartvik (2001:33) points out that adverbs of frequency normally appear after forms of the ‘Verb Be’.

As a student, he was seldom happy.

Arturo is always first in line.



They were never on time.

The adverb still appears after 'Verb Be' verbs but before other main verbs:

My brother-in-law still works for the bank.

He is still a teller after twenty years.

An adverb can be interposed between the infinitive 'Verb Be' and a participle, as in the following sentences. The fear of splitting an infinitive is without grounds in this construction.

This medicine has to be carefully administered.

She turned out to be secretly married to her childhood sweetheart.

3. Procedures

3.1 Population and Sampling

3.1.1 Population

Richards et al(1992:282)state that population refers to any set of items, individuals, etc. which share some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken. The population of this study includes 1st year students ,Department of English,College of education, Ibn -Rushd at the University of Baghdad for the academic year (2011 – 2012).It is consisted of 168 EFL students distributed over three sections A, B, C as shown in table (2). Thirty students were chosen randomly to represent the main study sample and other twenty students represent the pilot administration.

Table 2
The Population and Sample of the Study

College of Education	Third Year Sections	No. of students	Population	Sample
	A	57	168	30(main)
	B	56		20(pilot)
	C	55		

3.2 The Instrument of the Study

In this study an achievement test has been constructed by the researchers.

Two types of knowledge have been used : recognition and production,

3.3 Description of the Test

The test consists of two tasks. The total number of the test items is 24. While the first task represents recognition, the second task represents production. In task one the students are asked to recognize the right answer, as they are given a multiple choice items, whereas in task two the students are asked to give the right answer from their own knowledge (See the Appendix).

3.4 Face Validity

One of the qualities to be considered when selecting or constructing a research instrument is validity. Validity is a reflection of how well an instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Bergman, 1981: 150).

According to Harmer (2001: 322), validity means that the test should measure what it is supposed to measure. It is the extent to which the conclusions drawn from a specific sample are applicable to a large population.

To ensure the face validity, the test has been exposed to a jury of experts in the fields of English language and language teaching at the Iraqi universities and some other foreign universities (see Table 3).

Table 3
The Academic Ranks, Names, and Locations of the Jury Members

N	Academic Rank	Name	College
1	Professor, Ph.D. in ELT	AbasRiza	College of Education, University of Kashan
2	Ph.D. in ELT	ArwaAbd Al- Karim	College of Education, University of Diyala.
3	MA in ELT	AswaqAbd Ai-Mahdi	College of Education, University of Diyala
4	Asst.Prof. Ph.D in Applied Linguistics	Franny F. McAleer	Indiana University of Pennsylvania



5	Asst.Prof. .Ph.D in ELT	Salam H.Al- Temimi	College of Education (Ibn - Rushd),University of Baghdad.

The jurors agree on the test and the scoring scheme as being appropriate for measuring the written performance of students.

3.5 The Pilot Administration of the Test

Before conducting the final version of the test, it is preferred to run a pilot test and to revise it according to the results of the test. To Tuchman (1972:197) pilot testing is "an attempt to determine whether the test items pass the desired qualities of measurement and discriminability". Pilot study, as stated by Harris (1969:25) involves "trying out the test material on a group similar to that for whom the test is being designed".

Results of the pilot study can be good indicator for making any necessary modifications for the final version of the test.

In order to conduct a pilot study, 20 students were randomly chosen from the third year, Department of English, College of Education. The findings of the pilot study revealed that the time required to complete the two tasks of the test ranges between (25 -35) minutes.

3.6 Reliability

Brown (1987:220) states that a reliable test is a test that is consistent and dependable. It means that if the same test is given to the same subjects or match subjects on two different occasions, the test itself should yield similar results.

In order to estimate reliability, a test – retest method is used. Accordingly, a test is considered reliable when there is a correspondence between the two applications or there is just a little difference.

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The test papers are distributed among the students who are told to read the items carefully in a normal speed. All students smoothly answered all items within the time allotted. The period between the two applications is two weeks. The correlation coefficient is 0.81 is considered acceptable according to Carroll & Hall (1985:118). Thus, the reliability of the test is established.

3.7 Scoring Scheme

Al- Hamash et al (1982:23) assert that for the purpose of objectivity and reliability, an accurate scoring scheme should be developed for the whole test. Each item was marked as either correct or incorrect. One mark was given for the correct answer of each item and zero for the wrong one. Leaving any item by the testee was also given zero. Since the test consists of 24 items, the highest mark for the whole test is 24, i.e. 12 marks for each task.

3.8 Error Analysis

Richard & Schmidt (2002: 184) state that error analysis is the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners. Error analysis may be carried out in order to :

- a. identify strategies which learners use in language learning
- b. try to identify the causes of learner's errors
- c. obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

Error analysis emerged as a reaction to the view of second language learning proposed by contrastive analysis theory, as Keshavars (2008:43) asserts, that it saw language transfer as the central process involved in second and foreign language learning. This view of transfer was linked to behavioural views of learning. Error analysis tries to account for learner performance in terms of the cognitive processes learners make use of in recognizing the input they receive from the target language. A primary focus of error analysis is on the evidence that



learners' errors provide to an understanding of the underlying processes of second language acquisition.

Corder (1973:168) classifies the errors in terms of the difference between the learners' utterance and the reconstructed version. In this way, errors fall into four categories: omission of some required element; addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element; selection of an incorrect element; and misordering of the elements. Nevertheless, Ellis (1997:66) maintains that "classifying errors in these ways can help us to diagnose learners' learning problems at any stage of their development and to plot how changes in error patterns occur over time." This categorization can be exemplified as follows:

Omission:

Morphological omission *A strange thing happen to me yesterday.

Syntactical omission * Must say also the names?

Addition:

In morphology * The books is here.

In syntax * The London

In lexicon * I stayed there during five years ago.

Selection:

In morphology * My friend is oldest than me.

In syntax * I want that he comes here.

Ordering:

In pronunciation * fignisicant for 'significant'; *prulal for 'plural'

In morphology * get upping for 'getting up'

In syntax * He is a dear to me friend.

In lexicon * key car for 'car key'

Keshavarz (2008:65) produces an arrangement to the practical aspects of error analysis:

1.Data collecting procedures will be presented .



2. The procedures for the linguistic analysis and classification of errors will be discussed.

3. A section will be devoted to the psycholinguistic analysis and classification of errors.

3.9 Overall Performance

In order to achieve the aim of the study " students' errors are investigated and analyzed. The total number of students are 30 as mentioned previously.

The minimum score in recognition task is 5 and the maximum score is 11 . The minimum score in production task is 6 and the maximum score is 10. The minimum score of the students at recognition and production levels are acceptable since all students' scores rang between (5-11) . This shows that students have acceptable level of acquisition .Percentages of the two tasks (recognition and production) show that students' performance at production level is higher than their performance at recognition level (See table 4).

Table 4

Students'Performance atProduction & Recognition Levels

Question	Total of correct items	Mean	percentage
Q1 Recognition	184/360	6.13	51.1%
Q2 Production	191/360	6.36	53.0%

3.9.1 Errors in Task One (recognition)

In order to achieve the aim of the study , the students are asked to choose 'Verb Be' that suit the sentence by choosing one of the four options given in each item.



Table (5) displays the rank order in percentages of the correct and incorrect answers of each item. The total number of items in this task is twelve. The results reveal that incorrect items range between 90% and 13.3% .

Item number 11, which needs students to select one item out of four (a.were given , b.is giving, c. was given, d. am giving) has got the highest percentage 90% of learner's performance. Errors of students in this area is form(ing form) and pattern error (passive auxiliary).(Quirk, 1998: 129).

Item number 8has got (66.6%) . It needs students to select from (a.were being b. was been c. is being d. being) which matches one of form(ed participle) and patternerror (passive auxiliary).

Results in table (5) also indicate that two items(1 and 2)have gained (60%).The first one requires students to choose one item out of four (a. am b. is c.are d. were).This type of students' errors is in uses(plural concord) and in pattern error (an auxiliary) . Another item which shares the same percentage with the previous item is number (2).

In which students are asked to select from (a. was b. being c.am d. is)This type of errors is considered one of the form(Notional concord) and pattern error (an auxiliary).

Itemswhich have gained 53.3 % percentage are item number5 and 9 which represent form error (future expression).

Items which have got 46.6% percentage as indicated in table(5)are items number 4 and 6. Both of them indicate formand pattern error.

Item number12 has got 43.3% percentage is item number 12. This indicates form (are not) and pattern error (main auxiliary).

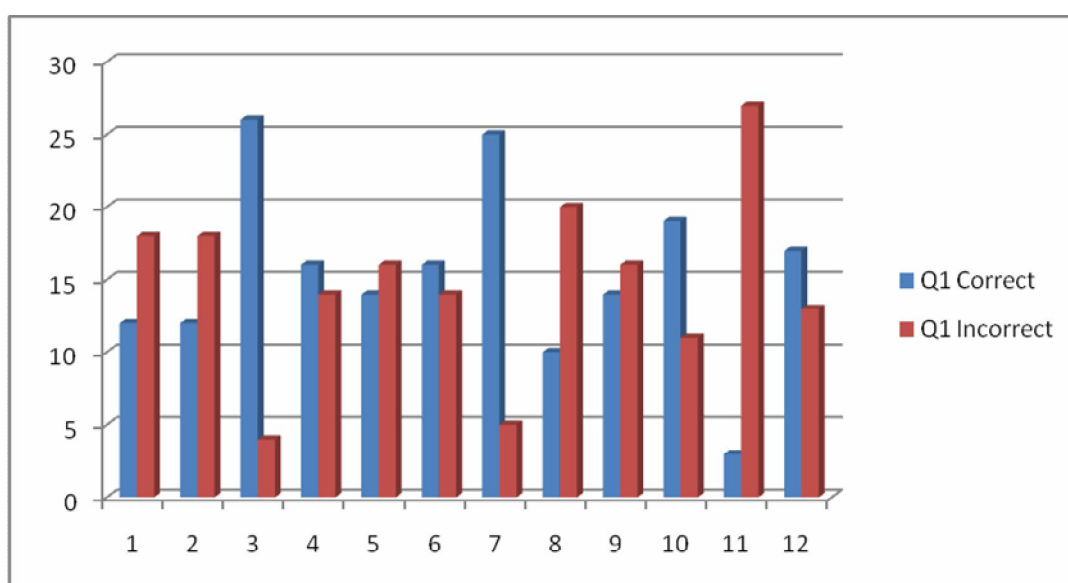
The item which has got 36.6 % is number 10. Item number 4,6,12, 10, with percentages 46.6,46.43.3,36.6, respectively share the approximate level of students . the Last two items in this group represent items number 3 and 7.

Table 5

Statistical Analysis of Subjects' Performance at Recognition Task of the Test

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Items No.	Number of the correct responses	Number of the incorrect responses	Percentage of Incorrect Responses
1	12	18	60%
2	12	18	60%
3	26	4	13.3%
4	16	14	46.6%
5	14	16	53.3%
6	16	14	46.6%
7	25	5	16.6%
8	10	20	66.6%
9	14	16	53.3%
10	19	11	36.6%
11	3	27	90%
12	17	13	43.3%
Total	184	176	





3.9.2 Errors in Task Two (Production)

Task two is designed to measure the ability of students to do as required between brackets. A detailed analysis of students' errors on the production level is indicated in table (6).

Results reveal that item number 4 has got the highest percentage among students' errors. In this item, which has got 73.3%, students are asked to provide one of the 'Verb Be' that represents (ed participle). Students' error are mainly done in form and pattern (auxiliary).

The second item which has got 63.3% namely item number 12, the students are asked to coin new sentence with be negative form, which also represents type of errors that learners committed in form.

Fourth items have got close percentages namely 10, 11, respectively as indicated in table (6). The first one has got 60 % and represent tag question and the students are asked to provide the right form of the sentence. This error is a form error.

Items number 2 and 8, which have got 53.3%, the students are asked to provide 'Verb Be' that represents time and thus they have form, pattern errors.

Item number 6, which has got 43.3 %, represents the use of plural form in the past tense. This type of errors is considered as uses errors and as pattern one (main auxiliary verb).

In item number 9, which has got 40 %, students are asked to provide 'Verb Be' making interrogative one. Thus, it is a use error.

The last group of items which have got the lower percentages, as shown in table (4), namely 5, 7, 1, respectively. 26.6 % , 23.3% and 20% of errors are made by students. Item number (5) has got 26.6 % as indicated in table (6). This item represents the form error.

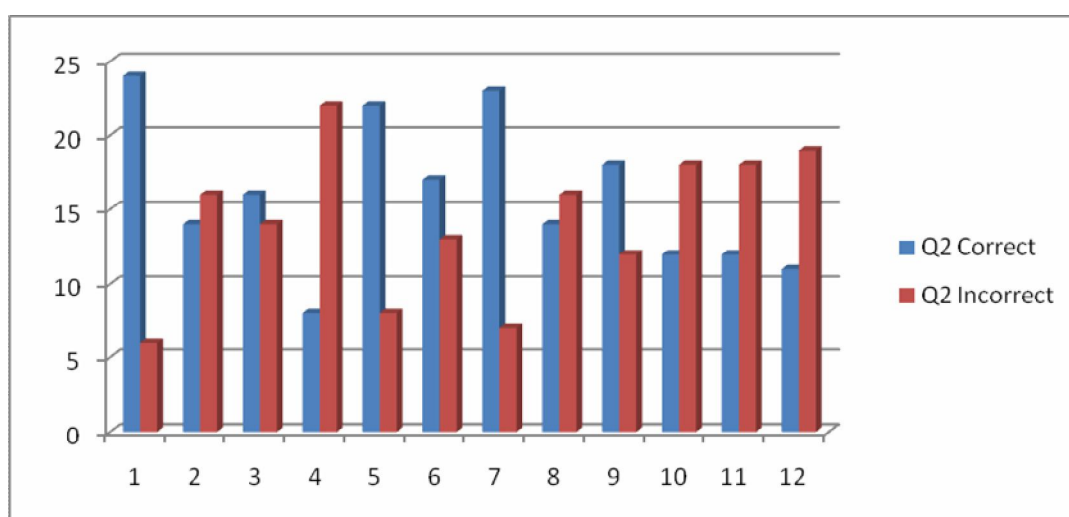
Table 6

Statistical Analysis of Subjects' Performance at Production Task of the Test

Items No.	Number of the correct responses	Number of the incorrect responses	Percentage of Incorrect Responses
1	24	6	20%
2	14	16	53.3%
3	16	14	46.6%
4	8	22	73.3%



5	22	8	26.6%
6	17	13	43.3%
7	23	7	23.3%
8	14	16	53.3%
9	18	12	40%
10	12	18	60%
11	12	18	60%
12	11	19	63.3%
Total	191	169	



3.10 Sources of Errors

There are four sources of errors(as identify inBrown (1987:177-185) as follow

- 1.Interlingual transfer
- 2.Intralingual transfer
- 3.Context of learning
4. Communicative strategies

1.Interlingual transfer

Some errors occur as a result of the influence of the mother tongue. This happens when an item or structure in the second language manifests some degree



of different form, and some degree of similarity with the equivalent item or structure in students L1 (Jackson, 1987:101).

2. Intralingual transfer

These types of errors are intralingual or developmental errors. Intralingual errors result from the general characteristics of language acquisition. They illustrate the students' attempt to build up hypotheses about English language based on their partial exposure to the target language (Richards, 1974:199-203).

Such errors might be attributed to certain factors, one of which is overgeneralization. It covers instances where the students create a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the TL. For example, item number 2 in recognition task represents one of the overgeneralization error for example:

*Lots of people is coming to our party .

Because the word people here appears without s plural so students may use singular instead of plural form.

Another factor is the process of ignorance of rule restrictions. The students may fail to observe the restrictions that English foreign language structure require . For example, by putting Be plus ed participle after have as in item 4 in task 2. For example:

*They have..... (be/mail) their messages recently.

3. Context of learning

The third source of errors is context of learning. Context here refers to the classroom with its teacher and material. In a classroom context, the teacher or the textbook can lead the L2 learner to make faulty hypotheses about it (Brown, 1987:179).

The most influence of context of learning on the subjects' responses is clear item number 11, task 8

4. Communicative strategies

Corder (1981:103) defines the communication strategies, which represents the fourth source of students errors, as systematic techniques employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty. These strategies are employed when learners are faced with the task of communicating meaning for which they lack the requisite linguistic knowledge. Again, since this research dealt with written achievement test, communicative strategies used are restricted to some items. The students have used the circumlocution strategy as in the following example which is taken from item number 8 task 2 :

The project (be) done by Tom few minutes ago.

Topic avoidance strategies have been represented by the items that were left by the subjects with no answers.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions



The analysis of the data has indicated the following conclusions:

1. Iraqi EFL college students face more difficulties in using 'Verb Be' at production level than the recognition one.
2. Iraqi EFL college students' mastery of 'Verb Be' is somehow good, since all students pass the criteria adopted for acquisition namely (12).
3. Results indicate that most of the errors that are made by students occurred in using Be plus ed participle and in plural concord at production and recognition levels .
4. According to students' responses, errors in forms are the most frequent type of errors made by students at both recognition and production levels.

4.2 Recommendations

Teachers of English should consider the difficulties face by students in mastering 'Verb Be' ,teachers should take these into consideration when teaching English language. Each form, use , and pattern should be taken into account. Teachers have to distinguish clearly between the various aspects of 'Verb Be' and their uses and teach them in the appropriate contexts.

The teachers should explain the use of each form based on time orientation: present, past, future and future in the past. A useful way to teach the different uses is to use an imagery biography which gives details of someone's past, present and future life. Error correction is also a useful technique to teach grammatical rules to students by drawing students' attention to the errors made. Students' written work can be photocopied with their names erased and given out as exercises for error identification and correction. Creating an awareness of the common 'Verb Be' errors made and explaining the proper grammatical rules as well as explaining the time axis can help the students to master the language.

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Appendix

The Final Version of the Test

University of Baghdad

College of Education/ Ibn Rushd

Department of Educational and Psychological Sciences

Dear Mrs. /Mr.....

The researchers intend to carry out a research entitled "**Analyzing the Errors Made by EFL College Students in using Verb to be**". The attached test has been constructed. You are kindly requested, as an expert, to read it and express your opinions on the suitability of its items. Any comments, suggestions, and modifications will be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dr. Fatima Rahim

Khansa' Hassan

Q1 //Choose the suitable answer:

1. Every child Holding a flag.

a. am b. is c. are d. were

2. Lots of people coming to our party .

a. was b. are c. am d. is

3. I going to work by bus.

a. am b. are c. been d. is

4. They havefinished their job.

a. were b. been c. are d. be

5. She will here next week.

a. was b. be c. been d. am

6. Next year we..... going to take the clinic again.

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- a. are b. were c. be d. is
7. She in our house last week.
a. is b. are c. be d. was
8. The house cleaned by Sally.
a. were being b. was been c. is being d. being
9. the students attending the lecture?
a. Is b. Are c. Am d. Was
10. Oh!, is she? No, she?
a. is not b. is c. are d. are not
11. I..... the roses by Sam.
a. were given b. is giving c. was given d. am giving
12. There..... any cookies in the box.
a. are not b. is not c. am not d. be not

Q2// Do as required using the words between brackets:

- 1 .Hurry! the teachers (come).
- 2 .The river (flow) very fast today .
- 3 . I (go) to your party now.
4. They have..... (be/mail) their messages resently.
- 5 . He will..... (be) an engineer next year.
6. She and I.....(be) best pals.
7. Yesterday, she (be /write) a story.
8. The project (be)done by Tom few minutes ago.
9.(be) Tom and Sam meeting their friends?
10. Weekends are my favorite days,..... (be not)they? Yes they are.
11. She(give) a gift by her mother.
12. I usually grow vegetables in my garden but this year I (not /grow) any.

تحليل اخطاء استعمال فعل الكينونة عند طلبة الكلية دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية
كلغة أجنبية عند مستويي الادراك والانتاج

ملخص

تهدف الدراسة إلى التحليل عن "أخطاء طلاب الجامعات" العراقية الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في فعل كينونة "على مستويات الإنتاج والإدراك واقتصرت الدراسة على طلاب المرحلة الأولى قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية / جامعة بغداد في العام الدراسي ٢٠١١ - ٢٠١٢.

تتكون عينة البحث من (١٦٨) طالب EFL العراقية موزعة على ثلاثة أقسام A، B، C. وتم اختيار ثلاثون طالبا عشوائيا لتمثيل عينة الدراسة الرئيسية و عشرين طالبا يمثلون العينة العشوائية . لتحقيق الهدف من هذه الدراسة، تم بناء اختبارين يتكون من سؤالين و ٢٤ فقره . السؤال الأول يمثل مستوى الإدراك والسؤال الثاني يمثل مستوى الإنتاج.

وكانت نتائج الطلبة تشير إلى أن معظم الأخطاء وقعت في استخدام فعل الكينونة 'be' يكون زائد 'ed' و الجمع والموافقة في كل من مستويات الإنتاج الإدراك في نفس الوقت. انتهت هذه الدراسة مع عدد من الاستنتاجات و التوصيات.