

*Investigating the Ability to Construct
English Sentences by First Year
Students of Physical Education
College in the University of Mosul*

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This paper investigates the ability of first year students in the College of Physical Education to construct English sentences. This is done by testing them during the lectures to write down all kinds of sentences correctly in order to help them to overcome the difficulties which they face when constructing such kind of sentences .

The aim of this study is to discover the ability of the students in constructing sentences.

The hypothesis of this paper is that the students do not have the ability to construct sentences. Therefore, they must know fundamental basic rules of grammar and be introduced to the elements of the sentences which are very necessary to make sentences.

The procedure followed in this study is to ask the students to write all kinds of the sentences in the classroom. At the end, the students take all the information about the kinds of the sentences, the test of recognition is made upon them. The result of the test indicates that the rate of writing wrong sentences is more than writing correct sentences.

1. Theoretical Background:

Grammarians have given many definitions of the sentence and classified it into many types. In order to know the structures of the sentence and its types, we should know what is meant by a clause. Jones and Farness (1982: 130) present the clause as a group of words, a subject and a predicate. While Nelson (2001:9) adds that a sentence is any sequence of words which begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, a question mark, or an exclamation mark. eg .: *Where did you buy your car?*

Razzak and AL-Hassan (2000: 7, f) explain all kinds of sentence. They classified sentence into four traditional categories: simple sentence, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentence. A simple sentence as all writers say consists of one independent clause; i.e., one subject and one predicate. e.g.:

The boy was running.

While a compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses. Each clause contains a subject and a predicate of its own and makes good sense by itself. A co-ordinating conjunction such as (and, but, or, for,etc) is a joining word that joins two clauses of equal value, for example:

The moon was bright and we could see our way.

A complex sentence consists of one independent clause and one or more secondary ideas. Dependent clauses are used as nouns, as adjectives, and as adverbs. e.g.:

He ran as fast as he could.

The independent clause (main clause) is " he ran". The subordinate clause (dependent clause) "as fast as he could" tells us how he ran. It is an adverbial clause.

As far as the compound-complex sentence, it contains two or more independent clauses. e.g.:

The agent knew that the roof was leaked, but he did not tell us.

The two independent clauses in this sentence are "*the agent knew*" and "*he did not tell us*" whereas "*that the roof was leaked*" is a subordinate noun clause. Sneddon and Spence (1963: 78) state that the structure of the sentence. They say

that simple sentence consists of one subject and one predicate. For example:

The Nile is a river.

"*The Nile*" is the subject of the sentence. The part of the sentence which says something about the subject is called the predicate. so, "is a river" is the predicate of the sentence. The compound sentence is merely two or more simple sentences joined together by the use of certain conjunctions (the words which are used to combine sentences), for example, and, but, or, for, etc). The use of these conjunctions does not change the work of the verbs and therefore, we can define the compound sentence as a sentence containing two or more principal verbs. The complex sentences so called because it is complicated and the most difficult to analyze. It is a sentence which contains one principal verb and one or more subordinate verbs. A subordinate verb is the verb of the clause simple sentence consists of one complete statement. A compound sentence consists of two or more complete statements, all of equal importance. And a complex sentence contains one principal verb and one or more subordinate verbs, a subordinate verb is the verb of the clause (Sneddon and Spence, 1963: 2).

Huddleston (1984: 378) maintains that traditional grammars classify sentences as simple, compound or complex: e.g. a- *Liz prepared the food.* "simple".
e.g. b- *Liz prepared the food, ^{Ed} bought the wine.* "compound".
e.g. c- *Liz prepared the food that they had ordered.* "complex".

A simple sentence contains only one clause, a main clause; a compound sentence contains two or more main clauses; a complex sentence contains two or more clauses at least one of which is subordinate. Thus "that they had ordered" is a subordinate clause, so that c- is complex. While "and Ed bought the wine" is a main clause, so that b- is compound. Alexander (1965: 2) considers that the compound sentence is merely two or more simple sentences joined together by use of certain conjunctions. The words which are used to combine sentences are called "conjunctions". The main conjunctions used to form compound sentences are: and, but, yet, so, bothand, either.....or, neither.....nor, and not only....but.

Huddleston (1984: 379) describes the most central cases of complex sentences, that subordinate clause is a constituent of the superordinate clause. "that they had ordered" is modifier within the NP "the food that they had ordered" – and hence a constituent (non-immediate, of course) of the clause of which that NP is object. "A complex sentence is like a simple sentence in that it consists of only one main clause, but unlike a simple sentence in that it has one or more subordinate clauses functioning as an element of the sentence. An adverbial clause does the work of an adverb and may refer to a verb, adjective or adverb. To form a complex sentence containing an adverbial clause, certain conjunctions are used, each of which implies that the adverbial clause has a certain meaning with regard to the principal clause. An adverbial clause may be a clause of purpose, a clause of consequence or result, a clause of time, a clause of manner, a clause of concession or a contrast or a clause of condition (Sneddon and Spence, 1963: 96, 102).

Alexander (1965: 1 f) emphasizes that "no matter how many ideas it may contain, a sentence must always express a complete thought:.. The three types of sentences express different ideas. The simple sentence expresses one idea only. e.g.

The man knocked at the door.

The compound sentence contains more than one idea. In this types of sentence, all the ideas expressed have an equal value. e.g.

The man knocked at the door and waited for an answer.

The complex sentence contains one main idea (called the 'main clause') and one or more secondary ideas (called 'subordinate clauses'). e.g.

As soon as he arrived at the house, (subordinate clause) the man knocked at the door (main clause).

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 283) and Tallerman (1998: 71) mention that a compound sentence consists of more than one clause. There are three independent clauses in (a) which can be joined together, or co-ordinated as in (b):

a- *Kim arrived early.*

Hughes et al (2002: 25) state that a sentence always has a subject and a verb. e.g.

This soup is cold.

(*Soup*) is the subject, (*is*) is the verb. The verb enables the subject to do or be something. Usually a word or phrase completes the subject and verb. e.g.

They had headaches for two days.

Sentences can have more than one subject and more than one verb. e.g.

Tracy and Pete have a new home. (two subjects).

They bought an old house and restored it (two verbs).

In compound or co-ordinated sentences, two complete sentences can be joined to make a compound, or coordinate, sentence. If some of the elements are omitted, e.g. the subject or the verb in the second sentence, the resulted sentence appears to have more than one verb or more than one subject.

2. Procedure:

There are many steps have been followed in this work, and will identify the idea of this work. There is an explanation of the subject of this work, the given material, the way of the test, scoring scheme, findings and discussion.

2.1. The Subject:

The researcher sheds light on the types of English sentences and the ability of the physical education students to construct English sentences. This paper includes definitions, explanations and many various examples about all types of the sentence.

2.2. Materials:

The materials given to the students are as follows: Firstly, an explanation of the simple sentence in the first lecture. Secondly, an explanation of the compound sentence in the second lecture. Thirdly, an explanation of complex sentence in the third lecture. Finally, the researcher gives the students ten different sentences of the three types in the last lecture. Then sentences are:

1. *The boy was running.*

2. *The moon was bright and we could see our way.*

3. *The sky darkened, but no rain fell.*
4. *He had to act immediately or he would have been too late.*
5. *It was very hot.*
6. *The teacher said that the answer was correct.*
7. *This is the boy who brought the papers.*
8. *He ran as fast as he could.*
9. *Some students like to study in the mornings.*
10. *The race will start at three o'clock.*

Then, the researcher asks the students to distinguish between the different types of sentences, i.e., to recognize the simple, compound and complex sentences.

2.3. The Test:

The test is done upon 25 first year students in the College of Physical Education in the University of Mosul. The researcher applies two tests upon the students; pre-test and post-test. In the pre-test, the researcher informs the students that they are going to write examples of each type of sentence. Thus, she asks them to write down (10) examples of simple sentences in the first lecture, (10) examples of the compound sentences in the second lecture and (10) examples of the complex sentences in the third lecture. In the post-test, she asks the students to write down (5) simple sentences, (5) compound sentences and (5) complex sentences. In the fourth lecture, the lesson begins with a review of the three types of sentences. The researcher gives the students (10) examples of the three types of sentences viz, simple, compound, and complex. After that, the researcher asks them to recognize the types of the sentences whether they are simple, compound and complex.

2.4. Scoring Scheme:

The study is about constructing three types of English sentence (simple, compound, and complex) by 25 students at the first class of Physical Education College in the University of Mosul. These students asked to write down (15) sentences. Each five sentences are about one type of English sentences. The test of each kind of sentences is done individually in one lecture. In the first lecture, they are asked to write (5) simple sentences. In the second lecture, they are asked to write (5) compound sentences. In the third lecture, they are asked to

write (5) complex sentences. Finally, the recognition is to give them (10) sentences from the three types of sentences and asks them to distinguish between them.

Below is the table of the statistical results for the test which is done upon (25) students.

<i>Types of sentences</i>	<i>No. of students who write (5) correct sentences</i>	<i>No. of students who write less than (5) correct sentences</i>	<i>No. of students who write (5) wrong sentences</i>	<i>Total no. of the students in the lecture</i>
<i>Simple sentences in the first lecture</i>	(4) 16%	(9) 36%	(12) 48%	25
<i>compound sentences in the second lecture</i>	(6) 24%	(11) 44%	(8) 32%	25
<i>Complex sentences in the third lecture</i>	(3) 12%	(7) 28%	(15) 60%	25
<i>Recognition in the fourth and last lecture</i>	(10) 40%	(15) 60%	(0) 0%	25

2.5. Findings:

The number of full correct sentences, i.e., (5) correct sentences which are written by 25 students is as a while 4 students write (5) correct simple sentences as the researcher asks them to write in the first lecture. In the second lecture, (6) students write (5) correct compound sentences and (3) students write (5) correct complex sentences in the third lecture, whereas the number of sentences less than (5) correct sentences, i.e., 4, 3, 2, 1 correct sentences which are written by students are as follows: 9 students write less than (5) correct simple sentences in the first lecture. (11) students write less than correct compound sentences in the second lecture. And (7) students write less than (5) correct complex sentences in the third lecture. The sentences which are completely wrong

are as follows: (12) students write (5) completely wrong simple sentences in the first lecture. (8) students write (5) completely wrong compound sentences in the second lecture. And (15) students write (5) completely wrong complex sentences in the third lecture. Thus, the incorrect sentences are more than the correct sentences. Finally, the recognition of types of sentences reveals a very clear picture in this study. This is done by giving the students (10) sentences from different types of sentences. some students are able to distinguish between all types of sentences. the results of the recognition is as follows: (10) students recognize between simple, compound and complex sentences successfully without committing any mistake, (15) students could not distinguish easily. So, they commit mistakes in choosing correct sentences. No one out of the (25) students who make complete wrong choice in the distinction between the three types of the sentences at all. The recognition test is done in the fourth lecture which is the last lecture for the tests.

3. Conclusions and Discussions:

The researcher concludes that the students' ability to construct the three types of sentences is poor, unlike their ability to distinguish among them. From this point, the researcher may concentrate on correct grammatical sentences to improve the students' ability in writing all kinds of sentences. So, the students should be given lessons and lectures on constructing English sentences and other rules of English grammar for example the tenses and their importance in writing in first year class because their knowledge about this subject is little. They need more information about English grammar in order to write correct grammatical English sentences and then to solve this problem. This is done by reinforcing their ability to write correct sentences.

4. Recommendations:

The researcher recommends to:

1. Providing the first year students in the College of Physical Education with texts and books which increase their information about English grammar.
2. Giving the students lectures about writing in order to develop their writing skills, in addition to the rules of

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grammar. They should know how to write correct sentences by using correct grammatical rules. Writing or constructing English sentences which have a strong relation with the rules of grammar and there is no doubt about this idea.

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Test subject (1)

Simple sentence 5

1. *Ali go to the school.*
 2. *Ahmed play Football naw.*
 3. *Layla prepared the Food.*
 4. *Ali watch TV.*
 5. *Ahmed viste Baghdad.*
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Test subject (2)

Compound Sentences 5

1. *I am play football and Ali play teines.*
 2. *Muna study English but Suha study Arabic.*
 3. *Ahmed driving car but yousif driving apical.*
 4. *Senan reading story but Benan read Novil.*
 5. *Huda helping her mother and rana helping her mother too.*
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Test subject (3)

Complex sentences 5

1. *I think that this is my car.*
 2. *I found my book, where I had left.*
 3. *this is the car, which I sold yesterday.*
 4. *I think that this is my CD player.*
 5. *I think that this is my ball.*
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Test subject (4)

Recognition 10 sentences

1. *the boy was running. (simple).*
2. *the moon was bright and we could see our way. (compound).*
3. *this is a boy who brought the papers. (complex).*
4. *he ran as fast as he could. (complex).*
5. *He is a brave man. (simple).*
6. *the sky darkened, but no rain fell. (compound).*
7. *He had to act immediately or he would have been too late. (complex).*
8. *the teacher said that the answer was correct. (complex).*
9. *my brother lives in Mosul. (simple).*
10. *It was very hot. (simple).*

البحث في قابليات طلاب المرحلة الأولى في كلية التربية الرياضية في إنشاء الجمل باللغة الانكليزية

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الملخص

تختبر هذه الدراسة قابليات طلبة المرحلة الأولى في كلية التربية الرياضية بجامعة الموصل في تكوين الجمل باللغة الانكليزية. يجري ذلك من خلال اختبارهم أثناء المحاضرات وإخضاعهم لكتابة كل أنواع الجمل الانكليزية بصورة صحيحة لتمكينهم من التغلب على الصعوبات التي تواجههم في تكوين هذه الأنواع من الجمل.

ومن فروض هذا البحث التي ينبغي التنبه لها هـ و أن هؤلاء الطلبة لا يمتلكون أدنى معرفة بقواعد اللغة الأساسية ومعرفة الأجزاء التي تتألف منها الجملة. لذا وجب علينا إتباع بعض الخطوات لتمكينهم من معرفتها والتي هي مهمة جداً في تكوين الجمل. ومن هذه الخطوات إخضاع الطلبة إلى تمرينات وتدريبات على كتابة كل أنواع الجمل، ومن ثم التمييز بين أنواع تلك الجمل التي هي البسيطة والمركبة والمعقدة ليتسنى لهم الوقوف على عموم الهدف الذي لأجله قمنا بهذه الدراسة ولأجل أن يعوا أبعاد ما نطمح إليه في الارتقاء بمستوياتهم العلمية.

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