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المحتويات

A Syntactic Study of Iraqi EFL Postgraduate Students' Academic Writing

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Abstract
The present study concerns the Iraqi EFL postgraduate students' academic writing on the level of syntax (sentence level). On this level, specific topics, including concord and adverbs, are investigated as indicators of an accurate writing for academic purposes. So it tries to answer the following questions: 1) In which syntactic feature (concord or adverbs) do Iraqi EFL postgraduate students commit more errors in their academic writing? 2) What is the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of occurrence? 3) What is the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of errors? This study also aims at: identifying the frequencies of correct and incorrect uses of the specified syntactic features in Iraqi EFL postgraduate students' academic writing; investigating the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of occurrence in their academic writing, and finally investigating the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of errors. What this study hypothesizes is: 1) Those students commit more errors in concord than in adverbs. 2) Subject-verb concord is the most dominant category among the other categories of concord in terms of occurrence. 3) Subject-verb concord is also the most dominant category among the other categories of concord in terms of errors. 4) The connective adverb type is the most dominant among the other types of adverbs in terms of occurrence. 5) The adverb of manner is the most dominant type among the other types of adverbs in terms of errors. The data are master's theses selected from Thi Qar University, College of Education for the Human Sciences, Department of English. For analyzing the selected data, an eclectic model was adopted.

دراسة نحوية للكتابة الاكاديمية لطلبة الدراسات العليا العراقيين في اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية

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كلمات مفتاحيه: الكتابة الاكادمية، النحو، التوافق، الظروف

ملخص

تتعلق الدراسة الحالية بالكتابة الاكاديمية لطلاب الدراسات العليا في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على مستوى الجملة النحوية (مستوى الجملة). على هذا المستوى، موضوعات محددة، تتضمن التوافق و الظروف يتم التحقق منها كمؤشرا للكتابة الدقيقة للاغراض الاكاديمية. لذلك هذه الدراسة تحاول الرد على الاسئلة التالية: 1) في أي موضوع النحوي التوافق أو الظروف) يرتكب طلاب الدراسات العليا العراقيون في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية المزيد من الأخطاء في كتاباتهم الأكاديمية؟ 2) ما هي الفئة الأكثر شيوعاً لكل موضوع نحوي من حيث الحدوث؟ 3) ما هي الفئة الأكثر شيوعاً لكل موضوع نحوي من حيث الاخطاء؟ ما تفترضه هذه الدراسة هو 1) يرتكب هؤلاء الطلاب أخطاء في التوافق أكثر من الظروف. 2) التوافق بين الفعل والفاعل هو الفئة الأكثر شيوعاً من بين فئات التوافق الأخرى من حيث الحدوث3) التوافق بين الفعل والفاعل هو الفئة الأكثر شيوعاً من بين فئات التوافق الأخرى من حيث الاخطاء4) ظروف الربط هي النوع الأكثر شيوعاً من بين انواع الظروف الأخرى من حيث الحدوث 5) ظروف الحال هي النوع الأكثر شيوعاً من بين انواع الظروف الأخرى من حيث الحدوث. البيانات هي رسائل ماجستير مختارة من جامعة ذي قار ، كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية، قسم اللغة الانكليزية. ولتحليل البيانات المختارة تم اعتماد نموذج اختياري.

1. Introduction

When language in general or English in particular, especially in its written form, is used for academic purposes, it requires to be used carefully, clearly, and precisely with all its linguistic levels. Language use for academic writing is different from other uses of language. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 3), in this vein, state that the type of writing used in high school and university settings is called academic writing. Writing of this type should be formal; in a sense, it is impossible to use incomplete sentences, slang, or contractions. The sentences should also be organized carefully in a particular manner. They also mention that academic writing in English, according to EFL learners, may be different from that in a native language. Organizing ideas or using words and grammar may be quite different in English than what is used in the mother tongue. This difference is considered a major dilemma for most EFL learners who write for academic purposes, e.g., Iraqi postgraduate students. Swales and Feak (2012, pp. 1, 2, 30) say that one of the strategies of writing on which the writer has to focus is the emphasis on being sure that the grammar of the sentence level (e.g., syntax) has to be accurate because this is considered very significant in order for communicating ideas.

The present study is limited to solely investigating special topics on the level of syntax: concord and Adverbs because these topics are frequently used in writing and can be considered indicators of accurate writing for academic purposes. So it tries to answer the following questions: 1) In which syntactic feature (concord or adverbs) do Iraqi EFL postgraduate students commit more errors in their academic writing? 2) What is the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of occurrence? 3) What is the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of errors? This study also aims at: identifying the frequencies of correct and incorrect uses of the specified syntactic features in Iraqi EFL postgraduate students' academic writing; investigating the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of occurrence in their academic writing, and finally investigating the most dominant category of each syntactic feature in terms of errors. What this study hypothesizes is: 1) Those students commit more errors in concord than in adverbs. 2) Subject-verb concord is the most dominant category among the other categories of concord in terms of occurrence. 3) Subject-verb concord is also the most dominant category among the other categories of concord in terms of errors. 4) The connective adverb type is the most dominant among the other types of adverbs in terms of occurrence. 5) The adverb of manner is the most dominant type among the other types of adverbs in terms of errors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Syntax

Syntax can be defined as one level of language and how it works , how sentences are formed and how the words are organized into phrases or sentences. It studies the language level that lies between words and the utterances' meaning (Carnie, 2006, p. 4).

2.1.1 Concord

Concord, as defined by Quirk et al. (1992), is the relationship between two grammatical elements so that if one of the two elements has a special feature (e.g., plurality), the other element must contain the same feature too. In English, concord happens within a set of choices introduced through grammatical categories such as number, gender, person, etc. These are marked, morphologically, on certain kinds of words like nouns, verbs , and so on (Trask, 1992, p. 12). As Mcarthur and Mcarthur (2005) comment, concord in number involves an agreement between two related units to either be single or plural. Greenbaum and Nelson (2002, pp. 55-56) mention that English has three persons: **First person** (the person or persons speaking or writing), **second person** (the person or persons being addressed), and **third person** (others [person/persons]). In the present simple tense, the main verb with the third person singular, which includes *he, she, it,* or a *singular noun phrase,* is expressed with the *-s* form. All other persons, *I, you, we, they,* or *plural noun phrases,* are expressed by using the base form of verb. They also mention that the present tense of **BE** has three different forms: *first-person singular + am, third-person singular + is*, and *others + are.* But the past tense of **BE** has two forms: *first and third person singular + was* and *others + were*. Gender, in English, involves the following categories: masculine, feminine, and neutral. Herring (2016, p. 805) gives a summary of this reflection of gender as follows:

●**She, her, hers,** and **herself** are for the *third-person feminine singular* (human).

●**He, him, his,** and **himself** are for the *third-person masculine singular* (human).

●**It, its, its own,** and **itself** are for the *third-person neuter singular* (things or animals).

●**They, them, their, theirs,** and **themselves** are for the *third person neuter/ gender neutral plural* (human, things or animals).

●**I, me, my, mine,** and **myself** are for the *first person masculine/feminine singular* (human).

●**We, us, our, ours,** and **ourselves** are for the *first person masculine/feminine plural* (human).

●**you, you, your, yours,** and **yourself** are for the *second person masculine/ feminine singular* (human).

●**you, you, your, yours,** and **yourselves** are for the *second person masculine/ feminine plural* (human).

2.1.1.1 Subject-Verb Concord

There is an agreement between verb and subject in number and person only if the verb (except BE) is in the present simple tense, while this is not true for the verbs in the past tense. The verb, in the present tense , takes -s with the third person singular, and it is used in its base form with all other persons (Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002, p. 141). They also say that there is also agreement found between the verb BE and its subject in the present and past tenses. In the present tense, (is) is used with singular subject, (are) with plural subject, and (am) with the first person singular (I). In the past, (was) is used with the singular subject and the first person singular (I), while (were) is used with the plural subjects. Here also three principles of concord:

1) Grammatical Concord

The rule in which agreement between the verb and its subject in number is achieved through the formal appearance of a grammatical marker (Quirk et al,1992, p. 360), as in: (1) *The girl* **looks** comely.

(2) *The girls* **look** comely. (Roy,2020, p. 132)

2) Notional Concord

When an agreement between sentence elements (subject-verb) does not depend on the formal appearance of the grammatical marker but instead happens notionally depending on the idea of a number, this is called **notional concord**. This occurs in British English, for example, with **collective nouns**: nouns that can be treated as singular or plural according to the notion. When these nouns function as subjects, they can be singular, taking singular verb, or plural taking a plural verb. This is determined by whether what is intended is a collective group or an individual within it. Some of these nouns are *government, committee, team, family,* etc. (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973, p.176):

(3) *The family* **has** suffered the anguish of repossession.

(4) *The family* **are** absolutely devastated.

The noun *family* formally looks singular, but notionally is regarded as either plural or singular according to the notion, whether it refers to the group as a whole or to specific group members (Griffin, 2003, p. 65).

3) Principle of Proximity

Here the verb agrees with the noun that is immediately next to it rather than with its proper subject (Wren & Martin, 1995, p. 267). The verb here agrees with the noun phrase that closely precedes it instead of agreeing with the head of the subject. In the

following sentence, for example, a plural verb is used depending on the preceding noun rather than on *no one*: the head of subject *No one except his own supporters*:

(5) *No one except his own supporters a*gree with him. (Quirk et al,1985, p.757).

2.1.1.2 Pronoun-Antecedent Concord

There should be an agreement in number, gender, and person between a pronoun and its antecedent and between the subject and its complement or object when a reflexive pronoun or possessive pronoun occurs in the second part.

(6) **She** bought **herself** a raincoat. (Quirk et al., 1985, p.767).

Gender concord is also found between the antecedent and the relative pronoun. Decapua (2008, pp. 319-320) says the relative pronouns *who* and *whom* are used for people, while the pronoun *which* is used for things or concepts:

(7) *The teacher* **who** just graduated is the newest teacher in the school.

(8) Jason kept on telling *jokes* **which** made all of us really angry.

2.1.1.3 Determiner-Noun Concord

English displays agreement in number between the determiners and the nouns they modify. The singular determiners ***this, that*** and ***a*** are used with singular nouns, but the plural determiners ***these*** and ***those*** are used with plural nouns (Bender, 2013, p. 48).

2.1.2 Adverbs

The term ***adverb*** refers to a type of word similar to noun, adjective, etc., and can answer questions with how, where , when, or why (Crystal, 2008, p. 14), while the term ***adverbial*** refers to any element that has a distribution or function similar to that of a lexical adverb (Trask, 1992, p. 10). According to Eastwood (1994, p. 261-262), an adverbial can be a function for one of the following phrases: adverb phrase, noun phrase, or prepositional phrase. The *adverbial* modifies different parts of the sentence, such as *noun, adjective, clause, verb,* or *another adverb*

2.1.2.1 Adverbs of Manner

They tell how things happen (e.g., *happily, fast*, etc.). These adverbs can modify various parts of clauses like verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and adverbial phrases (Swan, 1996, pp.15-16).

2.1.2.2 Adverbs of Time

Herring (2016, p. 382) defines an adverb of time as a category that is used for telling when (time) or for how long (duration) things happen, such as *tomorrow, now, still,* etc.

2.1.2.3 Adverbs of Place

Adverbs of place indicate a location, direction, or position and answer the question "where"; such as *here, there, backwards*, etc. (DeCapua, 2008, p. 107)

2.1.2.4 Adverbs of Frequency

Roy (2020, p. 161) defines the adverbs of frequency as words that tell how often an action happens. The question "how long" is usually answered by these adverbs .There are two types of this adverb: **indefinite** (e.g., *always, usually,* etc.), and **definite** (e.g., *every day, weekly, every month*, etc.).

2.1.2.5 Adverbs of Degree

Adverbs of degree are normally used in order to modify either adjectives, adverbs, or verbs as well. They are of two types: **Grading adverbs**: their degree of describing what they modify can be mild, medium or strong (e.g., *very, really, quite*, etc.), or **non-grading adverbs**: their degree of describing what they modify is absolute state (e.g., *absolutely, fully, completely*, etc.). (Herring, 2016, pp. 400-401)

2.1.2.6 Focusing Adverbs

These adverbs, as mentioned by Eastwood (1994), are used for focusing on a special word or phrase. They usually precede what they modify. Herring (2016, p. 423-424) mentions that adverbs of this type often give focus on verb, noun, adjective, adverbial, or prepositional phrases. Some of them are *also, as well, too, alone, but, exactly*, etc.

2.1.2.7 Evaluative Adverbs

These adverbs are used by the speaker to make a comment or express an opinion. They modify the whole clause (Herring, 2016). Herring classifies these adverbs into: a) **Degree of certainty** are adverbs that express the degree of the speaker's knowledge about the truth of what is said (e.g., perhaps) b) **Attitude**: they are used for expressing attitude about something negatively or positively (e.g., hopefully) c) **Judgement**: they are employed to render judgement on someone's conduct (e.g., carelessly).

2.1.2.8 Conjunctive Adverbs

Swan (1996, p. 23) defines connecting adverbs as adverbs that connect a clause with what is previously said (e.g., *however, then*, etc.).

2.1.2.9 Viewpoint Adverbs

Adverbs of viewpoint are used to clarify which point of view we are conveying or whatever aspect of a topic we are discussing. These modify the whole clause or a separate clause (e.g., *technically, formally, linguistically*, etc. (Herring, 2016, p. 449-450). Eastwood (1994: 214) adds that such adverbs also have the function of modifying adjectives.

3- Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Description

The data collected for the purpose of this study are master's theses that were randomly selected from Thi Qar University, College of Education for the Human Sciences,

Department of English to be investigated on syntactic level. The number of these theses is twenty, and for the academic years from 2017 to 2022. The analysis is going to focus on the parts that were written by students, including: *Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Data Analysis* and *Conclusion*.

3.2 Model of Analysis

3.2.1 Concord

A model adopted from Quirk et. al. (1985) and Kim and Michaelis (2020) will be used for analyzing concord. Depending on this model, three categories are formed in this model for the purpose of this study. They are *subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement,* and *determiner-noun agreement*.

3.2.1.1 Subject-Verb Concord

This first type of concord adopted from Quirk et. al. (1985) involves an agreement between the verb and its subject in terms of number (plural and singular) and person (1st, 2nd or 3rd person). Three important cases here:

1- The Main Verb in the Present Simple Tense

The typical pattern is relatively straightforward: if the subject is in the third person singular, present-tense verbs other than *be* take an s-ending; otherwise, they stay uninflected (Milory and Milory, 2014).

2- The Verbs BE, HAVE, DO in the Present Tense

There is also an agreement between the verb *BE* and the subject in the present tense, as in the following: 1st person singular + am, 2nd person (singular and plural) and 1st person plural+ are, 3rd person singular + is, and 3rd person plural + are (Greenbaum and Welson, 2002, p. 141). There is an agreement in number between the verb *have* and its subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is to be in its singular form (has); on the contrary, if the subject is plural, the verb is to be in its plural form (have) (Quirk et al., 1985 p. 755). The same thing is with the verb *do*. In the singular, its form is (does) while in in the plural, it is form is (do) (Gupta, 2012, p.20).

3- The Verb BE in the Past Tense

This is as follows: 1st person singular + was, 2nd person (singular and plural) and 1st person plural + were, 3rd person singular + was, and 3rd person plural + were (Greenbaum and Welson, 2002, p. 141).

General Rule

Quirk et. al. (1985) give a general rule for this type of agreement:

1- If the subject is singular, then its verb must be singular.

2- If the subject is plural, then its verb must be plural.

3- If the subject is a noun phrase, the reliance must be on its head. If the main noun of the phrase (its head) is singular or plural.

4- Clauses (finite or non-finite) are generally considered singular.

5- If the subject is prepositional phrase or adverb, it counts singular.

6-Imperative and subjunctive do not show an agreement in number.

7- Model auxiliaries also do not show an agreement in number.

And:

▪ If two or more parts are linked by **and** functioning as a subject, a plural verb is used even if each part is singular.

▪ A plural verb is used with a singular subject followed by etc., so forth, so on.

▪ When a subject has *each* or *every*, a singular verb is used.

▪ If a subject is coordinated by (*and*) and seen as a single unit, a singular verb is used.

▪ If the reference of each part of the coordination is the same (in the case of coordinative apposition) where the two parts represent a single unit, a singular verb is used if each part is singular or a plural verb is used if each part is plural. (Quirk et al. , 1985)

Or:

If the closed noun phrase is singular, a singular verb is selected; otherwise, a plural verb is selected (the principle of proximity): *Either my sister or the neighbors* **are** *looking after the dog,* while *Three short essays or one long essay* **is** *required.* (Greenbaum & Welson, 2002, pp. 144-145)

3.2.1.2 Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

According to Quirk et al. (1985). there is an important agreement occurs between the relative pronouns and their antecedents in terms of gender. *Who* is personal while *which* is non-personal.

3.2.1.3 Determiner-Noun Agreement

This type of concord is adopted from Kim and Michaelis (2020) in which there should be an agreement in number between the head noun and its determiner, as follows:

1- Articles *: a , an* + singular noun

2- Demonstratives
  ● *This* + singular noun
  ● *Those*, these + plural noun

3- Quantitatives: *Every, each* + single noun

4- general ordinal
  ● *Another* + singular noun
  ● *other* + plural noun

5- Cardinal numerals :

- *one* + singular noun
- *two, three, four*, etc. + plural noun

There is also what Quirk et al. (1985) regard as exceptions with noun phrases of measures where no concord occurs in this case: *this last two weeks/ another two days/ a happy three months*, etc.

3.2.2 Adverbs

For analyzing the position of adverbs and the way they are used within sentences, a model is formed based mainly on Herring's (2016).

3.2.2.1 Adverbs of Manner

According to Herring (2016), these adverbs' position within the sentence relies on what they modify, as follows:

Modifying verbs
- They immediately follow the modified intransitive verb, or
- precede the verb or follow the direct object if the verb is transitive.

Modifying clauses: in order to modify the whole clause or for the purpose of focus, manner adverbs can be placed in the initial position and usually separated by a comma.

Describing adjectives: when manner adverbs modify adjectives, there is only one order, that is, the adverb directly precedes the adjective.

Manner adverbs can also occur in the middle, following immediately the auxiliary verb for modifying either a prepositional phrase or past participle with passive voice, as in the following sentences:

(9) He was **madly** *in love with* her.

(10) The driver has been **seriously** *injured*. (Swan, 2016)

3.2.2.2 Adverbs of Frequency

According to Herring (2016), adverbs of frequency can describe verbs and adjectives; however, they cannot modify other adverbs. Herring also adds that they are of two types:

A- Definite Frequency Adverbs

These adverbs modify the verb. In general, they come in initial or also in final position of the sentence. At the initial position, they are usually separated by a comma. The adverbs which end with -ly appear only in the final position.

B- Indefinite Frequency Adverbs

Their function and position vary. This variety depends on what they modify.

Modifying verbs:
- They usually precede the main verb.

● Some of these adverbs can also appear in the initial or final position of the sentence with or without a comma, including *usually, often, sometimes, frequently, normally, occasionally,* and *generally*.

● The adverbs *always, seldom, rarely, hardly ever,* as well as *never* can be used finally in the clause too. They can also be used in the initial, but with an inversion in the structure, as in:

(11) Rarely does she leave the house unattended.

● They always appear after the auxiliary verb, or after the auxiliary and before the main verb.

● If the verb BE is used with another auxiliary verb, these adverbs always come before BE:

(12) I will never be an actor!

Modifying adjectives:

When they modify adjectives, they come after the auxiliary verb BE and before the adjective they modify.

3.2.2.3 Adverbs of Degree

These adverbs, as Herring (2016) states, modify verbs, adjectives, or adverbs; therefore, they always precede what they modify directly (with exception for the adverb *enough* that modifies only adjectives and other adverbs and directly appears after what it modifies.

3.2.2.4 Focusing Adverbs: Too / As well

Too and *as well* always occur in the end position:

(13) Tom is coming to the party, and James is coming **too**.

(14) I want to go to the party **as well.**

3.2.2.5 Conjunctive Adverbs

According to Herring (2016), their position must be in the second clause and they occur:

At the initial position of the second clause. There are two ways for using them:

● the two clauses should be separated by a semicolon, and the second clause starts with the conjunctive adverb followed by a comma.

● or a period ends the first clause and a comma follows the adverb in the second clause.

At the middle position of the second clause. It should follow the subject or introductory phrase. The conjunctive adverb may not need to be followed by a comma if the introduction is not long (one to two syllables). However, if the introductory phrase is not short, it is required to close the adverb between two commas.

At the final position of the second clause. A conjunctive adverb can occur at the end of clauses, preceded or not by a comma.

3.2.2.6 Evaluative Adverbs

According to their place, Herring says that the following rules are important:

- They are usually put in the initial position of the sentence, separated by a comma.
- They can be put at the final position of the sentence, separated by a comma too.
- There are some evaluative adverbs that can also come in the middle

of a sentence; in this situation, they are usually not separated by a comma. Particularly, after the subject or after the verb **BE**, like *probably* and *definitely*.

3.2.2.7 Viewpoint Adverbs

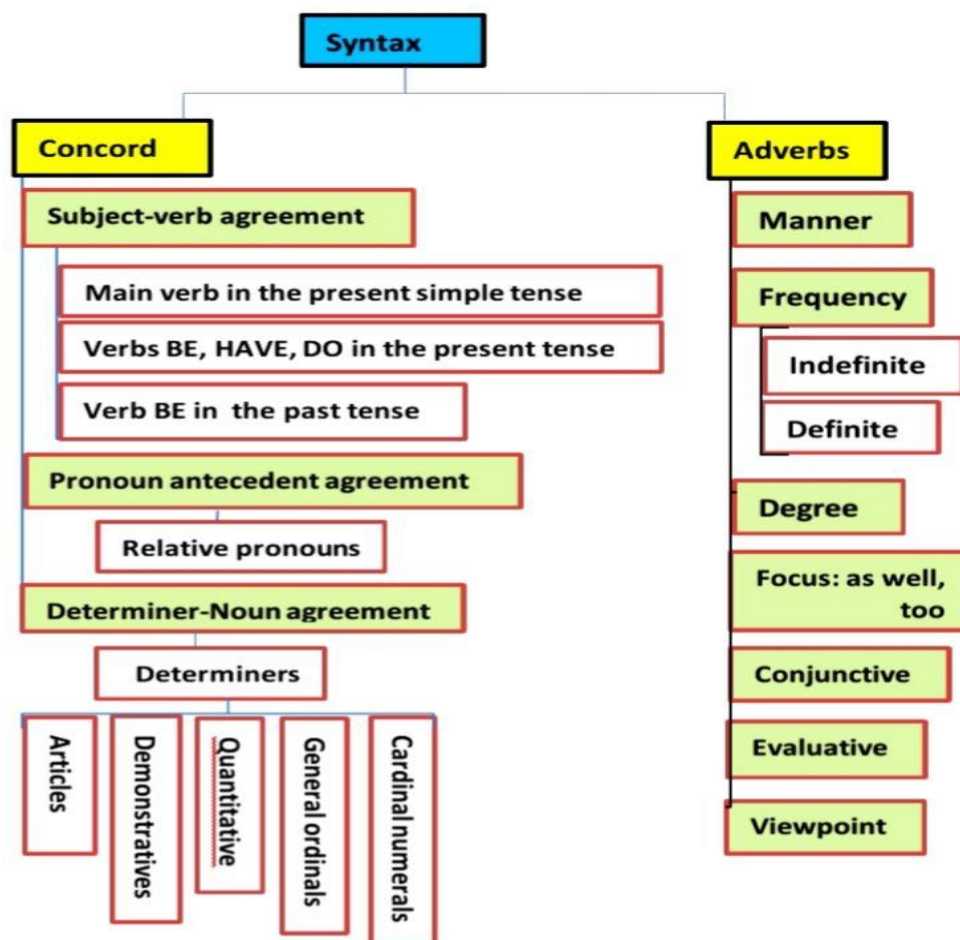According to their place, Herring (2016) says that the following rules are important:

- They are usually put in the initial position of the sentence, separated by a comma:
- or in the final position of the sentence, separated by a comma:

The eclectic model adopted for analyzing the selected topics on the level of syntax (concord and adverbs).

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Syntax: Data Analysis According to Concord

A) Subject-Verb Agreement

In the following examples, some incorrect uses of *Subject-Verb Concord* that are committed by Iraqi EFL postgraduate students in their writing in the data under investigation:

1- The Main Verb in the Present Simple Tense

● "*<u>Using assertive speech acts in American vice presidential debate 2020</u> enable us to explore and understand the language use of political candidates*".

In the above excerpt, there is a breach of the rule that states the clause, whether finite or non-finite is generally considered singular. So the non-finite clause (*<u>Using assertive speech acts in American vice presidential debate 2020</u>*) in the above excerpt should take a singular verb containing the third person singular-*s* to be (*enables*).

● "*<u>Findings from the data selected</u> proves the first hypothesis which suggests that the English connective (and) is the most frequent one in the selected data*"

In the above excerpt, there is a breach of rule that states there should be an agreement in number between the head of a noun phrase as a subject and its verb, but in this excerpt, the singular verb *proves* is incorrectly used with a plural subject, which is a noun phrase with a plural head (**findings**). According to the rule the verb *proves* should be plural, i.e., it should be replaced by its base form (**prove**).

● "*If <u>someone</u> <u>take</u> the joke personally, that will lead to be the target for teasing*"

In the above sentence, with an indefinite pronoun *(someone)* that requires a singular verb, the plural verb *take* is used wrongly. In general, indefinite pronouns take singular verbs, so the correct use is that the verb *take* should be used with the third person singular-s to be (**takes**).

2- The Verbs BE, HAVE, DO in the Present Tense

● "*<u>Other cases of such situation</u> is seen in (1,3,4,7,8,10, 1317. 18,22, 23,24, 27,3 1,38 and 39) in the Appendix*"

In the above sentence, the rule that states a plural subject requires a plural verb is breached, where the singular form of the verb *BE (is)* is incorrectly used with the plural subject, which is the noun phrase *Other cases of such situation* with the plural head *cases*. The correct use is the verb *is* should be replaced by its plural form (**are**).

●"*It is mentioned above that <u>existential presuppositions</u> has the highest frequency in relation to the other main types of presuppositions*"

In the above excerpt, there is a breach of the rule that states there should be an agreement in number between the subject and its verb in terms of singularity and plurality. The breach is that the singular verb *has* is incorrectly used with a plural subject, which is a noun phrase with the plural head (*presuppositions*). According to the rule, the verb *has* should be used in its plural form (**have**) to agree with its plural subject (*existential presuppositions*).

● *"she will do it at time when <u>she</u> <u>do</u> not have to work and free from duties or responsibilities"*

In the above sentence, the rule that states a singular subject should take a singular verb, i.e., there should be an agreement in number between the subject and its verb, is breached. Here the plural verb form *do* is wrongly used with the singular subject pronoun *she*. The auxiliary verb *do* in this sentence should be replaced by its singular form (**does**).

3- The Verb BE in the past Tense

● *"<u>The components of existential presuppositions</u> was progressive from proper nouns and popular names of persons and places to define article…"*

In the above sentence, the rule that states that a plural subject which is a noun phrase with a plural head, requires a plural verb, is breached, where the singular form of the verb *BE (was)* is incorrectly used with the plural subject *The components of existential presuppositions*. The correct use is the verb *was* should be replaced by its plural form (**were**).

B) Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

1- The Relative Pronoun: Who

● *"Correspondingly, a credible source is observed as consisting of technical proficiency and a good reputation in regards to <u>the orator</u> <u>which</u> persuades people the argument true…"*

In the excerpt above, there is a breach of the rule that states there should be an agreement in gender between the relative pronoun and its antecedent, where the relative pronoun *which* is wrongly used with the personal antecedent (*<u>the orator</u>*), so *who* should be used instead of *which*.

2- The Relative Pronoun: Which

● *"the study adopts Haroon's (1959, p.129) <u>model</u> <u>who</u> indicates ten informing speech acts…"*

In the excerpt above, the relative pronoun *who* is wrongly used because there is no agreement in gender between *who* and its antecedent *model*, so *which* should be used instead of *who*.

C) Determiner-Noun Agreement

1-The articles: *a* and *an*

● *"it is a frequent activity in daily life that is used by human beings in <u>a private and personal settings</u> or in professional institutions"*

In the excerpt above, an incorrect use of the article *a* can be seen because this article is wrongly used as a determiner of the plural noun head *settings.* So, here, the article should be removed, since it is used only before a singular noun.

2- The demonstratives: *this, those,* and *these*

● *"it appears that the double use of <u>those device</u> of similarity in his utterance…"*

In the excerpt above, there is no agreement between the determiner (*those*) and the determined noun (*device*). It can be seen that the use of the demonstrative (*those*) is incorrect since the noun after it is singular (*device*). In fact, the demonstrative (*those*) is used before a plural noun, not a singular one.

3- The quantitatives: *every* and *each*

● *"in recognising the strategies that are used in <u>each situations</u>…"*

In the excerpt above, there is no agreement between the determiner (*each*) and the determined noun (*situations*). The wrong is with the use of the plural noun (*situations*) after the quantitative (**each**). In fact, the quantitative (**each**) is used before the singular noun, not the plural one.

4- The general ordinals : *another* and *other*

● *"…<u>another types is</u> added to these three main types…"*

In the above sentence, there is not an agreement between the determiner (*another*) and the determined noun (*types*) as well as a disagreement between the head of the noun phrase as a subject (*types*) and the verb (**is**). The wrong use is of the plural noun (*types*) , this noun should be in the singular case for two reasons: the first reason is that it is preceded by the general ordinal (*another*) which is used with a singular noun and the second reason is that of the use of the singular form (is) of the verb BE.

5- The Cardinal numerals: one, two , three, etc.

● *"on the linguistic variation because they affect the <u>two area</u> in the city of…."*

In the excerpt above, there is no agreement between the determiner (*two*) and the determined noun (*area*). The wrong is with the use of the singular noun (*area*) after the cardinal numeral (**two**). In fact, the cardinal numeral (**two**) is used before a plural noun, not a singular one. So the noun should be (*areas*).

The Main Categories of Concord	Frequency	Percentage	Total Number of occurrences of all concord types
Subject-Verb Concord	11335	65.81%	17222
Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement	769	4.46%	
Determiner-Noun Agreement	5118	29.71%	

Table (4-1): The number of frequency and percentage of each main category of concord.

Table (4-1) shows that the total number of uses is (**17222**) occurrences, and the dominant category among the other categories of concord is *subject-verb concord*, where the frequency of this type is (**11335**) occurrences, and it reaches (**65.81%**) out of the total occurrences of the concord used in the data under investigation.

Incorrect Uses			
Categories of Concord	Frequency	Percentage	Total No. of Incorrect Uses
Subject-Verb	332	82.58%	406
Pronoun-Antecedent	3	0.74%	
Determiner-Noun	67	16.66%	

Table (4-2): the frequencies and percentages of incorrect uses of each category out of all incorrect uses of all concord categories

Table (4-2) shows that the total number of incorrect uses of all concord categories is (**406**) errors, and the dominant category among the other categories in terms of errors is

subject-verbs concord, where it forms (**82.58%**) out of all errors of the concord used in the data under investigation.

4.2 Syntax: Data Analysis According to Adverbs

In the following examples, some incorrect uses of *adverbs according to their position and behavior within the sentence* that are committed by Iraqi EFL postgraduate students in their writing in the data under investigation:

A- Adverbs of Manner

● *"She begins to compliment <u>explicitly</u> two senates by appreciating their hard work in Hampshire"*

In this example, the adverb *explicitly* should be put either immediately before the transitive verb *compliment* or after the direct object *two senates*, but not immediately before this object.

B- Adverbs of Frequency

● *"This <u>can be usually seen</u> in the relationship between a worshiper and God The Almighty"*

In this example, the adverb *usually* is put in the wrong position. So, it should be put before the verb *BE* to be …*can usually be seen*….

C- Conjunctive Adverbs

● *"He did not have good intentions, <u>on the contrary</u> he was taking advantage of her psychological status"*

In this example, the correct way is that an adverb of this type is usually put at the beginning of the second sentence, followed by a comma, in addition to the use of a semicolon that separates the two sentences or a full stop put at the end of the first sentence.

D- Adverbs of Degree

● *They have the same form but are not <u>equivalent totally</u> in their pronunciation"*

In the above sentence, the adverb of degree *totally* is used wrongly since these adverbs always precede what they modify.

E- Focusing Adverbs

● *"She cannot within the power or capacity of her <u>too</u> hate someone else as she hates him."*

In the above sentence, the use of the focus adverb *too* in this case is wrong. The position of this adverb is always at the end of the sentence.

F- Evaluative Adverbs

● *"<u>Undoubtedly</u> this is possible if it follows leeches rules…"*

In the above sentence, the evaluative adverb *Undoubtedly* should be separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma. In this use, it modifies the entire sentence.

G- Viewpoint Adverbs

● *" Syntactically the advertisement is a simple promise…"*

In the above sentence, the viewpoint adverb *Syntactically* should be separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma. In this use, it modifies the entire sentence.

Types of Adverbs	Frequency	Percentage	Total No. of All Adverbs Types Uses
Manner	314	20.24%	
Frequency	185	11.92%	
Conjunctive	790	50.93%	
Degree	125	8.05%	1551
Focus	17	1.09%	
Evaluative	81	5.22%	
Viewpoint	39	2.51%	

Table (4-3): the frequency and percentage of each type of adverbs.

Table (4-3) shows that the total number of uses is (**1551**) occurrences, and the dominant type among the other types of adverbs is conjunctive adverbs, where the frequency of this type is (**790**) occurrences, and it reaches (**50.93%**) out of the total occurrences of the adverbs used in the data under investigation.

Incorrect Uses of Adverbs			
Types of Adverbs	Frequency	Percentage	Total No. of Incorrect Uses
Manner	25	11.90%	210
Frequency	8	3.80%	
Conjunctive	124	59.04%	
Degree	20	9.52%	
Focus	4	1.90%	
Evaluative	24	11.42%	
Viewpoint	5	2.38%	

Table (4-4): the frequencies and percentages of incorrect uses of each type out of all incorrect uses of all types of adverbs.

Table **(4-4)** shows that the total number of incorrect uses is (**210**) errors, and the dominant type among the other types of adverbs in terms of errors is *conjunctive adverbs*, where it forms (**59.04%**) out of all errors of the adverbs used in the data under investigation.

Table **(4-5)** below presents the frequencies and percentages of correct and incorrect uses of each syntactic features (concord and adverbs) in the data under investigation. It shows that the percentages of errors committed in adverbs are more than those in concord.

Syntactic Level	Use	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Concord	Correct	16,820	97.66 %	17,222
	Incorrect	402	% 2.33	
Adverbs	Correct	1341	86.64 %	1551
	Incorrect	210	13.53 %	

Table (4-5): the frequencies and percentages of correct and incorrect uses of the concord and adverbs on the level of syntax.

4.3 Results Discussion

The analysis of the results shows the percentages of errors committed in adverbs are more than those in concord, where the number of incorrect uses (errors) of **adverbs** that are committed in the data under investigation reaches (**210**) errors out of (**1551**) uses, i.e., (**13.53%**) of the total number used in these data. On the other hand, the number of incorrect uses of concord reaches (**405**) errors out of (**17222**) uses, i.e., (**2.33%**) of the total number used in the data under investigation.

The results also show that the **conjunctive adverb type** is the most dominant one among the other types of adverbs in terms of occurrence, as it is used at a rate (**50.93%**). Furthermore, **this type** is the most dominant one among the other types of adverbs in terms of errors, as it forms (**59.04%**) out of all errors of adverbs committed in the data under investigation.

With respect to concord, the results also display that the **subject-verb concord** category is the most dominant category among the other categories of concord in terms of occurrence, as it is used at a rate (**65.81%**). In addition, **the subject-verbs concord category** is the most dominant one among the other categories of concord in terms of errors, as it forms (**82.58%**) out of all errors of concord committed in the data under investigation.

4.5 Conclusions

The findings reveal that Iraqi EFL postgraduate students' performance in their academic writing at the level of sentence structure (syntax) is rather good, with some failures. The results reveal that the errors are committed more in adverbs than in concord, and

this refutes **hypothesis No.1**. The most dominant category of concord in terms of occurrence is *subject-verbs concord*, and this supports **Hypothesis No.2**; additionally, the most dominant category in terms of errors is *subject-verbs concord*, and this supports **Hypothesis No.3**. The results also show that the most dominant type of adverbs used in the data under investigation in terms of occurrence is *connective adverb type*, and this supports **Hypothesis No.4**, while the most dominant type of adverbs in terms of errors is the *connective adverb type*, and this refutes **Hypothesis No.5**.

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