Study of English Clauses Errors in Syntactic Structures of Iranian Students

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to examine Study of English Clauses Errors in Syntactic Structure of Iranian Students at Bushehr Payam Noor University in Bushehr city. The role of error analysis in language teaching is always vital. Error analysis as one of applied linguistics subjects has been discussed among language teachers, syllabus designers, linguistics more than fifty years. They have recognized that it can be used as one of the learning strategies in helping to language teachers and learners in acquiring their target language. In this research work, 30 Iranian EFL students in the age range of 20 to 27 at under graduate level were participated. Outcome of this research paper showed that the number of errors of Iranian under-graduate students in the clause structure test was 594. The results of this article indicated that the learners need sufficient exercises to be conducted in the classroom in order to increase their knowledge of English clauses and reduce their errors.

Key words: Iranian Students, Error Analysis, Contrastive Analysis, Noun Clause, Adjective Clause, and Adverbial Clause

Introduction

The aim of this study is to reveal clauses errors of Iranian English learners at under graduate level at Payam Noor University in Bushehr, Iran. Before, we consider the role of error in language teaching. We investigate the place of grammar in language and then discuss briefly

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to clause structure in language. Khansir and Pakdel (2016) argued that every language has its grammar. Grammar is primarily concerned with the study of language. It explains to us the difficulties and problems involved in learning a language and it guides us to how language is effectively used in our day-to-day life. They added that grammar of a language can help us in order to make familiar with sentence structure. Thus, it enables us to understand how sentences are patterned and how they are used in our practical life for proper and effective communication. Freeman (2003, p. 13) mentioned that "grammar is an area of knowledge that linguists and language teachers study". Ur (1996, p. 75) argued that" grammar is sometimes defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences". Khansir (2008) indicated that language teachers and specialists are of the view that grammar can help first, second and foreign language learners develop linguistic competence as part of communicative competence in language learning. However, writing of language as one of the grammar subjects has always been a big problem in learning language is not only for non-native speaker of the target language but also for native speaker of the language. Based on the discussion, many researchers mentioned that writing is art and writer is artist, from of this point of view, the researchers believe that writing is not easy even for the native speaker (Khansir, et al, 2013).

However, clause structure as one of the grammar subjects always plays the key role in the improvement of language writing. Therefore, the acquisition of a good writing in the target language is needed to learn clause structure of the target language. Richards, et al (1992) mentioned that clause consists of a group of words which form a grammatical unit which contain a subject and finite verb. They added that a clause forms a sentence or part of a sentence. In generally, the function of clause is classified into three parts: noun, adjective, and adverb. Radford (1998, p. 256) added that "a clause is defined in traditional grammar as an expression which contains a subject and a predicate, and which may contain other types of expression as well (e.g. a complement and an adjunct)". In addition, an important point to note about a clause structure is that it is different from a phrase structure. Richards, et al (1992) argued that a phrase is a group of words which form a grammatical unit and thus, it does not contain a finite verb and does not have a subject –predicate structure.

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In this paragraph, before inquiring directly into error analysis, let us investigate contrastive analysis in language teaching. We come back to 1950s in which contrastive analysis has dominated the linguistic study of language teaching. In this time, the important of contrastive analysis hypothesis has been stated initially by Lado and subsequently has been taken up by his followers. According to contrastive analysis, the errors and difficulties that occur in learning of the second or foreign language learners are caused by the interference of their mother –tongue. Supporters of contrastive analysis believed that wherever the structure of the foreign language differs from the structure of the mother –tongue of the language learners, they argued that we can say both difficulty in learning and error in performance. Wilkins (1972) mentioned that "learning a foreign language is essentially learning to overcome these difficulties "(p.198). He added that based on contrastive analysis where the structures of the two languages are the same, no difficulty is anticipated and teaching is not necessary.

Khansir (2012a) argued that error Analysis as one of the branch of Applied Linguistics emerged in the sixties to reveal that learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language but also they reflected some universal strategies. He added that error analysis used in language teaching as a reaction to Contrastive Analysis Theory which considered native language interference as the major source of errors in second language learning what behavioristic theory suggested. Khansir and Hajivandi (2016, p.417) indicated that this theory revealed that errors are systematic; they can be used in order to give information to text book writers, teachers, and even learners in learning languages. In other words, the role of learner's errors in learning target language has always been as an integral part of language learning. Richards (1971, p. l) explained "the field of error analysis may be defined as dealing with the differences between the way people learning a language speak and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language". Language errors due to the influence of the mother tongue are called interlingual errors or due to the difficulty of the second/target language are called Intralingual and developmental errors. However, Khansir and Hajivandi (2016, p.418) argued that "error analysis is regarded as one of the most essential issues in second and foreign language learning".

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In discussion of statement of problem, it is felt that Iranian under graduate learners need more information about clauses such as noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause to get knowledge of English Language in order to use it in their writing. It seems worth mentioning that clause structure of English language is considered as an important learning strategy in learning writing in foreign language setting, especially in Iran. Thus, for better work and get more information on this paper work, the researcher tried to discuss with the other teachers and use their experience in order to manage and work effectively over this research. Finally, this paper attempted to reveal clauses' errors of the English students such as noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause at Payam Noor University in Bushehr city, and therefore, follow the objectives of this research paper such as a) to examine types of errors in target language; b) to compare types of errors in noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause; and c) to suggest remedial measures to overcome the committing of errors.

Thus, the following question and hypothesis are considered in this paper.

1. Is there a significant difference between noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause errors committed by Iranian EFL learners?

H1. There is a significant difference between noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause errors committed by Iranian EFL learners.

Literature Review

Many language researchers, who examined the error analysis hypotheses in the target language, have reported their results as follows:

Khansir (2013) examined the number of errors made by the Indian and Iranian students in English language. He selected 200 students from the two countries for collecting data in order to acquire knowledge of their English in written errors. The findings of his project showed that the total number of errors made by the Iranian learners was 3045 and that of their Indian peers' was 3274. His research results indicated that all errors types recorded in this paper related to the knowledge of the subjects on the basis of English writing. Schachter (1974) investigated learners' English relative clauses from Japanese, Arabic, Persian (Farsi) and Chinese. According

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to this paper, error analysis showed to the researcher just what difficulties the students have in fact, therefore; the difficulties in the target language showed up as errors in production or the frequency of occurrence of specific errors gave evidence of their relative difficulty. Khansir and Hajivandi (2016) considered essay writing of Iranian Medical learners errors at Bushehr University of Medical Sciences in Bushehr city, Iran. In this project, 160 medical learners in the age range of 18 to 23 as foreign language students participated in order to data collection. The result of this study showed that there was a significant difference between types of essay writing errors made by Iranian medical learners at Bushehr University of Medical Sciences. Findings of their research project showed that the Iranian medical students have not mastered on essay writing and structure of paragraph writing in their responses.

Farsi and Zarei (2013) investigated Iranian students' errors of English relative clauses. They selected thirty Iranian intermediate students from English Institute in Shiraz city, Iran. The results of their research work showed that the major of Iranian errors have been resulted from first language transfer, thus intralingua errors were responsible for other major errors. Zhao (2015) analyzed errors in English attributive clause made by college students in China. He considered why the learners make these errors. Findings of his study indicated that errors of the college students have been resulted of lack of systematic grammar knowledge, necessary vocabulary, language transfer and over-generalization. In addition, he suggested their teachers should teach grammar exactly and make students know each grammar rules exactly.

Khansir and Ilkhani (2016) analyzed a study of written grammatical errors of Iranian EFL learners at undergraduate level at Payam Noor University in Bushehr city, Iran. They selected 100 Iranian learners as participants in this study. Finally, this research work showed that there was a significant difference in types of written grammatical errors committed by Iranian undergraduate level learners.

Alotaibi (2016) examined 120 Kuwaiti English foreign language students were aware of the structure of relative clauses in English through measuring their ability to produce this structure. In order to reach his purpose in his study, he used a sentence combination task in order

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to measure the participants' ability to produce correct relative clauses in English. Thus, the test was used in order to analysis the types of error committed by the participants pertinent to relative clauses in English. The results of the study showed that Kuwaiti EFL learners may not be fully aware of the formation rules of relative clauses in English.

Baithy (2014) analyzed errors of the second grade students of SMA Darul Maarif in learning noun clause. He selected 21 students as his research participants, and then he used of the descriptive analysis. Outcome of this paper showed that the most common type of error was omission; the second type of the students' errors was misformation; the third type of the learners' errors in this research was misordering. Finally, the research indicated that the second grade students of SMA Darul Maarif still have many errors in learning noun clause.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper consists of the processes such as a) Data collection and b) Data analysis. Thus, three tests used in order to complete this project such as General English Proficiency Test, Background Questionnaire, and Clauses Structure Test .The General English Proficiency Test (Transparent) consisted of 50 multiple choice vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension items. The test was selected to assess the participant's level of proficiency in English. In administering the test, the researchers piloted the test for the target group. Thus, the researchers also piloted the Clause Structure Test.

Participants

The data for the study were thirty students in the age range of 20 to27 at under graduate level at Payam Noor University in Bushehr, Iran as EFL learners participated in this project work. The mother tongue of Iranian learners is Persian language. English language used as a foreign language. According to the above sentence, Khansir and Gholami Dashti (2014, p.38) argued that" in Iran English language as a subject is taught as a foreign language from middle (Guidance) school. Though it was introduced as a subject from middle school, the Iranian students accepted it as language to pass in the examination".

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Materials

The instruments utilized in this study consist of 1). A General English Proficiency Test; 2) A Background Questionnaire; and 3) A Clauses Structure Test. They are discussed briefly as follows:

1. General English Proficiency Test

In this study, The General English Proficiency (Transparent) consisted of 50 multiple choice vocabularies, grammar and reading comprehension items was selected to assess the participant's level of proficiency in English. In a administering the test, then, the researchers piloted the test for the target group. In addition, 15 students with the same level and similar characteristics to participants of this paper were selected in the pilot study. The General English Proficiency Test was found to be appropriate for the participants 'performing level. Its reliability through the K-R 21 formula turned out to be .71 and. 73to the undergraduate students of Payam Noor University in Bushehr.

2. Background Questionnaire

In this research project, the investigators had to develop a background questionnaire to get information on students. The questionnaire developed by the investigator consisted of some questions which were related to their information about parents, language attitude, etc. in addition; the subjects' parents in this project belonged to middle class and the middle income group. 3. Clauses Structure Test: in this project paper, Clauses Structure Test consisted of Noun Clause Test, Adverbial Clause Test, and Adjective Clause Test which was developed by the Researcher on the basis of syntactic competence of the learners covered in English textbooks designed for the undergraduate university level at Payam Noor University in Bushehr City, Iran. Clauses Structure Test is a test which aims to measure knowledge and syntactic competence of the learners in English language. In addition, this Clauses Structure Test was used in order to show the type of clause errors of Iranian students in this study. Thus, this test was piloted by the researchers.

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Procedures

In every research paper, the role of procedure of research is very important in order to reach the aim of the research work. In this research paper, the procedures were adapted divided into three steps, first development of questionnaire of this study; second administration of the questionnaire; finally data collection and analysis of collected data. Thus, all of them have been discussed in turn in this paragraph. The researchers tried to develop the test of their project work, and then they administered Back ground questionnaire of this research paper in order to get information about the subjects' education, parents' details, such as job, education, income etc. They administered the proficiency questionnaire of this study in order to get information about the level of English competence (proficiency level) of the participants. In addition, this test consisted of 50 multiple choice vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension items. Finally, the researchers of this study administered Clauses Structure Test has been taken from English grammar book (Contemporary English Grammar). The Clauses Structure Test administered in order to investigate the Iranian learners' English clause structure errors and improve their errors. However, the three tests of this study analyzed utilizing the computer programmed from SPSS.

In addition, the statistical analysis of this study used based on the following steps:
The first statistical analysis of this project consisted of General English Proficiency Test used in order to reach the proficiency level of the subjects. The second statistical analysis of this research work consisted of Background Questionnaire Test utilized in order to receive information about the subjects' education, parents' details, such as job, education, income etc. the third statistical analysis of this project consisted of Clauses Structure Test used by the investigators for getting the information on students' clause structure errors in English. The clause structure errors of the learners analyzed based on three steps: Classification of errors; Comparison of errors; and Suggestion of remedial.

Results and Discussion

This research paper considered the syntactic errors of Iranian EFL learners in English language.   An attempt was made here to classify the observed errors of noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause and categorize them. A further attempt was made to compare types

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of the syntactic errors (errors of noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause) of Iranian students. The test was specially chosen to examine the ability of the learners in applying the correct rules in the construction of the clauses in the English language. The test is classified into three major categories: noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause. The following tables emerge after analyzing errors committed in clauses by Iranian EFL learners at Payam Noor University in Bushehr city.

Table (1): Syntactic Errors

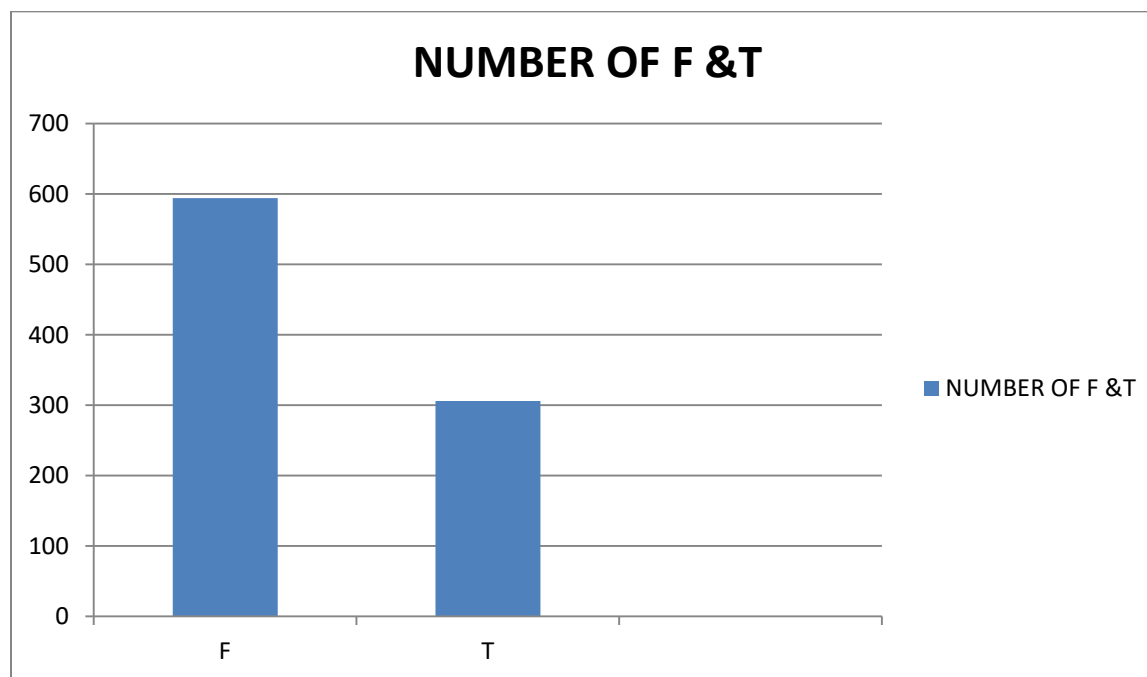| Test item	Correct response	Error response
	Number of response	Number of response
	306	594

Table (1) and its figure showed correct response and error response were made by the students in this project. However, the number of errors of the students in the clause structure test

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was 594 and then the number of correct responses of the subjects recorded in this test was 306. The table indicated that the subjects faced problems in applying the correct rules of in the construction of the clauses in the English language.

Table (2): English Clauses

Test item		
English Clauses	**Number of errors**	**Percent**
Adverbial Clauses	190	31.9
Adjective Clauses	264	44.5
Noun Clauses	140	23.6
Total	594	100

Based on table (2) the 594 errors which were used in the clause structure test for this paper research were classified into three major categories. Based on the category, the three major categories have been presented in table 2. Thus, table (2) showed that the largest number of errors made by the Iranian students was from realm of the Adjective Clauses (264); thus, the learners constituted 44.5 of errors for the adjective clauses in this research work. The minimum number of errors recorded in this test in this research was ' Noun Clauses'. The number of errors committed by the Iranian students in this area was 140 which came to 23.6 %. Iranian students' errors in the Adverbial Clauses were 190. They constituted 31.9 % of errors for the adverbial clauses.

Table (3): Adverbial Clauses

Test item	Number	Percent
Wrong use of adjective clauses for adverbial clauses	56	29.5
Wrong use of noun clauses for adverbial clauses	134	70.5
Total	190	100

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Table (3) pointed out errors committed in the use of adverbial clauses   by Iranian EFL students can be divided into different sub-groups depending upon the specific type of error. The errors relating to the adverbial clauses   classified into the sub-groups as follows:

1. Wrong use of adjective clauses for adverbial clauses
2. Wrong use of noun clauses for adverbial clauses

As it is observant in table (3) the number of Iranian student's errors in the   wrong use of adjective clauses for adverbial clauses was 56 which came to 29.5%. Thus, the number of Iranian student's errors in the wrong use of noun clauses for adverbial clauses was 134 which came to 70.5%.

Table (4): Adjective Clauses

Test item	Number	Percent
Wrong use of adverbial clauses for adjective clauses	104	39.4
Wrong use of noun clauses for adjective clauses	160	60.6
Total	264	100

Based on table (4), the cause of the errors in the use of adjective clauses committed by the Iranian students were wrong use of adverbial clauses for adjective clauses and wrong use of noun clauses for adjective clauses. The number of Iranian student's errors in the wrong   use   of adverbial clauses for adjective clauses was 104 which came to 39.4%. The number of Iranian student's errors in the wrong use of noun clauses for adjective clauses was 160 which came to 60.6.

Table (5): Noun Clauses

Test item	Number	Percent

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Wrong use of adjective clauses for noun clauses	51	36.4
Wrong use of adverbial clauses for noun clauses	89	63.6
Total	140	100

The total number of errors committed in the use of noun clauses by the Iranian students was 140. As it is observant in table (5), the number of Iranian student's errors in the wrong use of adjective clauses for noun clauses was 51 which came to 36.4%. The number of Iranian EFL students in the wrong use of adverbial clauses for noun clauses was 89 which came to 63.6%.

Clause plays a crucial role in English writing. It is generally used in the writing of English language learners in their written communication formally and informally. In teaching of English clauses, the English language teacher should be familiar with the rules of clauses structure in order to teach them to his /her students in ELT classroom.

The errors committed by the subjects in using the English clauses show that they did not have knowledge of the rules for using the clauses structure in English. . It may be partly because of the lack of their practice in their classroom. The Iranian learners should be taught use of clauses structure rules in English. The teacher should do some exercises containing various types of errors in the use of three categories of clauses: noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause and ask his / her students to correct the errors in the construction of the clauses in the English language. However, in order to avoid errors in the use of clauses, the Iranian students should be made familiar with the rules of clauses in English language. Therefore, the findings of this research work, which in many ways is similar to the findings of previous studies, showed that the Iranian foreign language students were not aware of rules of how to use of the clauses structures of English.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the clauses errors of Iranian EFL learners in English language. Based on this study, the errors of three major categories such as noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause were considered. However, clause has been known as one of the major topics of English language writing for EFL learners. This study showed that the

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number of errors of the students in the use of noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause was 594.

The research work indicated that there is a significant difference between noun clause, adjective clause, and adverbial clause errors committed by Iranian EFL learners. One of the sources of errors in this paper could be complexity of the English language writing in general and English clause structure in particular. This project revealed that Iranian EFL students in this study have not good knowledge of certain clause structures in English language. In general, error analysis is one of the major important topics of Applied Linguistics can be used in order to promote and improve language teaching strategies in ELT classroom.

Based on this study, Iranian EFL students should be encouraged to focus more their certain clause structures on actual errors in their own work. Iranian students should be taught English clauses rules   more than what is being done at present. Khansir (2012b) mentioned that most of the errors can be replaced by remedial measures through the instructional materials and teachings-learning strategies.

Finally, according to this research, the students need more teaching-learning to eliminate their errors. The researchers believe that this study will help the planners in identifying the problem areas and in framing syllabus for them.

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