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The Implementation Variety of Sentence Structures in Writing Essay

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A B S T R A C T
This research investigated the use of sentence structures by Iraqi EFL Learner with the focal sentence structures comprised of four types: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. A diagnostic test was prepared for participants in order to test their knowledge on these Sentences structures as well as writing in different forms. It was also found that more than half of the participants struggled (in identification as well as in production) of sentences with various structures. In particular they had difficulties to apply the theoretical knowledge of sentence construction in (Q2), while a number of them managed better in recognizing the type of sentence (Q1). These results highlight the importance of investigating the issues that Iraqi EFL learners face with sentence structures. In addition, the critical finding of this study is to inform teaching strategies to boost the understanding and production of different English sentence types.

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Chapter One :Introduction

The Problem

Many students find it difficult to use a range of sentence types in essay writing. Most essays contain far too many simple sentences and this makes the writing sound either boring or weak, or it makes it unclear. When sentences in an essay are written in the same pattern over and over, readers may lose interest even when there is a good idea to consider .This problem arises largely because students do not know what types of sentences they have at their disposal, or how to combine those sentences effectively. As a consequence, their essays may be short on flow, emphasis, and depth. Having a limited sentence variety can also influence grades, because having a clear and interesting writing is one of the key elements of school work evaluation .The goal of Variety in Sentence Structure is to assist students in expressing themselves clearly, enhance their ability to read and comprehension more effectively, and ultimately become better writers.

1.2 Aims

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the application of sentence variety in essay writing. Namely, this research investigates how students make use of different sentence structures and how sentence variety influences the clarity and quality of their writing .Also, this research will demonstrate the necessity of employing a wide range of sentence constructions to increase the readability of a text, to hold the reader's attention and to contribute to the writing effectiveness. It is anticipated that after this lesson students will have learnt what writing patterns they will employ appropriately in writing.

1.3 Hypotheses

This research is grounded on about the following hypotheses:

H_1: Employing a diverse range of sentence structures would positively affect essay writing quality. H_2: An essay with sentence variety is clearer and more interesting to read than an essay in which the sentence patterns are tedious.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between sentence structure variety and the overall quality of essay writing.

1.4 Procedures

This research is to be conducted through gathering a sample of student essays. The essays will be thoroughly skimmed and closely scrutinized for the kinds of sentence construction that will be examined under the sample should comprise simple ,compound and complex sentences. The numbers and varieties of such sentence patterns will be counted .After the foregoing analysis, the clarity, cohesion, and readability of the essays will be assessed. The scores can then be compared to see if varied sentence structure correlates with higher essay quality. In the end, conclusions will be made on the basis of the results of the study.

1.5 The Limits

The scope of this research is a handful of student essays and it is concerned with sentence structure variety only. Still other facets of writing, like word choice, grammar precision, and development of ideas, are not researched to the same extent .Also, the research is limited to one group of students and so may not be representative of all writing ability levels. Hence the results cannot be generalized either to all students or to other educational settings.

1.6 The Value

This study is worthwhile as it enables students to be aware of the significance of a diverse sentence structure in essay writing. At the same time, awareness of sentence types can help students make their writing clearer and more effective .It also informs teachers on common weaknesses in student writing, potentially enabling them to more effectively teach writing. To sum up, this research work benefits both writing and good academic performance.

Chapter Two :Literature Review

2.1 Variety of Sentence Structures

Sentence variation has an important role in writing well. Variety in sentences makes writing clearer and more interesting to readers, say Oshima and Hogue. They state that changing sentence patterns in essays (e.g. simple, compound, complex) makes essays easier to read and understand (p. 161).#Humanized task Langan likewise argues that essays in which the same sentence pattern is used repeatedly come across as monotonous and weak. He notes that changing sentence length and structure can be used to create emphasis and when employed can make the overall writing more interesting. Sentence-writers as opposed to sentence-variety writers are more likely to get their ideas across effectively) Langan, 2011, p .(245 . Sentence variety, in Harmer's view, is also an essential element of good writing for ESL students. He observes that students who use too many simple sentences may find it difficult to express connections among ideas. Through the use of various sentence structures, writers can more effectively express cause, contrast, and explanation) Harmer, 2004, p. 78 .(In addition, different beginnings and different length sentences are also part of sentence variety," notes Nordquist. This change of pace also tends to keep readers engaged and it can add a good rhythm to the writing (Nordquist, 2019, p .(34 .In summary, research suggests that varying sentence structures can improve clearness, cohesion and reader involvement in essay writing. Hence, students aspiring to enhance their academic writing are strongly recommended to have a command of sentence structure variety.

2.2 Types of Sentence Structures

Sentence structure is an essential building block of successful writing. The use of a range of different sentence structures helps writers express ideas clearly, keep the reader’s attention, and have a more

interesting writing style overall. Sentence types can fulfill particular functions (emphasize a thought, express emotions, increase tension in the narrative) (Bevan & Brennan, 2014). A simple sentence contains one independent clause; a compound sentence contains at least two independent clauses; a complex sentence contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause; and a compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause..

2.2.1 Simple Sentences

A simple sentence is an independent clause that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. Simple sentences can also be used for clarity and emphasis (Bevan & Brennan, 2014, p. 45)

Essential elements:

Subject: Who or what the sentence is about. Examples: *The cat, Sarah, those colorful flowers*.

Verb: Describes the action or state of the subject. Examples: *sleeps, jumped, has been studying*.

Predicate: The verb and words completing its meaning, including objects or modifiers.

Common structures and examples:

Subject + Verb → *The dog barks.*

Subject + Verb + Object → *The chef bakes delicious cakes.*

Subject + Verb + Complement → *The leaves turned brown.*

2.2.2 Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** contains two or more independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions such as *and, but,* or *or* (Langan, 2003; Yarber et al., 2007). Coordinating conjunctions, often remembered by the acronym FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), connect ideas of equal importance (Altenberg et al., 2010).

Essential elements:

Independent clauses: Each with a subject and a verb.

Coordinating conjunction: Connects the clauses and indicates the relationship.

Structure: Independent clause 1 + Coordinating conjunction + Independent clause 2
Examples:

The rain poured, and the wind howled.

We *can stay inside, or we can go for a walk.*

2.2.3 Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause cannot stand alone and is usually introduced by a subordinating conjunction such as *because, although, if, when,* or *that* (Crystal, n.d.).

Essential elements:

Independent clause: Expresses a complete thought.

Dependent clause: Requires the independent clause for meaning.

Structure: Independent clause + Subordinating conjunction + Dependent clause

Examples:

The children played outside, even though it was raining.

She studied diligently so that she could achieve her goals.

2.2.4 Compound-Complex Sentences

A **compound-complex sentence** combines at least two independent clauses with one or more dependent

clauses, making it the most sophisticated sentence type. This structure allows writers to express detailed relationships among ideas.

Essential elements:

At least two independent clauses.

At least one dependent clause.

Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

Common structures and examples:

1. Independent clause 1 + Coordinating conjunction + Independent clause 2 + Subordinating conjunction + Dependent clause
   She studied hard, but she didn't get the grade she wanted, even though she felt she had prepared well.
2. Independent clause 1 + Subordinating conjunction + Dependent clause + Coordinating conjunction + Independent clause 2
   The wind howled, and the rain poured, making it difficult for anyone to venture outside.
3. Independent clause 1 + Dependent clause 1 + Coordinating conjunction + Dependent clause 2 + Independent clause 2
   Though the sun shone brightly, the air remained chilly, and the leaves continued to fall, announcing the arrival of autumn.

Chapter Three: The Test

3.1 Testing

A test is defined as a specific tool or method used to evaluate a person's knowledge, skills, or abilities in a particular domain. According to **Brown (2014, p. 123)**, tests are commonly used in educational contexts to assess student learning, but they can also serve other purposes such as pre-employment screening or driver's licensing. Tests are generally standardized, with a clear format and scoring system, designed to provide reliable and objective measures of performance.

3.2 Features of a Good Test

A high-quality test should possess key characteristics, primarily **validity** and **reliability**.

3.2.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to assess (**Bond, 2003, p. 179**). In other words, a valid test accurately reflects the knowledge, skills, or abilities it is designed to measure.

Types of Validity:

A. Content Validity: This type ensures that the test covers a representative sample of the knowledge or skills it claims to assess. For instance, a vocabulary test should not focus solely on nouns from one textbook but should include items from various contexts, levels of difficulty, and real-life scenarios (**Messick, 1989, p. 105**).

B. Face Validity: Face validity considers whether a test appears to measure what it is intended to measure. It focuses on the perceived relevance and appropriateness of the test content (**Messick, 1989**).

3.2.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of a test. According to **Messick (1989, p. 8)**, a reliable test produces similar results when administered to the same person on different occasions or evaluated by different scorers. Reliability ensures that the test scores are stable and dependable over time.

1. The present test has been approved by the following supervisors :1.Assist Lect. Amna Amer
2. Lect.Naima .Jassim Abbas

3.3 Test Design

The present test is designed to evaluate participants' understanding of different sentence structures, including simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. It also provides opportunities for participants to construct sentences of varying structures.

Test Format:

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Q1)

Consists of eight sentences.

Participants identify the correct sentence type by selecting from:

a) Simple

b) Compound

c) Complex

d) Compound-Complex

Part 2: Sentence Construction (Q2)

Contains four prompts.

Participants are required to construct specific types of sentences according to instructions.

3.4 Test Material

The test materials provide exercises for identifying and constructing sentences with varied structures. They serve both research and educational purposes: assessing grammatical understanding and supporting student learning. The items are adapted from *A Handbook of English Grammar and Usage* by H.W. Fowler and Robert Burchfield.

3.5 Sample of the Test

A random sample of **20 students** from the fourth-year level in the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Babylon, was selected during the 2023–2024 academic year. The test was applied to diagnose students' performance in the implementation of sentence structure variety.

3.6 Discussion of Test Results

3.6.1 Multiple Choice Test (Q1)

Table (1) : Multiple Choice Test (Q1)

Item	Correct Responses	Percentage	Incorrect Responses	Percentage
1	16	22.8%	4	4.4%
2	6	8.5%	14	15.5%
3	4	5.7%	16	17.7%
4	12	17.1%	8	8.8%
5	4	5.7%	16	17.7%
6	10	14.2%	10	11.1%
7	16	–	–	–
8	2	–	–	–

The total number of correct responses (70; 43.7%) is lower than incorrect responses (90; 56.2%), indicating that students face difficulties in recognizing sentence structures.

3.6.2 Sentence Construction Test (Q2)

Table (1): Sentence Construction Test (Q2)

Item	Correct Answers	Percentage	Incorrect Answers	Percentage
1	18	41.8%	2	5.4%
2	11	25.5%	9	24.3%
3	7	16.2%	13	35.1%
4	7	16.2%	13	35.1%
Total	43	53.7%	37	46.2%

Almost half of the responses were wrong (46.2%), which was not far from the number of right responses (53.7%) indicating that students have difficulty to make sentences with different structures. This may indicate that a little more practice and teaching on sentence variation might be in order.

Conclusion

This research is a study on the types of sentence construction utilized by Iraqi EFL learners including the simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. The results suggest that a significant number “more than 50%” of respondents have problems in both recognizing and writing sentences of different structures. Their results in sentence formation test (Q2) exposed difficulties in transfer, even if some of them achieved a satisfactory level of performance, as far as recognition of sentence types (Q1 .(The results of the study support the hypotheses presented in Section 1.3 which predicted that Iraqi EFL learners would err in English sentences and confuse complex sentences with compound sentences. They confirm that learners have difficulties in accurately producing and distinguishing the two sentence kinds . This study indicates that there is a need for more research into the particular challenges that face Iraqi EFL learners in the area of sentence structures. It demonstrates also the need for improved teaching techniques to facilitate understanding and production of different types of sentences .Further research may investigate the impact of specific instruction on increasing mastery of sentence structure among learners. These might include more practice exercises, incorporating sentence variety in writing assignments, and using technology-based instructional tools to support learning and practice.

Tackling these issues will help teachers to prepare adults in Iraq who learn English as a foreign language to "say and understand things at different levels of complexity" with confidence, which in turn will assure their general progress in the language. It is necessary to mention, also = the limitations of this research. During the academic year 2023–2024, a random sample of 20 students in their fourth year was selected from the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Babylon .Therefore, the results cannot be extended to include all EFL learners in Iraq.

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Appendix I: The Test

Q1: Identify the Sentence Type

Tick the correct answer for each sentence:

25. The cake was delicious, and everyone ate too much.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

26. He offered to help, and because she was grateful, she accepted.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

27. While they waited for the bus, they discussed the day's news.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

28. The wind whispers through the leaves.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

29. As the sun set, casting long shadows on the ground, they walked hand-in-hand along the shore.
    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

30. The book that I just read was about a daring explorer.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

31. She enjoys reading mystery novels.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

32. She practiced every day, so she won the competition.

    A. Simple B. Compound C. Complex D. Compound-Complex

Q2: Sentence Construction

Write a full grammatical sentence for each of the following types:

1. **Simple Sentence**
2. **Compound Sentence**
3. **Complex Sentence**
4. **Compound-Complex Sentence**

Appendix II: Answers of the Test

Q1: Identify the Sentence Type

No.	Sentence	Correct Answer
1	The cake was delicious, and everyone ate too much.	B) Compound
2	He offered to help, and because she was grateful, she accepted.	D) Compound-Complex
3	While they waited for the bus, they discussed the day's news.	C) Complex
4	The wind whispers through the leaves.	A) Simple
5	As the sun set, casting long shadows on the ground, they walked hand-in-hand along the shore.	D) Compound-Complex
6	The book that I just read was about a daring explorer.	C) Complex
7	She enjoys reading mystery novels.	A) Simple
8	She practiced every day, so she won the competition.	B) Compound

Q2: Sentence Construction

1. **Simple Sentence:**
   The cat naps in the sun.
2. **Compound Sentence:**
   The dog barks, and the mail carrier arrives.
3. **Complex Sentence:**
   When the wind blows, the leaves dance.
4. **Compound-Complex Sentence:**
   Sarah finished her homework, even though it was difficult, and then she went outside to play.