

Investigation of the students' ability to Identify the Sentence Pattern.

Dr. Madeha Saif AL-Deen
College of Education for Women
English Dept.

Abstract

The research aims at investigating students' ability to identify the sentence patterns.

It is hypothesized that: there are significant difference in third year students' ability to identify the sentence patterns. For the purpose of achieving the aim, third year students for the academic year 2007-2008 who are studying in College of Education for Women/ English department constitute the sample of the research.

In order to verify the hypothesis of the study , the researcher has developed a test which consists of (18) items .The researcher has designed this test carefully after consulting a number of instructors and specialists in the field of ELT. The test is then given to a jury members who have a greed on its validity for administration. Then ,the test is given to a sample of (10) students with the purpose of determining a number of factors including:

1. Item difficulty.
2. Item discriminatory power.

The test reliability is computed through using the test-retest method. The test in its final version has been given to a sample of the research .the reliability index is 0.85.

Furthermore, the test formula has been used to find out the significant difference between the theoretical mean and the experimental mean regarding the students' ability through identifying sentence patterns.

Analysis of Variance has been used to find out the significant differences concerning each sentence pattern.

After analyzing the data statistically the researcher found out that:

1. Sentence pattern number 1, 2, 3, and 4 are well identified by third year students.
2. Sentence pattern number 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are not identified by students.

It has been found that there is statistically significant differences at the of 0.001 level of significance in the students' performance regarding the identifying of every sentence pattern. This means that the hypothesis is verified.

In the light of the findings of this research , relevant conclusion are drawn, and a number of recommendations and suggestions are made.

1.1 Introduction.

The structure of knowledge emphasizes the selection of what is relevant and important to teach. It is ridiculous to think that the structure of knowledge movement was stressed only in the 1960 and 1970s. Determining the structure of the English language and any language for that matter, is very important. Much wasting of time occurs if teachers teach what is irrelevant and unimportant. The structure of knowledge movement also emphasized that students learn these ideas inductively . Inductive learning today is very important . Students like to discover rather than receive knowledge through lecture or heavy use of explanations. The problem is contextual and not outside the present learning activity being pursued .(Ediger, 1999:109).

Thus a problem is determined by students with teacher guidance to identify the sentence patterns .

Su (2001:84) states that students be able to learn how to write accurately if they are taught using explicit, systematic, and repetitive structured sentence patterns.

The research addresses the value of pattern in language learning, the one area neglected over the past two decades is the importance of structured patterns in writing .

There are many way in which the same combination of facts can be “packaged” in sentences . Students need to be aware of some

of the main option for varying the structures within a sentence , for example by using subordinate clauses and passives.

These options allow information to “follow” through a sentence so that it is clear which parts are most important .They also improve the flow of information within the whole text, because they help the writer to integrate each sentence with those on either side of it. When we write, we try to establish links in the reader’s mind as quickly as possible . So the context –what the reader already has in mind –determines the most effective sentence pattern (Yates and Kenkel,2002:30-45).

Ordinary main clause and subordinate clauses offer a convenient range of different solutions to the problems of signaling importance , but there is also a range of special patterns that expand the range of possibilities even further.

(1) There is a large cat in your garden.

There takes over the role of subject from the basic subject a large cat, so a large cat occurs later, and has greater importance than it would have in the sentence:

(2) A large cat is in your garden.

In this pattern the basic subject is delayed till the end of the sentence where it can have greater importance. However another element has to move out of that position, so the two elements swap places.

e.g. (3) In your garden is a large cat (Ibid).

1.2 Aim.

The aim of the research is to measure the students’ ability to identify sentence patterns.

1.3 Hypothesis.

It is hypothesized that:

There is statistical significant differences among the Iraqi college students’ ability in identifying sentence patterns by exposing them to a achievement test.

1.4 Procedures.

To verify the hypothesis , the following procedures are followed:

1. The sample of learners: A stratified random sample of students is chosen from College of Education for Women.
2. The tool: A test containing of (18) items.
3. Statistical means: Chi-square, Difficulty level, Discrimination power, ANOVA, Pearson formula, T-test for one sample.
4. Analysis of the results of the test and drawing of conclusions.

2.Theoretical Background.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Patterns.

A person learning English as a foreign language may be tempted to form sentences by analogy.

For example ,(4) he hears or sees such sentences as please tell me the meaning and please show me the way (an indirect object by a direct object).By analogy he forms incorrect sentence please explain me the meaning (instead of please explain the meaning to me) Hornby (1974:15) .

Stageberg states that we do not speak English by merely stringing word together in some random fashion. Instead, we carefully arrange our words, for the most part unconsciously, into patterns. In English we use nine sentence patterns and a multitude of sub-patterns. Included in these nine basic sentence patterns are specific sentence positions. Each position in each pattern is the home-slot of a particular grammatical meaning (1981:169).

The sentence can be defined as the largest structural unit in terms of what the grammar of a language is organized. According to the traditional grammar "the expression of a complete thought". Most analyses recognize classification of "sentence patterns" into simply, complex or compound types, i. e. consisting of one subject-predicate unit, as apposed to more than one (Crystal, 2003: 414-415).

All the parts of sentences are related by grammar and meaning; the parts work together to express a thought or idea . Every simple sentence has a subject and a verb (Feigenbaum, 1985:3).

All the sentences consist of two parts: the part is the noun phrase and is called the subject and the second part is the verb phrase as the predicate (AL-Hamash, 1976:143). In this we see the expression of each pattern where this expansion lies on the predicate.

Stageberg (1981:198) states that the grammatical meaning of the subject in pattern 1(N be Adj) is “that which is described”.

Consider Alexander(1979:5) “A place to Wait” pattern (2). Stageberg says that pattern 2 (N be Adv) differs from pattern 1 in these respects:

1. The verb be in this pattern usually has the meaning of “be located” or “occur”.
2. Pattern 2 is not capable of taking the pattern 1 expansion.
3. The third position is occupied by a type of uninflected word. Words of this types include here, there, up, down, in, out, over, through, above, before, after, etc, are partially and / or irregularly inflected with the forms upper , uppermost, inner, in most.

e.g .

(5)The ping pong table is downstairs.

(6)The balls are out doors (1981:200).

The meaning of pattern 3(N1 be N1) is “be identified, or classified as”. The first N1 (subject) has the grammatical meaning of “that which is identified”. The second N1 means grammatically “that which identifies the subject” and is called the subjective complete.

e.g.

(7) My mother is a doctor (Stageberg,1981:201).

In pattern 4 (N Lv Adj) the verb is called a linking verb, as it links the adjective with the subject (Stageberg, 1981:202).

Feigenbaum (1985:18) admits that ‘this sentence pattern is used for a condition’. The subject is described (with an adjective) or identified (with a noun or noun equivalent) by the subject complement.

e.g.

(7) The telephone calls be came relatively inexpensive(Ibid).

The number of linking verbs that may occupy the verbal position in this pattern is very small. Among them are remain, seem, taste, smell, etc.

Sentences that follow pattern (5) should not be confused with those in which the noun after the verb does not have the same referent as the first noun.

e.g.

(8) My brother became a doctor , other

(9)My brother was seeking a doctor.

The pattern 5 (N1 Lv N1) as in pattern 3, the second noun means ‘that which identifies the subject’, and is called the subjective complement (Stageberg, 1981: 204).

Pattern 6 (I N INV)is used to describe an action or activity . An intransitive verb is self-sufficient ; it can stand alone with its subject .(Ibid:204-205)

e.g.

(10)The sportsman fished .

It can be modified by words and word groups known as adverbs and adverbials.

e.g.

(11) The sportsman fished early (Ibid) .

Sometimes , the action verb is followed by a prepositional phrase and the verb is still intransitive as long as it does not take a direct object.

e.g.

(12) In few weeks my cousin will arrive with my uncle (Tomasello, 1992: 47).

In pattern 7 (N1 TrV) the verb is completed by a noun or pronoun. The verb has the grammatical meaning of “undergoes of the action” or “that affected by verb”.

e.g.

(13) She saw herself (Stageberg, 1981:207-208).

“Sentence patterns with transitive verbs are the ones that can be changed into the passive voice”(Feigenbaum, 1985:5).

e.g.

(14) Your cat is chasing our dog.

(15) Our dog is being chased by your cat (Tomasello, 1992: 47).

In pattern8 (N1 TrV N2 N3) the grammatical meaning of the indirect object is “beneficiary of the action of the verb plus-direct-object”(Stageberg,1981:210-211).

e.g.

(16) The mother bought the girl a dress (I bid).

In pattern 9 (N1 Trv N2) plus one : a.N2 b. Adjective c. pronoun d. Adverb (of place) e. verb, present participle f. verb past participle g. preposition phrase h. Infinitive phrase with to be.

e.g.

(17) He considered her brilliant(Stageberg, 1981: 212).

2. Previous Studies.

2.1 Nomura and Kakehi (2003).

This study aims at testing the children through the analysis of longitudinal Child data of Japanese-and English- acquiring children. There was also a secondary aim , the cross-linguistic comparison of the developmental process of English and Japanese sentence patterns.

Two analyses corresponding to these two purposes were constructed. The results showed that the target English –acquiring child became faster and more productive concerning verb modifier frames of the target language during the fourth year of life. They also showed that, from the third to fourth years of life, the number of sentence patterns for the same verb increases in Japanese, while it remains about the same in English. The results imply that the target language of children began to form verb-general categories and rules (i.e. the grammar of the target language) during the fourth year of life .Signs of “gradual” grammatical development were also found in them.

2.2 Rau (2008)

This study aims at answering the following question :what effect does the repetitive application of numbered sentence patterns have on students' ability to perform on the English portion of the ACT examination?.

The sample of the study is fourteen 11th grade subjects. The subject is exposed to structured sentence patterns for sixty minute sessions over a six month period from October to March. The subjects learned sentence patterns by taking notes, creating patterned sentences, analyzing patterns in expository texts, creating patterned paragraphs, and creating a patterned essay.

The results of the present study demonstrate that structured sentence patterns significantly improve students' writing and achievement on the ACT English Test among culturally-diverse adolescents. The finding stresses the importance of providing explicit, systematic sentence patterns to students.

2.2 Li and Croft (2008).

The aim of this study is to provide a user with a list of materials that are relevant and contain new information with respect to a users' information need. The goal is for the users to quickly get useful information without going through a lot of redundant information, which is a tedious and time-consuming task.

This study hypothesized that: re-ranking process would improve the performance of finding relevant sentences. The researchers compare the performance of finding relevant sentences with and without re-ranking. The comparison results verify this hypothesis at low recall. This indicates that pattern-based approach makes a larger difference at the step of detecting novel sentences that at the step of finding relevant sentences. Throughout the paper ,sentences that contain query-related patterns are called relevant sentences. Sentences that contain new patterns are called novel sentences. The proposed pattern –based approach was trained with the data from the TREC 2002 novelty track and tested on 100 queries from the TREC 2003 and 2004 novelty tracks.

The experimental results show that the pattern-based approach significantly out performs all three baselines in terms of precision at low recall, but only for queries where specific answer-related patterns can be formulated.

3.1 The Population and Sample.

The population of the research is all the college students studying at the College of Education / for Women, University of Tikrit. One hundred and seventy two college students.

The sample of the research is thirty female students.

3.2 The Test.

An achievement test is constructed to fulfill the aim of the present research. The test aims at investigating students' ability to identify sentence patterns.

The general objective of the test is to verify the hypotheses of research. The test consists of (18) items.

3.2.1 Test Validity.

Validity of the test is the extent to which it measures what it supposed to measure and nothing else(Heaton,1975:153).

Two types of validity are considered important :content and face validity .Therefore, both types have been adopted for the purpose of that research.

3.2.2 Content Validity.

Mehrans and Lehman(1973:290) state that content validity is particularly important for achievement tests.

Anastasi (1976:134-135) also supports this idea by saying that" content validity involves essentially the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behaviour and content domains to be measured."

To ensure content validity, much attention has been given to the content of the syllable items of the third year College of Education / for Women.

3.2.3 Face Validity.

In the words of Harris(1969:7) face validity is “the way the best looks to the examinees, test administrators, educators, and the like”.

Therefore, face validity is ensured by exposing the test to a jury of experts in the field of English language and the Teaching of English as a foreign language.

Chi-Square has been used to compare the agreeable and disagreeable responses of the experts to the test items.

Therefore, the items that gain significant differences on the level of significance have been retained.

The jury members are:

1. Prof. Husain AL-Yasiri(Ph.D) College of Education for Women/ Baghdad University.
2. Asst.prof. Layla Yousif (Ph.D) College of Education for Women/Baghdad University.
3. Asst.prof. Duha Atalla (Ph.D) College of Basic Education ?AL-Mustansiriyah University.
4. Inst. Hanan Khatab (M.A) College of Education for Women /Tikrit University.
5. Inst.Yasir Saleh (M.A) College of Education for Women /Tikrit University.
6. Abdul-muna;m Khalaf(M.A) College of Education for Women /Tikrit University.

3.2.4 Pilot Administration.

In order to estimate the time needed and to have an idea about the requirements of the final administration of the test, ten students from the morning classes selected randomly from the College of Education for Women / University of Tikrit.

After the first application of the test, item analysis is carried out to check the difficulty level and discriminator power of each item included in the test . The difficulty of a test item is indicated by the percentage of students who got the right answer (Gronlund, 1976:211).

The following formula is used to find out the level of

$$DL = \frac{HC + LC}{\text{Total number of the sample}}$$

According to Madson , “a test is considered too easy if more than 90 percent get it right .And item is considered too difficult if fewer than 30 percent get it right”(1983:181-182). Where as the discriminatory power can be obtained by subtracting the number of students in the lower group who get the right item (RL) from the number of students in the upper group who get the item right (RU) and dividing by one half of the total number of students included in item analysis (1/2).

The formula used is :

$$DP = \frac{RU - RL}{\frac{1}{2} T}$$

Table(1)
Difficulty Level (DL) and Discriminating Power(DP) of the Test Items.

DL%	DP%
68	51
56	37
72	55
62	50
56	37
37	30
51	37
64	37
61	51
55	37
66	33
59	37
59	51
66	44

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52	44
65	44
37	51
57	40

3.2.4 Test Reliability.

One of the good characteristics of a good test is reliability. Madsen states that “a reliable test is one that produces essentially the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the test remain the same”(1983:179; Lado, 1961:330).

One of the methods used to estimate the reliability of a test is test-retest method. According to this method ,the test is reliable when the scores of the two administrations are correspondent, or there is just a little difference.

The test has been administered to a sample of 10 students twice with two weeks interval (Adams, 1964: 85). The reliability coefficient is obtained by comparing the scores of the first administration to those of the second one. Pearson correlation coefficient formula has been used to find out the correlation coefficient which is 0.85 and this is considered high (Hedges, 1966:22).

3.2.5 The Scoring Scheme.

The test consists of (18) items . Each item is marked as either correct or incorrect. An item correctly rendered is given one point, an incorrect item is given zero. Concerning the items that are left un answered by the testees , they are considered wrong and given zero.

3.2.6 Test Administration.

Having made sure that the test is valid , reliable discriminative and has a suitable level of difficulty, the researcher administrated the test to a sample of (30) students in the College of Education for Women. It has been given to the students under the same conditions.

Moreover, the students have been asked to write their responses on the test papers so as not to waste time and effort.

AL-Hamash and Younis (1985:205) state that “a good test should be economic both in time and stationary”. This has been ascertained fully with our test.

3.3 Statistical Means.

In the way of summary, it is necessary to point out the statistical means used in this research:

1. Pearson's Formula for correlation coefficient has been used to compute the reliability of the test (Glass and Stanley, 1970 :114).
2. Chi-Square has been used to determine the degree of agreement and disagreement among the jury members who have been consulted to decide the face validity of the test (Roscoe, 1969:192).
3. Difficulty-Level Formula has been used to measure the difficulty level of the post achievement test items.
4. Discriminating-Power Formula has been used to measure the discrimination power the post achievement test items.
5. Analysis of Variance has been used to determine whether there is any significant differences among the students' achievement.
6. T-test for one sample has been used to determine whether there is any significant difference among the means of the students regarding the analysis of sentence patterns.

4. Data Collection.

After administering the test on a sample of the third grade students and analyzing their responses, it has been found out that the experimental mean of the sample of learners is (30.45) with analysis of variance (9.663).

Then, it is compared to the theoretical mean of the test by using the T-test formula of one sample . It becomes clear that the mean score of the sample of the learner is lower than the theoretical mean with statistical significance.

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Analysis of data indicates that the third year students' performance is very low regarding the identification of sentence patterns. This is probably due to: (1) the complexity of the sentence patterns, (2) L1 interference, (3) inadequate application of the rules, (4) the unawareness of the instructor of the significance of sentence patterns.

In order to determine whether there is any significant difference between the mean score of the sample of the students and the theoretical mean concerning every sentence pattern as shown in Table (2) T-value and standard deviation have been computed.

The results obtained are as follows:

It has been found out that students' performance in the following sentence patterns (1,2 ,3, and 4) are good since the experimental mean is higher than the theoretical mean. This indicates that there is significant difference at the level of (0.001) level of significance, whereas the performance of the students regarding the other sentence patterns (5,6,7,8, and 9) is low because the experimental mean is lower than the theoretical mean with statistically significant difference at the (0.001) level of significance.

Table (2)
Scores of the third Grade students on the Identifying Sentence Patterns and the Appropriate Statistics.

marks	X	S	M	Calculated t	Tabulated t	Level of Significance
P1	17.47	4.978	16	2.95	2.617	0.001
P2	7.13	2.330	6	4.85	3.373	0.001
P3	1.83	.888	1.5	3.72	3.373	0.001
P4	17.65	4.338	16	3.80	3.373	0.001

The finding confirms the findings of the previous studies that investigate sentence patterns. Rau (2008) in her research states that repetitive application of numbered sentence patterns improve students' writing.

Li and Croft (2008) also indicate that patterns based approach significantly outperforms. The findings of Nomura and Kakehi (2003) study showed that the target English-acquiring child became faster and more productive concerning verb modifier frames of the target language at the early stages of learning.

5.1 Conclusion.

1. It has been found out that there are statistically significant differences among the performance of the students in third grade.
2. It has been found out that there are certain patterns which are identified more adequately. These are :1, 2, 3, and 4 .
3. There are certain marks which are not identified by the third grade college students. These are: P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9
4. It has been found out that pattern 8 and 9 are learned by analogy. This is crucial in 9 pattern acquisition (Rau, 2008:8).

5.2 Recommendations:

1. Emphasis should be given to the sentence patterns both in Arabic and English in relation to clarity of rules of use in written texts.
2. Emphasis should be given to the problematic sentence patterns.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research:

1. A study is needed to examine the efficiency of a program developed for teaching sentence patterns in the fourth grade of the College of Education for Women.
2. Another study can be carried out to find out what extent the sentence patterns of Arabic may influence the students' performance when sentence pattern in English.

Appendix(1)
Final Form

Tikrit University
College of Education for Women
English Department

Q1 . State the sentence pattern of the following sentences:

1. My friends are here.
2. His clear tender voice was quite lovely
3. Mr. James has been a teacher for forty years.
4. The cake on the table looks delicious.
5. At a very early age, John became a Buddhist.
6. In a few weeks my cousin will arrive.
7. The archer shot an arrow into the target.
8. Smith gave the employees arise.
9. Most people consider Jacobson a loyal friend.
10. The basketball team chose charlotte captain.
11. The sergeant found the recruit a rifle.
12. The waiter poured the coffee.
13. He hammered fast.
14. My sister remained an outstanding student.
15. The cyclist appears weary.
16. Harry is my favorite uncle.
17. The wolf is at the door.
18. That food is very good.

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