

The Morpho-Syntactic Features of The Notes of EFL Of Nasiriya Students at College of Medicine: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

This Paper conducts a linguistic analysis of the notes written by EFL Nassiriya students at college of Medicine . It aims at identifying the linguistic features of the English used in medical writing through answering the following question:

-What are the morpho-syntactic features of medical Notes ?

Note-taking is the process that English foreign learners perform when they attend lectures in English . It involves certain important skills , such as good command of listening , extracting the major points and the gist of utterances , using abbreviations , contractions , shorthand keywords, etc.

Lecture is the predominant and most common method of teaching in higher education throughout the world . Thus note taking imposes itself as a necessary method for utilizing the subject matter of the lecture .

The study is based on the following hypotheses (1)the notes written by EFL Nassiriyah students of the college of Medicine are characterized by certain morpho-syntactic features to the extent that make them as a special variety.(2) the passive verbs in either medical notes do not represent a linguistic feature compared with the active ones..

In order to achieve the aims of the study, two types of notes written by twenty five students are examined :Surgery and Ortho . These notes are taken from 5th year students . To the best knowledge of the researcher , no such study has been

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carried out in the field of the language of medical issues in Iraq , therefore the present study is an attempt to fill this gap.

Key Terms : Morpho-Syntactic Features ,EFL Students (English as a Foreign Language),

الخلاصة

هذا البحث يجري تحليلاً لغوياً للملاحظات التي يكتبها طلبة كلية الطب في جامعة ذي قار ، حيث تهدف هذه الدراسة الى التعرف على المميزات اللغوية المستخدمة في الكتابة الطبية من خلال الإجابة عن السؤال الآتي:- ما المميزات او الخصائص الصرفية-النحوية للملاحظات المكتوبة باللغة الطبية ؟

تعد كتابة الملاحظات اجراء يقوم بها الطلبة المتعلمون للغة الانكليزية – بوصفها لغة أجنبية عند تواجدهم بمحاضرة باللغة الإنكليزية . هذه العملية تضم مهارات كثيرة، مثل القدرة على الإصغاء ، الاستفادة قدر الامكان من النقاط المهمة ومغزى العبارات ، استخدام المختصرات (abbreviations) ، الصيغ المختصرة (contractions)، الكلمات المختزلة (shorthand keywords)، الخ.

تُعد المحاضرة الاداة المهمة والأكثر استخداماً للتدريس في الجامعات في انحاء العالم لذلك فإن تدوين الملاحظات في اثناء المحاضرة تفرض نفسها وسيلة ضرورية للاستفادة من موضوع المحاضرة.

اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على الفرضيات الآتية:- (1) تتميز الملاحظات التي يدونها طلبة كلية الطب جامعة ذي قار بخصائص صرفية -نحوية تجعلها نوعاً لغوياً ذو ميزة خاصة. (2) ان صيغ الأفعال المبنية للمجهول في الملاحظات الطبية كليهما لا تشكل مقومة لغوية مميزة مقارنة بصيغ الأفعال المبنية للمعلوم. اخيراً، على حد علم الباحث ، لم يتم إجراء مثل هذه الدراسة في مجال لغة القضايا الطبية في العراق ، وبالتالي فإن هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لسد هذه الفجوة.

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Introduction

Language is one of the most powerful symbols of social behavior. We use language to send different messages about who we are , where we come from , and who we associate with . It is the most frequently used and the most highly form of human communication . It is used in different parts of the world where it is not a native language .It is considered the main medium of communication between educated speakers and is widely used as a language of administration and commerce (Barber, 1964 :224-225).

English is the most important language . Barriers like race, colour and creed are no hindrance to the continuing spread of the use of English (Broughton et al , 1994:1). So the importance of English stems from the fact that most of the scientific literature is in the English medium.

During the last years , the wide spread of English has been characterized by many political and sociolinguistic factors but nowadays English is fast obtaining ground in the non-western countries . So , English is used as an additional language in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Quirk and Widdowson , 1985 :14).

Moreover , in science, the English speaking people have played a large part and recently there has been a tendency for scientists in other countries to publish their work in English . So their researches would reach all parts of the world(Barber 1964 :226) .

English is really a lingua franca in science and technology. English is very important to the students of science . If they like to increase their knowledge , supplement their reading , write articles and reports , read references , participate in international conferences , they must have a good command of the English language. So the English language has established

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itself as the principal international language of science where students need to fulfill their academic and education tasks , in addition to catching on with the technical inventions and researches .

ESP

The abbreviation ESP stands for English for special or specific purposes (Richards et al , 1992 :128). It is a linguistic material designed specially for people who are learning English so that they will be able to use it in practical situations . In Mackay and Mountfor 's (1978:2) words , ESP is used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose .

ESP has emerged as a result of linguists' interest in describing varieties of English primarily for purpose of language. According to Munby (1978 :2) ESP courses are "those courses where syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner".

So we should put in our mind the differences in the English course for a non-native speaker who needs English to study Medicine in his country as opposed to England or when he might need English only for reading Medical texts(ibid).

ESP has begun to appear under several names which have developed during the last ten years or so . In the past the term "ESP" was the international term which was used to refer to a broader notion which includes other languages , such as French and German (Robinson , 1980:5).

In order to understand the meaning of "ESP" an examination of its language components is needed and defined the purpose of which the ESP approach is used .

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Evans (1998:Int.) who prefers to call ESP “an attitude of mind” gives an extended definition in terms of absolute and variable characteristics .

Absolute characteristics

- 1.ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners .
- 2.ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves .
- 3.ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar , lexis , register , study skills and discourse genre.

Variable Characteristics

- 1.ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines .
- 2.ESP use , in specific teaching situations , a different methodology from that of general English .
- 3.ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners , either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation . It could , however , be for learners at secondary school level .
- 4.ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students .
5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems .

The study of ESP lies in the domain of the expanding EFL circle (Quirk and Widdowson , 1985 :238) i.e learners have to learn English to use it in an immediate or future task. This case illustrates how a course in general English can be adopted to the specific needs of a given group of learners(Brouhton etal ,1994:192).

The main concern of ESP is the specific communicative needs of the learners ; i.e to enable the learners to communicate efficiently in the fields of their own specialization .ESP is practically used to teach science and technology . It is mainly tailored to fit all disciplines through vigorously prepared and

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designed programs to improve the students' ability to communicate in English about their specific fields of study . It focuses on using English effectively in specific academic fields such as business , international studies , English linguistics , literature , chemistry, biochemistry , physical education and so on .

Robinett (1978:132) believes that this field is also called scientific and technical English (henceforth STE) and it places emphasis on the specialized vocabulary connected with various professional or technical fields .

According to Strevens (1978:186) special purpose language teaching occurs whenever the content and aims of teaching are determined by the requirements of the learner .

Since the main aim of an ESP course is to qualify the learner to obtain the kind of English peculiar to his interests, a clear connection of the English course and learner's aims would make the teaching process much more effective . "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English you need"(Hutchinson and Waters , 1987 :8) and as we know that the interests of learners are various and language varies from one situation to another , so what is needed to design the learner's courses is the specialization of the characteristic features of the situations in which the learner is expected to act and communicate .ESP as a method "based on the learners reason for learning",(Ibid :19) is what will probably help teachers decide on what English for which discipline and how it can be performed in an approximately short time .

ESP is directed mainly to the acquisition of a certain body of knowledge or a set of skills , e.g. understanding speech , reading , writing , etc. The aim of ESP is to help learners to express their purpose of learning in this "purposefulness". So ESP course designers have to present a clear and careful

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analysis of learner's needs. Finally , we come to the conclusion that the purpose behind teaching ESP determines what sort of language is to be used and what linguistic activities are to be achieved in order to give it its fullest diffusion (Brumfit , 1977 :71).

Medical Language

Without doubt , science and technology flourish in a well educated society . EST - a major sub-division of the field of teaching ESP has been the concern of many scholars in recent years (Mackay and Mountford , 1978 : 6) .

EMP is an applied linguistics – pedagogical entity still in its new period of existence has not thrived as vigorously as it was hoped back in the early 1980s .

Mackay and Mountford (1978 : 6) emphasize the need for English by students who major in scientific discipline . They say that nowadays English is considered the principal international language of science. Medical students (henceforth MSs) need English in their lectures , laboratories , work teams , reports writing , reading medical leaflets , textbooks and different sources . They need English because it helps them in many medical tasks (reading a medical report in English rather than any other language) .

Scientific discourse refers to the verbal and non-verbal communication related to a special field of science. For Quirk (1962:26) scientific English is not a different variety from that of everyday life , but some authors believe that there are several varieties of scientific English for different professions , occupations and subjects .

Robinett (1978 : 132) states that STE puts emphasis on the specialized technical fields saying that there are many differences in the way in which English structures are used in the EST and also in literary English . He emphasizes that the

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use of technical and sub-technical vocabulary forms an important distinction between scientific and literary styles of English writing . Technical writing communicates specific information about a technical subject to a specific audience for a specific purpose .(Ibid:197)

So the teaching of English in the Medical field is an example of performing several Medical activities which involve using English and identifying specific individual language problems in the field of Medicine.

Note-Taking

Far from being a simple task , classroom NT is a complex event defined by a set of intellectual skills (attention , encoding , transformation and transcription) (Pollio , 1990 :22).

NT can be defined as listening to a speaker and at the same time writing down the important ideas , facts, actions or arguments given by the speaker in abbreviated form , which may be written up later on in continuous form (Wright and Wallwork , 1968 : 44).

While many students view NT as an activity conducted simply in lecture , solid NT skills require preparation and reflection as well . The class notes can serve as an important tool for reviewing for exams and distilling key concepts.

The purpose behind taking notes is to make an abbreviated record of the language used in a rapid , accurate and parsimonious way , so that the main idea of that language can be recalled , retained or constructed by note taker (Shuy , 1998 : 354). “NT must not be merely a recording process ; it must be a thinking process” (Rackhman and Bertagnolli ,1988: 400) that helps students to listen attentively and to think critically. Taking notes during the lecture offers an opportunity

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to review the material presented in the lecture , which as a result helps in retention and synthesis .

Good NT is a difficult but valuable skill for any student in that it will be of great benefit to him / her in later life (Sesnan , 2000 : 114).

In addition , the lecturer should be able to facilitate students NT by organizing lecture information in such away that a structure can be readily seen , and using simple cues which direct the student to include or omit certain types of information . Lecturers themselves need to be acquainted with , and trained in , the skills of lecturing.(see Pollio , 1990:22).

Burrows etal (1966 : 53) state that the most successful approaches to NT can be found when students become concerned about the chance of forgetting data needed in their study .

Analysis of Data

This section is devoted to the analysis of the selected data .The analysis involves the morpho- syntactic features of medical language . In order to investigate MSs undergraduate's written notes, a sample of 5th year students of medicine for the academic year 2017-2018 at the college of medicine , University of Thiqr has been chosen . As far as the present study is concerned a corpus of (50) notes written by 5th year students has been subjected to a relatively analysis based on an eclectic approach*.The reason behind choosing such a model is that it has all the linguistic features needed in the analysis and it is appropriate to the data. The results are shown in terms of the

* According to Crystal (2003:154) eclecticism is mainly in relation to models of description which have been built from a combination of features originating in more than one linguistic theory. In this thesis the eclectic analysis depends on more than one model . The current study depends on Halliday and Hasan(1976) , Crystal and Davy(1969) and Leech and Short's(1981) Models of analysis

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frequency of occurrence of these features. The idea behind this analysis is to investigate whether these features really exist or not in the notes written by students of medicine . The materials taken in the analysis are:

Orthopedics Surgery

Students of medicine at the University of Thiqr are taught through the medium of English in spite of the fact that their native language is Arabic. They have to listen to lectures given in English , take notes , read textbooks and references , answer exam questions in English , etc .

This is not an easy task because they have not been exposed to scientific English before , nor have they been taught any of the morpho-syntactic , stylistic and rhetorical features.

In view of what has been mentioned so far , below is a detailed analysis of the data.

Morpho- Syntactic Features

Based on the analytical framework of the present study , the researcher has analyzed the data in terms of the following parameters :

- 1.Tenses
- 2.Passivization
- 3.The Choice of Articles

Tenses

The analysis reveals that the present tense is the most frequently used tense in medical notes. It recurs 1466 times in Ortho corpus representing 29.47% of all verb forms found in this corpus , while it recurs 1488 times in Surgery corpus representing 29.90%. The total number of the present tense in both corpora is 2954 representing 59.37% of all verb forms which are 4975. There are 930 affirmative verbs in "Ortho" corpus representing 18.69% of the all verbs , while negative verbs are 536 forming 10.78% . "Surgery" has 1185 affirmative

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verbs representing 23.81%, while it has 303 negative verb forms constituting 8.09% of all verb forms in the notes under analysis .

The reason why this tense is frequently used is that it is a common linguistic feature in scientific text . The simple present is used without reference to specific time which signifies “eternal truth” , this means a general timeless statement which does not necessarily refer to the present time (see Lackstrom etal ,1988 :65) . The following are some examples taken from the corpus .

(1) The cranium contains the brain, blood and the CSF , they are constant so any increase in the volume of any of them can occur at the expense of the others .

(Lec.38 ,Surgery)

(2)Other wise , the child does not complain from his foot.

(Lec.35, Ortho)

(3)It follows polygenic pattern of inheritance (not usual line of inheritance) but it involves the appearance...

(Lec.34, Ortho)

(4)It is an autosomal dominant and the patients are between 2 and 20 years of age .

(Lec.23, Surgery)

In the above examples the verbs (contains , are , does not complain, follows , involves, is , are) are used to denote scientific truth. Table (1) shows the frequency of occurrence of the present tense in this corpus .

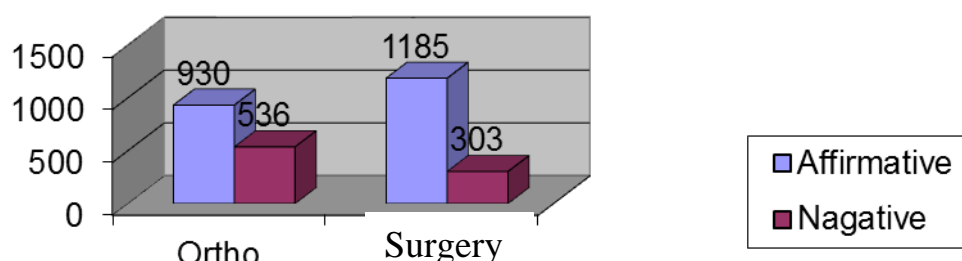
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Table (1) Distribution of the Present Tense

Simple present tense	Affirmative		Negative	
	F	RF	F	RF
Ortho	930	18.69	536	10.78
Surgery	1185	23.81	303	6.09

Chart(1) Distribution of the Present Tense



Passivization

The analysis of the data shows that medical include 848 instances of passivization which make 17.04% of the total verbs of this corpus . The total number of verbs in MNs is 4957 verbs . The corpus of Ortho contains 502 passive verbs comprising 10.09 of the total number of passive verbs, compared to 346 passive verbs used in Surgery , which constitute 6.95% of the total number of passive verbs as shown in the following examples :

(5)N.B. : The rheumatoid factors is seen in the serum of rheumatic patients.

(Lec.38,Ortho)

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(6) The cerebrospinal fluid is mainly secreted from the choroid plexus of the lateral ventricle , and passes by the foramen of monro or what is called the interventricular....

(Lec.38,Surgery)

(7) The clotting factors are synthesized by the liver but the factor V is also produced by the platelet and the end othelial cells .

(Lec.44 , Surgery)

(8) the fibrin , platelet , cholesterol or any other foreign body will be stucked to the area

(Lec.25, Surgery)

(9) when the hip joint was dislocated at birth we can see that...

(Lec.25, Ortho)

In the above examples the passive is used in informative , non-personal style of scientific discourse basically to indicate an established or standard procedure .Table (2) presents the distribution of passive voice in this corpus.

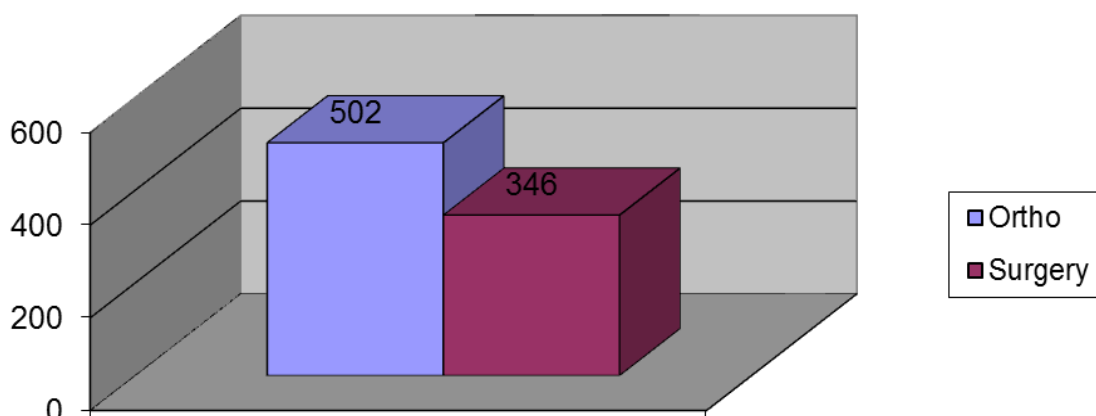
Table (2) Distribution of Passive Voice

Passive Verbs	F	RF
Ortho	502	10.09
Surgery	346	6.95
Total	848	17.04

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Chart(2) Distribution of Passive Voice



The Choice of Articles :

The analysis shows that the total number of articles in both corpora is 4283 . The corpus in Ortho contains 2444 articles while the corpus in Surgery contains 1839 article.

The highest frequent article is "the" which has 3853 occurrences in all notes , constituting 89.96% of all articles . Next in frequency is the article "a" which recurs 348 times , representing 8.13% . While the article "an" recurs 82 times in the notes representing 1.91% of the total number of articles .

The corpus "Ortho" contains 2201 "the" which makes 51.40% , while it has 191 "a" which represents 4.45% of the total number of articles. The article "an" recurs 52 times in this corpus constituting 1.21% of the total number of articles in Ortho.

The article "the" has a frequency of 1652 in the corpus "Surgery" , representing 38.57%, compared with 157 instances of the article "a" in Surgery , representing 3.67% of the total number of articles in this corpus. The article "an" recurs 30

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times in this corpus , representing 0.70% of the total number of articles in this corpus .Below are illustrative examples.

(10) This due to atherosclerosis of the blood vessels resulting in insufficiency and aschaemic gangrene , especially in the extremities of the lower limb .

(Lec.20,Ortho)

(11) They form 60-70% of a normal count of WBC_s....

(Lec.36,Surgery)

(12) Basophils are a same size as the neutrophils , but are less common than.....

(Lec.26, Surgery)

(13) the anterior of a joint can be visualized by inserting an endoscope through a small incision .

(Lec.2 , Ortho)

In the above examples we notice that the article is either used or dropped in the same context. Table (3) presents the distribution of articles in this corpus .

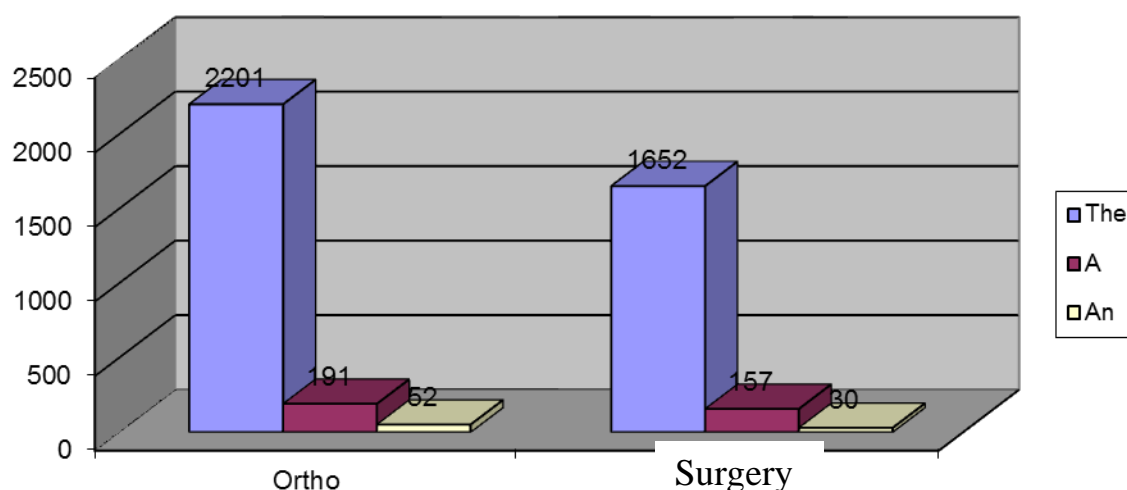
Table(3) Distribution of Articles

Articles	Ortho		Surgery	
	F	RF	F	RF
The	2201	51.40	1652	38.57
A	191	4.45	157	3.67
An	52	1.21	30	0.70
Total	2444	57.06	1839	42.94

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Chart(3) Distribution of Articles



Conclusions

In the light of the previous analysis , the researcher has come up with the following conclusions :

On the Morpho-syntactic level , Medical notes are characterized by an extensive use of passivization , simple present tense , Simple and complex sentences , abbreviations and acronyms .

a)Scientific English is best described as highly impersonal hiding the addresser's identity and making the text impersonal , detached and neutral . This language variety is characterized by the frequent use of passivization as a typical means of complex syntactic connectivity which adds to the text abstractness and impersonality . The truth of what is stated is never dependent on who is addressing whom . Hence , the passive voice , with elimination of active subject , is favoured by the demand for impersonality .

b)Use of verbs which merely signal logical connection and thus mainly point to other semantically more significant textual content , i.e., they give an impression of abstractness and impersonality . The main verb used is often in the present tense

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. The simple present tense is used to express regular actions , processes and factual statement and observations .

c)The use of a wide variety of abbreviations and acronyms for practical significance . This is considered the most distinguishing feature in scientific word formation whereby a word is coined from the initials in a succession of words .The word formation is of two kinds – either the letters of the abbreviations are pronounced individually or they are pronounced as a word .They are termed abbreviations and acronyms respectively .

d)Among articles we can notice the definite article "the" is frequently noticed in both corpora.. It occurs 1652 times in Surgery forming 38.57% of the total number of articles while it recurs 2201 times in Ortho making up 51.40% of the total number of articles .

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