

## **Error Analysis of Spoken English Language among Jordanian Secondary School Students**

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English language is one of the main languages in the world that is used for communicational as well as for educational purposes. Despite of the importance and pedigree of the English language, there are many EFL students in Jordan having problems in speaking the English language. In the light of the need for mastery of speaking skills, most of them fail to communicate well. They commit errors in various aspects of language including syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology and spelling. This study aims to investigate structural errors that occur in the spoken English language among Jordanian secondary school students. The data were taken from 31 respondents comprising Grade 10 and 11 students from 4 schools in Jordan, both from public and private schools. The instruments used in the research were semi-structured interviews and document analysis from the transcribed interviews. Data analysis adopted Error analysis procedures and the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The findings of the study revealed that the students committed some errors on *omission*, *addition*, *mis-formation*, and *mis-ordering*. The results shed light on several causes of the students' spoken errors including the teaching techniques, lack of vocabulary, lack of motivation, and lack of practice. In order to improve the speaking skill among students, some suggestions and solutions were forwarded by teachers and the ministry of education.

**Keywords:** English Learning, EFL, Speaking Skill, Error Analysis, Surface Strategy Taxonomy

### **1.1 Introduction**

Speaking skill is an interactive process of constructing meaning, producing, processing and receiving information. Speaking is important in the acquisition of the English language, the process of speaking requires grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. To speak and communicate efficiently, students need to develop their speaking skill. Speaking English requires linguistic competence. A student who is a proficient speaker knows when to synthesize the skills and knowledge in order to succeed in any situation, this is important for him to avoid any

misunderstanding and miscommunication during a conversation (Yaseen, 2018). Many studies around the world showed difficulties, problems and errors in the EFL students' language due to many reasons. In particular, EFL Jordanian students encounter problems and lots of errors that occur in their spoken English.

Arab students face many difficulties in their speaking and writing in English since English and Arabic linguistic system differ, it is expected that Arab students of English encounter difficulties learning English as a second language. They have major problems in English sentence structure; they encounter word level errors and sentence errors. Linguists document the wide divergences between the English and Arabic systems. They provided an insight for EFL language teacher into the difficulties encountered by Arab learners of English. They detailed problem areas in speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and writing (Rass, 2015).

For Jordanian students, one of the main obstacles they face in the English language, especially school students, is their weakness to master communication and speaking skills, and shortcomings of the language so that they are not able to express the simplest English phrases. It is also found that they are unable to converse a simple sentence in English, with the understanding that the most important standards of efficiency of language are not only spoken but also involved spoken and written language. Therefore, this issue must be taken into consideration, both students and teachers must change their learning and teaching style and try to introduce modern techniques to learn the language more efficiently. Therefore, the study seeks to identify the errors made by the Jordanian secondary school students in spoken English language and the causes of such these errors.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Question**

This study is carried out in order to investigate most common structural and syntactical errors committed in speaking the English language, the reasons why Jordanian secondary schools' students commit the errors thus impeding them to speak English language properly, and the problems they faced when trying to speak the English language.

This study sought to answer the following question: *What are most common structural errors in spoken English language among Jordanian high school students?*

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Interlanguage**

It is a term referred to as a language that is produced by second (foreign) language learners, which lies between the target language and the learner's first language. The theory of interlanguage was the first attempt to explain the process of second language learning, where it contributed a lot to developing many other theories of second language acquisition. If the learner's errors are systematic, his own version of the target language must rely on some methodological or personal knowledge. These learners' versions of target languages were given the collective name (interlanguage), the term Interlanguage suggested that the language of the learner, will show

systematic features for both the target language and other languages that he may know, and more clearly of his mother tongue. In other words, its system is mixed or intermediate (Mathe, 2017).

Interlanguage is a system the learner builds which consists of the elements from his first language and elements from his second language, it is a language produced by learners when they attempt to communicate using the language, they are in the process of learning it. Interlanguage cannot be seen as a random collection of unsystematic errors, it is a separate transitional linguistic system. Learner use this language unconsciously and they are not aware of the linguistic features, the interlanguage rules they use are not the same as the rules in both native language and target language. Researchers explain such these interlanguage as errors made by learners, they consider these errors as a natural process of the development of learning a language.

## **2.2 Transfer**

When learning a new language (foreign language) , it deals as the first language of its linguistic structures and construction, so the learner measures the new (second) language to the first one which means he follows his rules of the first language and used it as a criterion for learning a new language to make a linguistic system in terms of form sentences and construct structures, so the structures and formulas found similar to those in the first language are being dealt with easily and this process is called `positive transfer`, as for those which are different, it is an obstacle in learning the foreign language which led the occurrence of linguistic errors because of what called `negative transfer` or `interference`. Transfer is defined by behaviourist and psychologists who first defined it technically as the subconscious, automatic, uncontrolled process of the use of past learned behaviours in the attempt to produce new responses. There are two types of transfer as mentioned earlier: `positive` and `negative`. It is said that the second language learners face difficulties in mastering the language and due to these, the errors would be produced (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982) . Behaviourist theory viewed language transfer as an important source of error and interference in second language learning, because first language habits were so tenacious and deeply rooted (Björkegren, 2018).

The first language L1 transfer is inevitably an important source of learner errors. Many learners tend to think in their native language first, before converting their mental output into L2 spoken output. Some learners may process their mental output directly in the L2 but constantly retrieve their L1 repertoire when encountering difficulties or dealing with unfamiliar concepts in their production of L2 spoken output. The units affected range from the whole sentence to individual phrases or words at nearly all linguistic levels.

## **2.3 Errors and Mistakes**

Any language student also makes errors and mistakes when speaking, but there are differences between the two of them. A student makes a mistake just by the `slip` of his tongue and he is aware of these mistakes, and able to correct them. According to James (2013) mistakes can be self-corrected but not errors. Errors are something systematic, it is an error within the system, the

student produces an incorrect result because he doesn't understand the grammar or rules (Suhono, 2016). Other defines mistakes as two kinds: errors and slips, slips are mistakes that students made and they are aware of them, they can correct themselves and they know the correct version. Errors are mistakes students made due to lack of knowledge of the grammatical structure or spelling. They are not aware of them (Jonsson, 2015).

## 2.4 Error Analysis

The theory of error analysis is a branch of Applied Linguistics, it was founded and emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Corder. According to Corder (1974), learner errors are significant in three ways; They serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned, they are proof that learning is taking place. Errors can serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language by obtaining feedback on their errors. They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not yet mastered and they tell the teachers about the effectiveness of teaching (MUIA, 2015).

Actually, the learner does make errors, the errors can be analyzed, classified and observed to reveal something of the system processing within the learners' errors, and analyzing them. Errors grow from several general possible sources: Intralingual errors within the target language, Interlingual errors of interference from the native language, psycholinguistic strategies, the sociolinguistic context of communication, and other variables (Brown, 2000). Errors could grow from several possible sources: Intralingual errors within the target language, errors of interference from the native language, the sociolinguistic context of communication, and other variables.

Investigating and identifying errors based on error analysis procedures suggested by Corder (1974) consists of several stages; collecting a sample learner language, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and error evaluation. The researcher adopted these steps for data analysis process.

## 2.5 Sources of Errors

Errors caused by two sources according to Richard (1973), Interlingual errors and developmental errors. Interlingual errors occur at different levels: phonological, morphological, and grammatical elements of the first language into the second language. Interlingual errors are called transfer or interference errors, they occur due to the influence of the native language in learning the second language are called interlingual errors. It is a significant source of errors for learners, they are very frequent at the initial stages of second language learning. Developmental errors refer to the errors occur when the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about a new language based on his limited experience. This type of errors made due to several reasons including incomplete application of rules, false hypothesis, over-generalization, and ignorance of rule restrictions (Al-Khresheh, 2016).

Other sources of errors were found in past studies investigated the causes of errors in speaking English. A study conducted by Al-Sobhi (2018) examined the problems of the speaking skill among the Arab students, his study revealed that students faced many difficulties during speaking the English language due to several reasons, for example, students lack knowledge, students are not motivated, and teaching techniques are not effective. Hind (2018) carried out a study on the factors affecting the Arab students English speaking skill, it was indicated that students have weakness in the linguistic and speaking skills due to the influences of the first language and differences of the cultures of both countries, as well as the teaching methods.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study showed that the students committed errors in their spoken English from different categories, their most frequent types of errors were found in the omission, addition, misformation and only a few errors on misordering. Some samples of errors on omission and their corrections are shown below.

#### 3.1 Errors on Omission

A large proportion of students committed the same kind of omission errors which is omitting of auxiliary verbs, and the most common errors were in deleting the word “is” in a context. For example, “*she very smart*” instead of saying “*she is very smart*”. The same goes for “*my name Sharif*” while the correct is “*my name is Sharif*”, these auxiliary verbs are significant to complete the English sentences and deleting them produce incorrect sentences. The omission of auxiliary or helping verbs apparently happens because of the students first language (Arabic), Arabic language has no helping verbs which led them to made errors in the use of these verbs.

The analysis also revealed that students tend to omit the articles in many of their spoken English, they omitted the article “a”, “an” and “the” as the sentence missing the article an “*she is English teacher*” instead of “*she is an English teacher*”. Also, in “*she is lovely girl*” the correct is “*she is a lovely girl*” this either attributed to their Arabic language interference. In addition, the participants omitted prepositions and pronouns, for example “*Listen English*” the preposition **to** after the verb is missing. In regarding pronoun omission, the students deleted two pronouns in this sentence “*wear uniform to go to school*”, the **I** and **my**.

The student also omitted the suffix “s” in the verb of third person singular, and it was omitted in plural nouns. For example, “*she make me laugh*” the s from the verb was omitted, while it was necessary adding “s” to indicate the present tense. Another example regarding errors in using the “s” for plurality, “*many photograph*”. These errors considered intralingual errors, that is the students lack of knowledge of the second language.

### 3.2 Errors on Addition

The percentage of students who committed errors of addition is 45%, students were adding words and affixes to verbs where it shouldn't be added. These errors might occur due to the students misunderstanding of the use of some rules in grammar such as articles, there were found several of addition of articles errors and adding "s" to the present tense verbs. The following are examples of the two type of errors addition:

she is <u>a</u> tall	( she is tall)
she is <u>a</u> clever	(she is clever)
I <u>am</u> always going <u>to</u> hunting,	(I always go hunting)
I try to <u>writing</u>	( I try to write)

Sometime student added letters in the form of a verb as in the sentence " *we walks together*", the final s in the verb should be omitted. Another addition errors appears in the addition of articles in many of their sentences, these errors occur due to overgeneralizations. For example, "*she is a clever*" and in "*Mecca is a hot*".

### 3.3 Errors on Misinformation

Misinformation errors were found the most commonly errors in several of students` presentations, amongst the three types of misinformation, alternating forms and regularizations were most frequent. These errors could appear due to lack of students` knowledge of linguistics rules. Some examples are given below and their respective corrections:

<u>in</u> a boat trip	(on a boat trip)
I <u>save very</u> meaning and grammar	(I memorize or retain meaning and grammar)
my family <u>go</u> on the picnic	(my family went on a picnic)
I <u>eaten</u> the food	(I ate the food)
I love <u>go</u> to the picnic	(I love going to picnics)
Like I was <u>tell</u> you	(I was telling you)
I was go	(I was going )

Majority of the errors of misinformation were on verbs and wrong structure, the students misform or don't know how to form verbs, this shows the extent of the students' weakness in the language. in some context they were selecting the wrong word, many errors found because of the wrong usage of words.

### 3.4 Errors on Misordering

Errors of misordering were relatively low, around 19% of the students committed this type of errors and the number of errors was limited.

Examples:

from <u>seven grade</u>	( from grade seven)
my dad is a <u>teacher physic</u>	(my dad is a physics teacher)
in <u>one grade</u>	(in grade one)
<u>hair tall</u>	(tall hair)
<u>films English</u>	(English films)
explore <u>language new</u>	(explore new language)

Based on the results some factors contributed to the errors of students including their lack of knowledge and mother tongue transfer, some errors were related to the learner's interlanguage. That is the students made errors due to over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions and their incomplete application of rules. The psychological and pedagogical factors were significant causes of errors that need to be taken into account in teaching the English language. Having poor communication ability creates anxiety among students, they were insecure during their presentation, which caused many difficulties in their performance. Teacher must encourage students, raise their self-confidence, and help them to overcome such these problems.

### 4. Conclusion

EFL learners committed errors in all skills of language and in different types; in writing, speaking, reading and pronunciation. In order to identify errors, the error analysis procedures were used to describe and classify errors. This paper examined the structural errors of the spoken English among Jordanian students and investigating the causes of the errors made by the students. It was concluded that student in Jordanian schools encounter many problems and challenges in communicating and speaking English. Several factors affect their speaking ability including their shyness, lack of motivation, using Arabic not practicing the English language. Students needs to be confident and motivated to use the English inside and outside classrooms, teacher should encourage them to participate in the oral activities and tasks by utilizing modern teaching strategies.



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