

Appendix

The erroneous sentences used as data for the investigation of error tolerance.

1. A child in such a period does whatever he wants without thinking of other's comments.
2. I faced many difficulties because the examination was not the easy one.
3. I hope you will be here after the examination to enjoy ourselves in a holiday together.
4. I am feeling so tired and exhausted from stay awake till late hours every night.
5. Years of childhood is like sitting in a beautiful garden.
6. Children at this ages are very sensitive and instable.
7. There are many family that lives in very bad circumstances.
8. I want to write to me and tell me about yourself.
9. The questions are difficult to answer it.
10. Many people think that childhood is the happiest time in them life.
11. They want prepare their children according their opinion.
12. I have not seen you since three weeks.
13. Children do not think of their parents. They only themselves.
14. Life today full of bad people who speak with honey tongues but their hearts full of hate.
15. Many reasons are prevented me from reading.
16. I hope you writing your report now.
17. They attack those who are always blame their past.
18. They want prepare their children for the future.
19. I wish you will have time to visit me so as to let me forgets my misery.
20. This thing makes me to live very sadly.
21. Adults have a complete right to bought their clothes.
22. No one can ran away from his future.
23. I am afraid I shan't be able to write you a letter last week because I am very busy.
24. When we had guests at home I ask my family to tell them that I am not at home, therefore, I take my books and went upstairs.
25. Nowadays our life it becomes miserable and full of troubles.
26. The man whom I asked him was kind.
27. Any one can find pleasure with people he everyday meets.
28. They can give love to other people and especially to the children those whom without parents.
29. In addition to that, the maltreatment of the lecturers throughout the academic year, which reflected as bad results on the students.
30. Please tell me in your next letter where did you spend the holiday.
31. I not want to tell you about my results.
32. How you spend your holiday?
33. Anything can fright children.
34. Children might have dead of diseases.
35. I answered him very faithful.
36. Finally I beg you to accept my apologize for being unable to reply to your letter.
37. I felt terrible and frighten.
38. Children means innocent, freedom and pleasure.
39. Examinations are not a success way to know student's ability.

- Hultfors, P. (1986): *Reactions to Non-native English: Native English Speakers' Assessment of Errors in the Use of English Made by Non-native Users of the Language*. Stockholm Studies in English 67.
- James, C. (1977): "Judgements of error gravity". *ELT Journal*, 31 (2): 116-124.
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- Sheorey, R. (1986): "Error perception of native speaking and non-native speaking teachers of ESL". *ELT Journal* 40 (4): 306-312.
- Turner, D. (1980): "Native speakers' reactions to non-native speakers' morphological errors". *TESOL* 11: 52-80.

A first finding is that sentences involving multiple errors and those involving the verb phrase come at the top of the scale of gravity. Multiple errors render the message unintelligible and ambiguous. For example, the most seriously erroneous sentence (i.e. No. 29) involved nominalization and a relative clause both of which rendered the sentence extremely difficult to understand. The ambiguity seems to arise primarily from the interpretation of "the maltreatment of the lecturers" (see sentence 29 in the Appendix). The native speakers were not sure whether the student who made the error intended to say the lecturers were maltreated or the students were maltreated. This was made more difficult by the addition of the relative clause which added to the ambiguity of the sentence.

Next in seriousness are global errors involving wrong tense (see sentences 23 and 24), or wrong verb form whether an infinitive (sentence 20), a missing verb (sentence 28) or the wrong form after progressive aspect auxiliary (sentence 17). It should be noted that our initial hypothesis: that seriousness of the error is proportionally related to the degree of intelligibility cannot by itself account for the native speaker's reaction to the seriousness of the error. For example sentence (20)

*"This thing makes me to live very sadly," was fairly intelligible to the native speakers yet it was judged to be a serious error. This judgement can be related to the breaking of a basic rule, and seems to support the claim made by Turner (1980: 54) and Hultfers (1986: 113) that native speakers strongly react to errors involving verbs. The use of the base form of the verb instead of the -ing form after BE, the omission of the verb altogether, the omission of "do" in a negative verb all seem violations of basic rules and thus sound "odd", "non-native" and "totally wrong" to native speakers of English, and hence judged to be serious.

Errors involving wrong word order or omission of certain parts of the sentence are also considered global errors and were indeed judged by the native speakers as very serious (see sentences 28 and 8).

Errors involving parts of speech (e.g. sentences 33, 37, 38), wrong concord (sentence 7) wrong use of articles (sentence 2), misuse of pronouns (sentence 26, 28), which are normally considered local errors were judged by the native speakers as less serious than the other types, and thus they occupy positions at the bottom of the table.

The seriousness or syntactic errors as judged by native speakers of English can be summarized as follows in descending order.

a. Global errors

1. Multiple errors.
2. Errors in the verb phrase.
3. Word order.

| | | | | |
|----|----|--------|--------|----|
| 13 | 96 | 1.6 | 1.1673 | 19 |
| 4 | 95 | 1.5833 | 1.0623 | 20 |
| 1 | 95 | 1.5833 | 1.4177 | 21 |
| 39 | 92 | 1.5833 | 1.1856 | 22 |
| 6 | 88 | 1.4666 | 1.0162 | 23 |
| 5 | 88 | 1.4666 | 1.2138 | 24 |
| 10 | 84 | 1.4 | 1.0923 | 25 |
| 22 | 83 | 1.3833 | 1.0906 | 26 |
| 9 | 83 | 1.3833 | 1.1945 | 27 |
| 32 | 81 | 1.35 | 1.2326 | 28 |
| 7 | 80 | 1.333 | 0.9857 | 29 |
| 30 | 80 | 1.333 | 1.1448 | 30 |
| 36 | 74 | 1.2333 | 1.1254 | 31 |
| 16 | 78 | 1.3 | 1.1092 | 32 |
| 2 | 77 | 1.2833 | 1.2900 | 33 |
| 37 | 80 | 1.3333 | 1.2166 | 34 |
| 38 | 69 | 1.15 | 0.9884 | 35 |
| 12 | 69 | 1.15 | 1.0548 | 36 |
| 18 | 68 | 1.1333 | 1.0162 | 37 |
| 31 | 67 | 1.1166 | 1.1213 | 38 |
| 33 | 66 | 1.1 | 1.0688 | 39 |

score, the higher the score, the greater the seriousness. It should also be noted that rank 1 refers to greatest seriousness or gravity whereas rank 39 refers to the least gravity.

Table -1-

| sentence No | score | mean value | SD | rank |
|-------------|-------|------------|--------|------|
| 29 | 209 | 3.4833 | 1.396 | 1 |
| 23 | 165 | 2.75 | 1.5028 | 2 |
| 24 | 164 | 2.733 | 1.3 | 3 |
| 20 | 151 | 2.5165 | 1.4437 | 4 |
| 28 | 149 | 2.4833 | 1.3339 | 5 |
| 17 | 142 | 2.366 | 1.6871 | 6 |
| 11 | 141 | 2.35 | 1.4709 | 7 |
| 34 | 139 | 2.3 | 1.4648 | 8 |
| 21 | 126 | 2.1333 | 1.2414 | 9 |
| 26 | 122 | 2.033 | 1.4017 | 10 |
| 8 | 120 | 2.00 | 1.3018 | 11 |
| 14 | 117 | 1.95 | 1.3706 | 12 |
| 19 | 111 | 1.85 | 1.2598 | 13 |
| 35 | 109 | 1.8166 | 1.3715 | 14 |
| 15 | 106 | 1.7666 | 1.2671 | 15 |
| 27 | 105 | 1.75 | 1.216 | 16 |
| 25 | 102 | 1.7 | 1.1974 | 17 |
| 3 | 98 | 1.633 | 1.2208 | 18 |

speakers, then complete accuracy may be sacrificed and certain errors can be tolerated. However, the question to be asked is which errors can be overlooked and which are to be corrected. The answer to this question is not an easy one. In order to decide whether an error is more serious than another, we must have a scale of gravity, which we hypothesize to be directly related to the degree of intelligibility, the more intelligible the utterance, the less serious the error, if there is one.

Procedure

To test the above hypothesis we devised a questionnaire (see the Appendix) which involved 39 erroneous sentences obtained from essays written by third-year students at the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Mosul. The sentences involve two types of errors: local errors which affect single constituents or parts of constituents in a sentence (Burt 1975: 56) such as the use of articles, pronouns, prepositions, and global errors which affect the overall sentence organization (ibid) e.g. errors in the use of the verb, wrong tense formation, word order and clause construction.

Sixty native speakers of English from the city of Birmingham and the teaching staff at the Department of English Studies, University of Strathclyde in Glasgow participated in the interpretation and evaluation of the data. Thirty of the speakers (15 males and 15 females) were teachers of English and thus linguistically sophisticated; the other thirty speakers (also 15 males and 15 females) were non-teachers and linguistically 'naive'. Thirty-three of the speakers had a first degree (i.e. B.A or B.Sc.) and the remaining 27 had higher degrees (i.e. M.A., M.Sc. or Ph.D.)

The native speakers were asked to identify the error, to interpret each sentence according to what he/she thought the writer intended to say, and evaluate the seriousness of the error on a 0-5 point scale, so that the point 0 indicated that the error was not serious and the message was perfectly intelligible, and 5 indicated that the error was most serious and intelligibility suffered severely.

The data in this study have been subjected to two statistical tests: the F-test and the T-test. The former was used to show differences within groups and the latter to show any significant difference between each two groups.

Results and Discussions

Table 1 summarizes the results obtained for the 39 syntactically deviant sentences. The sentences have been arranged according to their degree of seriousness.

It should be noted that the scores mentioned in the table are those given by the total number of the subjects (i.e. 60 subjects) for each erroneous sentence, and the seriousness of the error is proportionally related to the

NATIVE SPEAKER'S REACTIONS TO SYNTACTIC ERRORS MADE BY IRAQI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

Error tolerance is an important subject which has far reaching implications for the teaching of foreign languages. If certain errors can be tolerated and others cannot, then the teacher has to have at his disposal a scale showing the gravity of the errors, which would function as a guide to the evaluation of the written as well as the spoken performance of his students.

Appeal is made to the judgement of native speakers of English on the gravity of syntactic errors through a questionnaire distributed to sixty British English judges of different ages, sexes and professions.

The results obtained clearly show that global errors involving multiple deviations, wrong word order, and wrong verb forms are considered more serious and therefore less tolerable than local errors involving the negative and interrogative formation, use of articles and parts of speech.

Native speakers' judgements as to error gravity and therefore error tolerance seems to be proportionally related to intelligibility; the more, intelligible the utterance, the more tolerable the error. However, error tolerance seems to be affected by other variables including the sex, age and profession of the judge.

Introduction

A major problem faced by foreign language teachers is the correction of errors made by the learners. Traditionally, teachers insisted on grammatical accuracy in addition to lexical appropriateness and corrected every error on the spot no matter how 'trivial' the error was in the belief that mastery of the language would automatically follow much in the spirit of stimulus-response-reinforcement.

However, in the last two decades, learners' errors have been viewed in a different perspective. They have been regarded in a more positive manner, as a means of 'observing' the learning process and the strategies the learner uses to test his hypotheses about the language he is learning (see Corder, 1967, 1975, Piazza, 1980, Bell, 1981, Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982, and Major, 1988 among others). If the aim of language teaching is to enable the learner to communicate effectively with native