

Understanding Syntactic and Semantic Errors in the Composition Writing of Jordanian EFL Learners

Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the salient syntactic and semantic errors made by Jordanian English foreign language learners as writing in English. Writing poses a great challenge for both native and non-native speakers of English, since writing involves employing most language sub-systems such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. A total of 30 Jordanian English foreign language learners participated in the study. The participants were instructed to write a composition of no more than one hundred and fifty words on a selected topic. Essays were collected and analyzed statistically to obtain the needed results. The results of the study displayed that syntactic errors produced by the participants were varied, in that eleven types of syntactic errors were committed as follows; verb-tense, agreement, auxiliary, conjunctions, word order, resumptive pronouns, null-subject, double-subject, superlative, comparative and possessive pronouns. Amongst syntactic errors, verb tense errors were the most frequent with 33%.

The results additionally revealed that two types of semantic errors were made; errors at sentence level and errors at word level. Errors at word level outstripped by far errors at sentence level, scoring respectively 82% and 18%. It can be concluded that the syntactic and semantic knowledge of Jordanian learners of English is still insufficient.

Keywords: EFL learners, Syntactic errors, Semantic errors. Conjunctions, resumptive pronouns

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