

Testing Iraqi Foreign Language Learners' Awareness of English General Extenders

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ABSTRACT

General extenders are very important expressions that are used to end utterances but extending them at the same time; by doing so, they indicate that there is much more than what is said. They fall into two main kinds: adjunctive and disjunctive. Actually, the subject is somehow complex as to the different views of the scholars who discussed the subject.

Therefore, in one hand, this paper aims at collecting and unifying information about the subject to make it clear for the reader what is meant by a general extender.

On the other hand, this study aims at testing the students' awareness of such an important subject. It is, actually, hypothesized that the students at the University of Tikrit do not know what is meant by general extenders in English; and that they may have no idea of the main kinds of the subject. However, a test is built to find out whether the results agree with the hypotheses of this study or not. The fourth stage students in the Department of Translation in the College of Arts are chosen for analysis in this study.

1. General Extenders in English

This section is presented to mention and collect the whole possible data available about the subject in English: definition, terminology, forms, kinds, and how general extenders serve different functions in discourse.

1.1 Definition

Dagliamonte (2010: 335-6) states that 'general extenders' are constructions such as *and stuff*, *or something*, *and all that*, etc., that occur at the end of utterances to indicate that they refer to "items of a larger set". Sauer and Waxenberger (2012: 227) comment that they are "non-specific and they extend grammatically complete utterances by adding other words". Similarly, Stenstrom and Aijmer (2005: 1745) clarify that they are used at the end of utterances to make us know that the words which occur directly before them are parts of a set (*of a similar nature*). In this case, people tend to use them in their speeches in order to avoid, for example, enumerating the whole things they want to speak about. Consider the following example:

1. *Iraqi people demonstrate to get their rights and the like.*

And the like in this example is used to indicate that there are many other things Iraqi people want to get, *their rights* is only one part of the many things they want. Here, Stenstrom and Aijmer write that "they extend the meaning of that word without having to specify all the members of the set" (ibid. 1746). But, Stenstrom and Aijmer point to the fact that general extenders are not only used to extend meanings, people may use them to indicate that they are not quite sure about something, such as in the following:

2. *We rode my boat and everything.*
3. *I heard a strange voice or something.*

Actually, this is why they are considered as one part of "vague language" (Aijmer, 2002: 215; Garzone and Archibald, 2010: 87; Andersen and Aijmer, 2011: 296; Hyland and Paltredge, 2011: 158; and Sauer and Waxenberger, 2012: 227). For Garzone and Archibald (2010: 87), they are "expressions like *and so on*, *or whatever* that have traditionally been associated with the idea of vagueness and imprecision". Other examples that Garzone and Archibald give are:

and things, and things like this, and the like, and so forth, and everything, and the whole thing, and something, and sort of thing.

Graham and Locher (2010: 393) state that they are very important as they are used to extend and finish conversational turns, and that:

"their usage sustains the appearance of flow and cohesion; they seem to appeal to shared knowledge and can keep the non-impaired conversational partner engaged in the effort to co-construct meaning"

1.2 Terminology

The different roles that general extenders have in discourse have had its effect on their terminology. Aijmer (2002: 213) refers that 'general extender' (as a term) was introduced by Overstreet (1999 and 2005), but he finds that they are better called "referent-final tags, since they are placed after a referent in the preceding text". His claim is that they come after a referent in the final position to add other information similar to that referent; and in doing so, they are better considered as "tags".

However, Sauer and Waxenberger (2012: 227) add that all scholars agree that 'general extender' is suitable as a term for those phrases that "conceptually lengthen other words", but this is not to say that it is the only name of the class. According to them, they are called: *set marking tags, utterance-final tags, generalized list completers, extension particles, vague category identifiers, and discourse extenders.*

Bazanella (2011: 26-7) calls them as "devices of linguistic indeterminacy", because he admits that their meanings are "typically blurred or indefinite". It is clear that he neglected their referential role and concentrated on their vagueness. He points that in their literature they have also termed: *general words, approximators, vague additives, vague words, vague word clusters, and vague categories.*

1.3 Forms of General Extenders

For Dagliamonte (2010: 336-9) general extenders follow "a basic template" in their form. First of all, general extenders require the two connectors (*and* and *or*), then they are followed by a quantifier (such as *all*, *every*, *some*, etc.) and/or a generic noun (such as *thing*, *stuff*, *one*, etc.), and the comparative (such as *kind of*, *sort of*, *of that kind*, etc.). The quantifier and the generic noun must, at all cases, follow the conjunctions (*and* and *or*); the generic noun is the most necessary element, and the comparative is optional in the construction of the general extenders. The following table clarifies this construction:

Table (1): The Prototypical General Extender Form (Following Dagliamonte, 2010: 337)

Connector	Quantifier	Generic	Comparative
<i>and</i> <i>or</i>	<i>all</i> <i>every</i> <i>some</i> <i>any</i> <i>the odd</i> <i>the whole</i> <i>no</i>	<i>thing (s)</i> <i>stuff</i> <i>people</i> <i>one</i> <i>where</i> <i>crap</i> <i>baloney</i>	<i>like that</i> <i>sort of</i> <i>kind of</i> <i>type of</i> <i>of that kind</i> <i>of that sort</i> <i>of that type</i> <i>around there</i> <i>to that effect</i>

Dagliamonte, further, argues that the "comparatives do not materialize unless a generic noun is present"; and the quantifier must be followed by the generic noun, it cannot come alone. The followings are the possible constructions for him:

A. Connector + Generic + Comparative

4. *It was pretty general, you-know, nice and quiet, and stuff like that.*

B. Quantifier + Generic + Comparative

5. *They're turning sixteen in October or November something like that.*

C. Connector + Quantifier + Generic + Comparative

6. *I can see all this multiculturalism and everything like that.*

D. Connector + Generic

7. *A lot of them were listening to the performances and things.*

E. Connector + Quantifier + Generic

8. *I think it was like grade-seven or something.*

(ibid. 338)

Pichler and Levey (2010: 7-8) have the same view about the form of general extenders. They use the following schema: "AND/OR [PRO FORM] (LIKE THAT)". The pro form, according to them, includes quantifiers and "generic referents such as *thing*, *things*, *other*, *others*, *stuff*, and parentheses indicate optional lexical material". As it is clear, they prefer to indicate those optional elements as "parentheses" instead of 'comparatives' above.

Pichler (2010: 33) stresses that specific nouns (referents) may and can be used in the construction of general extenders. Specific nouns, if occur, must follow the quantifier (if exists) and precede the generic nouns, as in the following:

9. *Jet skies involve propellers and mechanical stuff like that.*

He adds that:

"different surface forms of general extenders are related by virtue of their common function of marking the preceding element as a member of a set. On this basis, the general extender system can be treated as a closed set"

(ibid. 35)

Pichler concludes that the different forms of general extenders are due to the different functions that they perform in discourse.

1.4 Kinds of General Extenders

General extenders fall into two basic Kinds: *adjunctive* and *disjunctive*. Every type is discussed on its own below.

1.4.1 Adjunctive General Extenders

Valor et al. (2010: 178-79) state that this kind includes extenders that begin with *and*, which would include *and that*, *and so on*, *and stuff*, *and things like that*, *and all that*, *and everything*, *and so forth*, etc. For them, adjunctive general extenders are more frequent than disjunctive forms between speakers.

Dagliamonte (2010: 337) also stresses that adjunctive forms are marked by *and*, and the extender used after *and* is used to generalize the "members of the set to which the referent belongs". He calls this as the "additive function" because adjunctive general extenders are used to inform the speaker that there is more in addition to the referent (and of the same type) used in his/her speech; for this reason they are called as adjunctive general extenders. Dagliamonte finds that *and stuff* is the most dominant adjunctive form that can generalize almost every set of referents.

According to Cheshire (2007: 161-62) those adjunctive forms indicate that "there is more, thus indexing shared knowledge or experience"; he admits that adjunctive forms require that listeners have knowledge of the set members of the referent used. He adds that adjunctive general extenders function as positive politeness devices (ibid. :173). Here, Pichler and levey (2010: 8) admit that adjunctive forms are used at the end of utterances to indicate that speakers are speaking politely, or at least they use them to inform listeners that they are going on well with the conversation, such as in the following examples:

10. *You have to speak clearly and stuff.*

11. *There's no sort of racial tension and things like that.*

(ibid.: 6)

1.4.2 Disjunctive General Extenders

Dagliamonte (2010: 337) maintains that adjunctive general extenders are marked by the connector *or*. The most used forms of disjunctive general extenders are those followed by the quantifiers *some* and *any*, such as *or something*, *or anything*. Other examples are *or whatever*, *or things like that*, *or the like*, *or more*, *or such*, *or others*, etc.

Cheshire (2007: 161-82) admits that disjunctive general extenders signal that "there are alternatives with consequent implications for the speaker's projected need to be accurate or specific", i.e., adjunctive forms indicate that what is more is not necessarily of the same type of the referent used in an utterance, they provide alternatives to the referents used in utterances. Actually, it is left to the listener to choose whether he/she understands the referent used in an utterance as being extended to include items (anything) of the same type of that referent, or he/she determines other alternative items that match the meaning intended by the speaker, and this is why they are called as disjunctive general extenders.

In this regard, Sauer and Waxenberger (2012: 230-31) write that the primary function of disjunctive general extenders:

"is to indicate the existence of potential alternatives to those offered ... as they indicate potential alternatives to those offered, they are related to the accuracy of a statement, or the appropriateness of a suggestion. Accuracy of a statement means that there is a lack of certainty in what has been said, as it presents options or approximations. In this lack of

*commitment to something mentioned, suggests
the presence of negative politeness strategies"*

Sauer and Waxenberger suggest that disjunctive forms permit the listeners to add new options or alternatives to those presented by the speaker. Consider the following example for more clarification:

12. Let the place about the ladder be anointed with costus oil, orris oil, or things like that.

(Sauer and Waxenberger, 2012: 332)

According to Sauer and Waxenberger, the speaker gives two options as examples of oils that can be used, allowing the listener to select one of them or a similar one with the same characteristics and properties. This is what Dagliamonte (2010: 337) calls the "alternative function" of disjunctive general extenders.

Cheshire (2007: 182) also agrees with Sauer and Waxenberger above that disjunctive forms function as negative politeness expressions, and that they are less frequent than adjunctive forms between speakers; therefore, adjunctive and disjunctive general extenders should not be treated as one "uniform group", they should be separated in their use.

1.5 Functions of General Extenders

Santaemilia (2003: 176-77) admits the fact that general extenders are semantically empty expressions, but although this fact is true they serve different important functions in discourse. For Santaemilia, general extenders serve "two broad macro-functions: compensatory and strategic". The compensatory function appears when speakers do not know specific information, maybe because of a weakness in their memory, they may then compensate for these "deficiencies" by using a general extender; "they are then being truthful in not giving more specific information than they know".

The strategic function appears when speakers themselves choose to be vague although they have the information they need in their utterances;

"they are using general extenders strategically to conform to perceived listener expectations, thereby generating affective implicatures and furthering interpersonal aims"

(ibid. 177)

Ketelä (2005: 120) points that general extenders are not only empty expressions "whose purpose is to get processing of time, but they are used to serve divers functions". According to him, those functions can be of two groups: those concerning information and those concerning interaction. A given general extender is used in the first group in situations:

"where the speaker feels that he wants to give the right amount of information that is appropriate for the communication situation at hand, but not burden the listener with redundant and unnecessary information that would only obstruct the message"

This function is illustrated in the following example:

13. *Quite a few of the Rotumans live as migrants in Australia and new Zealand USA and so on.*

(ibid.: 121)

Ketelä states that the speaker (*in 13*) above uses the general extender *and so on* to inform that the countries in the above example are only "exemplars of a larger set"; if the speaker mentions the whole list of the countries to which Rotumans immigrate would obviously be too long and redundant. On the other hand, Ketelä admits that there are other situations where the speaker lacks specific information, so he/she resorts to a general extender as he/she cannot

give a more precise utterance; the speaker (*in 13*) above may not know other countries that Rotumans may immigrate to.

The second group of functions is related to the communication process between speakers and listeners. According to Ketelä, a general extender maybe used "to create an informal and friendly atmosphere, and sometimes even to add a humorous effect to an utterance".

Some other important functions of general extenders are the followings, as pointed by Suzanne (2005: 219):

1. They show vagueness, or that the speaker isn't sure about what he/she is saying.
2. They show that the speaker has come to the end of his/her turn and invites the listener to say something on the same topic.
3. They create solidarity between speakers, by suggesting that the listener knows as much about the topic as the speaker (and so the speaker doesn't have to list all the members of the set) or that the listener has the same opinion as the speaker.
4. They may just 'punctuate' speech by splitting it up into manageable chunks like full stops do in writing.

2. Procedures

This section deals with the practical side of the study; it shows some information on the selection of the sample, the test that has been followed, and the results that have been identified. To achieve the main aim of this study, certain procedures are followed in order to be able to extract the weak and strong points that students have towards general extenders in English.

2.1 The Sample Selection

The sample of the study is reflected by the students of the fourth stage in the Translation Department, College of Arts at Tikrit University; the number of the students selected is 40. It is thought that

it is better to choose the final stage as the sample of the study because it is supposed that they have wide information about the language they are studying.

2.2 Description of The Test

The test of this study is constructed to match the hypotheses presented earlier. Therefore, it is divided into two parts. The first part shows whether the students are able to realize those general extenders by themselves. The second part shows whether they have the ability to realize the main kinds of general extenders. Each test contains ten items to provide a chance for the students to have more than one general extender.

2.3 The Scoring Scheme

The two questions are scored out of 20 marks; each item in both questions has been given one mark. Both incorrect and neglected items have been given zero mark.

2.4 Test Reliability

Ingram (1974: 15-16) refers to the reliability of the test as the consistency of scores obtained by the same individuals on different occasions and different sets of equivalent items. A split-half method procedure has been followed in this study, the reliability of the test is measured by correlating the odd and even scores of the students.

Harris (1969:16) points out that the reliability coefficient must be between (1.0), denoting perfect reliability, and zero, denoting absence of reliability. The reliability coefficient of this test is measured to be (0.90), therefore it is considered to be perfect.

2.5 Test Administration

The test was administered to 40 students in the final stage in the Translation Department, college of Arts on the 23rd of April 2013.

Some instructions were given to the students on how to fill the items. The test took half an hour to be completed.

3 The Results of the Test

The answers of the students have been identified; their errors have been extracted and classified according to the aspects of the test. The followings show the results on both parts of the test.

3.1 The Results of the First Area of the Test

The first question of the test is built essentially to find out whether the students are able to realize what is meant by a general extender in English. Table (2) illustrates the main results of this question.

Table (2): Students' Responses in the First Question of the Test

No. of Item	No. of Correct Answers		No. of Incorrect Answers	
1	10		30	
2	7		33	
3	8		32	
4	12		28	
5	5		35	
6	9		31	
7	13		27	
8	12		28	
9	8		22	
10	11		39	
Total with Percentage	95	23%	305	77%

As it is clear from the table above, 305 errors are recorded for the students with a percentage of 77%. This rate indicates that the subject under discussion is not familiar to the students; they failed to respond correctly in this area of the test.

3.2 The Results of the Second Area of the Test

In this part of the test, the question requires that the students determine the exact kind of the general extenders presented in the ten items of this question. The results are shown in Table (3).

Table (3): Students' Responses in the Second Question of the Test

No. of Item	No. of Correct Answers		No. of Incorrect Answers	
1	13		27	
2	9		31	
3	6		34	
4	4		36	
5	10		30	
6	5		35	
7	9		31	
8	12		28	
9	7		33	
10	4		36	
Total with Percentage	79	19%	321	81%

This table shows that 321 errors are recorded for the students (out of 400 response) indicating that 81% of the students are weak in determining the exact kind of general extenders presented in the items of this question.

3.3 The Results of the Whole Test

Actually, what has been found here is a real problem that encounters the students in the Translation Department. The results of the whole test indicates this conclusion, as appears in Table (4).

Table (4): Students' Responses in the Whole Test

No. of Question	No. of Errors	Percentage
Q.1	305	77%
Q.2	321	81%
Total	626	79%

The results of the whole test show that the students completely failed to respond to it. 79% of them have no idea about general extenders which are thought to be very important expressions in English, as appears in the data above. This problem is due to the reason that the subject has not been given attention by teachers; especially with the fact that the subject is not included in the syllabus of the study in the Translation Department. It is necessary, then, that the academic persons should pay attention to the subject as to include it in the programme of language teaching.

4. Conclusions

The followings are the main conclusions of this study:

1. All extenders have a non-specific general reference; they extend utterances indicating that there is more to be mentioned than what is said.
2. All linguists agree that general extenders fall into two main kinds, adjunctive and disjunctive. Extenders follow the conjunction *and* in the first kind; it is used to refer to anything that is of the same type of the referent mentioned in an utterance. Extenders follow

the connector *or* in the second kind, and is used to refer to anything that might give alternatives to the referent used in an utterance.

3. General extenders serve many functions in discourse, and it seems throughout the study that linguists have no one unified view about those functions; every linguist has his own view regarding the function of general extenders, except that many of them agree that general extenders serve a 'compensatory' and 'strategic' function.
4. The complicated view about the functions may be due to the characteristic of 'vagueness' that general extenders have. Many scholars view the term to be associated with this word.
4. The main conclusion arrived at in this study is that the subject constitutes a problem to the students in the Translation Department. General extenders are very important linguistic expressions, and are considered as a part of the language they are learning; despite this fact the students do not realize them. It has been proved throughout the procedures of this study that 79% of the students know nothing about general extenders and their simple main kinds.

5. Appendices

A:

Q1: Try to identify the general extender in each of the following sentences (20 Marks):

The Sentences	The General Extender
1. That man tried to greet me or something.	
2. Don't tell me how to drive and stuff.	
3. Marry wants to invite you to the party or something like that.	

The Sentences	The General Extender
4. I feel a headache, I need an aspirin or some sort of thing.	
5. You may call her a genius or anything like that.	
6. I felt oddly disturbed by the incident and everything.	
7. She's very dissatisfied with her current job and all that.	
8. She wanted to be a dancer or something like that.	
9. I don't know whether it's the adult sheep or whatever.	
10. He told me about all his health problems, including his arthritis and so on.	

B:

Q2: Try to determine the kind of the following underlined general extenders whether adjunctive or disjunctive (20 Marks):

The Sentences	The Kind of the General extender
1. Sit down and calm yourself, take a sedative <u>or whatever</u> .	
2. She said there wasn't any problem <u>or anything</u> .	
3. What are you doing tonight? Do you want to go out <u>or something</u> ?	
4. She told me everything about her kids <u>and so forth</u> .	

5. Some arguments embedded narratives, exemplums, anecdotes <u>and the like</u> .	
6. It is not necessary for pauses, exclamations, asides <u>and the like</u> to be represented in your paper.	
7. I love drinking water <u>and stuff</u> .	
8. We have made arrangements for the party <u>and everything</u> .	
9. People now put their hair blond <u>and that</u> .	
10. I like watching sport <u>and stuff things like that</u> .	

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