"Investigating the Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Block Language"

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الملخص:

تتعامل هذه الدراسة مع لغة الاعلانات باعتبارها مقترحًا جديدًا يتيح للمدرسين إتاحة إصدارات جديدة لطلابهم. تكمن المشكلة في أن العديد من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبات في استخدامهم بشكل صحيح في السياق، ولا يستطيع الطلاب استخدامها شكل صحيح، ويرتكبون أخطاء عند استخدام لغة الحظر. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى ١ – تحديد وتحليل الأخطاء التي قام بها الطلاب في استخدام لغة الاعلانات ٢– إعطاء مبررات واضحة للأسباب المحتملة لمثل هذه الأخطاء. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم وضع الفرضيات التالية: ١– يواجه معظم الطلاب صعوبات في إنتاج لغة الاعلانات. ٢ لا يمكن لمعظمهم تحديد وظيفتها. ٣ – معظمهم يميل إلى اكتساب لغة الاعلانات. للتحقق من هذه الفرضيات، يقوم الباحث بتصميم اختبار وتطبيقه على طلاب السنوات الثانية لمعرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه هذا النوع من المشاركة وتحليل النتائج على أساس الاستنتاجات التي تم استخلاصها. وتقتصر هذه الدراسة على خمسين طالبا في السنة الثانية بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية الأساسية، جامعة بابل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغة الاعلانات، الانتاج، التمييز ، الصعوبات

Abstract

This Study deals with block language as a new proposal to let teachers make available to their students new versions of popular programming languages in a block-language style. The problem is that many Iraqi EFL students face difficulties in using them properly in context, students cannot use block language correctly, they commit mistakes when employing block language and this is normal because most of block language have several functions. This study aims to 1 - Identify and analyze the errors which students made in using block language.2- Give a clear rationale for the possible causes for such errors. To achieve these aims the following hypotheses have been put: 1- _ Most of the students encounter difficulties in producing block language. 2 Most of them cannot identify the function of block language. 3- Most of them flunk to

acquire the proper use of block language. To verify these hypotheses, the researcher designs a test and applies it to students of the second years to find out the difficulties they encounter with this sort of participle and analyze the results on the bases of which conclusions have been drawn.This study is limited to fifty students in the second year at the Department of English in College of Basic Education, University of Babylon.

Key words: block language, production, recognition, difficulties

<div align="center">**Section One**</div>

Introduction

Block languages are a new proposal to let teachers make available to their students new versions of popular programming languages in a block-language style. Furthermore, teachers can easily create block language versions of their favorite programming languages or even of pseudo languages created by them.

Block languages free the students from the burdens of syntax and allow at the same time teachers not to loose the specificities of their curriculum. Also, there is no logical reason why one right in a certain context, whereas another is wrong.

Using block language correctly is a problem faced by students because most of block language have several functions.

1.1 The Problem

The problem is that many students cannot use block language correctly, they commit mistakes when employing block language and this is normal because most of block language have several functions.

(1) Entrance 50 mph limit

(2) No entry no dogs without leash

 (Quirk et al. 1985:845)

1.2 The Aims of the Study

This study aims at:
 1- Identifying and analyzing the errors which students made in using block language.
 2- Giving a clear rationale for the possible causes of such errors.

1.3 The Hypotheses
 1- Most of the students encounter difficulties in producing block language.
 2- Most of them cannot identify the function of block language.
 3- ost of them flunk to aquire the proper use of block language.

1.4 The Procedures
 1- Giving an account of block language depending on the literature in this field.

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2- Designing a test and applying it to students of the second year to find out the difficulties they encounter with this sort of block language.

3- Analysing the results on the bases of which conclusion have been drawn.

1.5 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to fifty students in the second year at the Department of English in College of Basic Education, University of Babylon.

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Section Two

</div>

Theoretical Background
2.1 Introduction

Block language can be described as a very simple language that deals with the scope rules of block structured language. Block language uses short sentences or visual pictures to convey information, warning or request to the people.

The main purpose of block language is to communicate ideas by using as few short words as possible, nevertheless, the meaning of block language can sometimes be misleading or misinterpreted. The reason behind using as few short words as possible is constraint space that provided for newspaper headlines, headings, labels, titles, notices and advertisements.

2.2 Definition

Block language is a term used in some grammatical descriptions to refer to the use of abbreviated structures in restricted communicative contexts, special use being made of the word or phrase, rather than the clause or sentence. Common examples include:

(1) No smoking

(2) Exit

(3) One way

and 'headlines' e.g.

(4)Prime Minister shock

(Mardh,1980:98)

The term block language was coined by Straumann (1957:54) who was the first to study newspaper headlines. According to Mardh (1980:12), it is defined as the type of linguistic utterance which occurs in telegrams, book-titles, diaries, advertisements, recipes, dictionaries, catalogues, on posters and labels and in headlines, etc.

Moreover Crystal (2003:216) added that minor sentences are common in certain types of written language, such as notices, headlines, labels, advertisements, subheadings, Web sites and other setting where a message is presented as a 'block'.

The zero article is normal with noun phrases in block language, which is to be found in newspaper headlines, labels, notices, etc., where communicative needs strip language of all but the most information-bearing forms. Compare:

(5)Fire kills teenager after hoax. (headline){news}

With:

(6)A teenager died in a blaze at his home after firemen were diverted by a call that turned out to be a student pranks. {news}

(Straumann, 1957:33)

Note the contrast between: fire__ a blaze, teenager __a teenager, hoax__ a student prank. The headline retains forms are representing all the essential clause elements, but the noun phrases have no overt articles. The exact interpretation of block language is highly dependent upon the context, in this case the following newspaper text.

Quirk et al.(1985:845) stated that block language appears in such function as labels, titles, newspaper, headings, notice, and advertisements. Simple block language messages are most often non sentences, consisting of noun, noun phrase or nominal clause in isolation on verb is needed, because all else necessary to the understanding of the message that is furnished by the context. For examples:

(7)   Entrance 50 mph limit

(8)   No entry no dogs without leash

(9)   Notional forecast Danger: falling rocks

(10)English department the new york times

(11) Fresh today pure lemon juice

(12) For sale all the news that's fitted print

(Ibid)

A comprehensive grammar of the English language is the first luxury Bound collector's edition of Agha Christie's work to be a reliable in this country. Some forms of block language have recognizable clause structures. These forms deviate from regular clause structures in omitting-class items of low in formation value, such as the finite forms of the verb (be) and the articles in other words that may be understood from the context.

(Ibid)

2.3 Types of Block Language

2.3.1 Newspaper Headlines

Newspaper headlines commonly contain block language because of pressure on space. They can generally be analyzed in terms of clause structure, though frequently scrutiny of the text below a head line obliges us to reinterpret the structure:

(13) FILM-STAR MARRIES EX-PRIEST(SVO)

(14) ELECTION A LANDSLIDE FOR SOCIALISTS(SC)

(15) NIXON TO MEET ASIAN PREMIERS(SVO)

(16) OIL SPILL THREST DECREA SING(SV)

(17) PRESIDENT GALL SFORGALM(SVA)

(18) SHARE PRICES NOW HIGHER THAN EVER(SAC)

(19) STUDY LINKS DEATHS TO CROWDING IN PRISONS(SVOA)

(20) THREE JOCKEYS HURT(SV)

(21) CHANCES OF MIDDLE-EAST PEACE IMPROVING(SV)

(22) JACKLIN BEATEN BY BONALLACK(SVA)

(23) CAMP HELPS ADULTS REDISCOVER WILDS(SVOC)

(Ibid:846)

The regular structure of the last two examples, for instance, would be three jockeys are hurt and the camp helps adults rediscover the wilds. In addition there are certain other syntactic features which are characteristics of newspaper headlines:

(1) The simple present is used instead of the present perfect, which are used in other styles (for example in conversation).

Would be normal for recent news:

(24) MEAT PRICE SRISEACAIN. (Meat price share risen again)

(Ibid:846)

(2) (To) is commonly used to express the future or a predicted arrangement.

(25) SENATOR TO SEEK REELECTION.(The senator is to seek reelection)

(Ibid)

(3) Asyndeton is more common:

(26) WOMAN CLAIMS DRUG CAUSED CANCER,SUES. (A woman has claimed that a drug has caused her cancer and she has sued some body)

(27)UTILITY POLE FALLS,KILLS PHONE COMPANY WORKER.(A utility pole has fallen and has killed a phone company worker(

4.Verbs that are generally transitive are used intransitively:

(28) BRITISH VICTORY SUPRISES(The British victory has surprised experts)

(Ibid:845)

Quirk et al.(1985:845) notes:

a. the use of past caused in the headline(WOMAN CLAIMS DRUG CANCER SUES) follows the normal back shift rule in indirect

speech substitution of present cause changes the time reference of the verb to habitual.

b. The example in (4) is structurally ambiguous. In addition to the interpretation given above which presupposes a noun phrase as subject with surprises may be a noun head of the noun phrase that comprises the whole of the title.

2.3.2 Personal Letters-Cables-Diaries

Block language is commonly used on postcards, where space is restricted and is also often used in informal personal notes. The first person pronoun and perhaps also an obvious auxiliary are often omitted:

(29) Sorry about Jane(I'm sorry about the news about Jane)

(30) Wish you were here(I wish you were here)

(31) Having wonderful time(I'm having a wonderful time)

(32) Weather marvelous(The weather is marvelous)

(33) Know who I saw?(Do you know who I saw?)

(Ibid:849)

Elliptical sentences like the last example are also common in informal conversation. The sender is likely to omit whatever can be understood by the receiver from a knowledge of the situation:

(34) NO MONEY SEND HUNDRED(I have no money. Send me a hundred dollars)

(35) NEGOTIATIONS PROGRESSING RETURNING END JULY STOP LETTER FOLLOWING (The negotiations are progressing well. I am returning all the end of July. A letter will follow this cable)

(36) MANSCRIPT RECEIVED CHANGES ACCEPTED PRINTING JANUARY(your man script has been received and your corrections have been accepted. Printing of the book will take place in January)

The language used in diaries is also abbreviated:

Got up at 6 phoned Bill. Bill said he was ill, so had to cancel meeting. Went to office instead. Worked till 12 on government contract.

Note:

a. Stop is used on cables in place of punctuation to indicate the ends of sentences if there is a danger of ambiguity.

b. Notes taken from lectures, books, or articles are likely to be abbreviated. the form and extent of the abbreviation vary with the individual writer.

c. The increasing use of telex instead of cable has rendered the extreme condensed form of cable language less common.

(Bruti, 2003:98)

2.3.3 Abbreviated Sentences in Instructional Writing

Abbreviated structures are typical of instructional writing, such as technical manuals, consumer leaflets on assembling or using products, instructional labels on products, and recipes. As in newspaper headlines, articles are often omitted, it is characteristic of this style to omit direct object that can be understood from the context.

(37) Tighten to hold bracket snugly against wall, but without excessive tightening of screws.

(38) Disconnect cleaner from electrical outlet before replacing belt.

(39) Add on can of cold water to the contents of this can.

(40) Heat to boiling point. Allow to simmer a few minutes and serve when mixing is finished, turn mixer off, unplug cord from outlet and subject beaters.

(41) Cook to golden brown.

(42) Beat egg lightly with fork.

(43) Keep away from heat.

(44) Just heat and serve.

(45) Lay flat.

) Gelderen, 2000:59)

Occasionally the subject is omitted:

(46) Makes four servings, cupful each contains whiteners and brighteners.

Note:

a. Ostens's identification indicates that a direct object has been omitted and that it refers to the article on which the sentences is written:

(47) Refrigerate after opening.

(48) Keep cool.

(49) Keep out of reach of children.

(50) Standard upright.

Out of context, sentences (1-4) would be interpreted to refer to the addressee's keeping cool, etc.

b. Spoken demonstrations, for example of cooking,sometimes adopt these characteristics of instructional writing.

(Elsness, 2003:56)

2.3.4 Abbreviated Sentences in Informal Conversation

Initial words in sentences are frequently omitted in informal conversation:

(51)(Don't know where they are(I don't…)

(52) Want another cup?(Do you…?)

(53) Lost something?(Have you…?)

(54) Serves them right!(It serves…)

(55) Good to see you again(It is good…)

(56) Anything wrong?(Is anything…?)

(57) Hot?(Are you "feeling"…?)

(Grush, R. 2003:66)

The pronouns and auxiliaries to be understood are partially cued by the words that begin the sentence in case of ambiguity are dependent on the situational context for example, Hot? Could be interpreted as either Are you hot? Or is it hot ?

2.3.5 Abbreviated Sentences in Broad Cast Commentaries

Commentaries on radio and television often contain abbreviated sentences, usually with the omission of there is, it is, or a form of the verb BE:

(58) The first lap is over. Five more to come.

(59) Sport, and we have the latest from Wimbledon. **???**

(60) Another batsman out.

(61) Two players wounded.

(62) And now a band of the marines.

(63) And again the sound of bugles.

(Jones, 2004:34)

2.3.6 Elliptical Sentences in Dialogue

In conversation and in written dialogue, it is common to find ellipsis in sentences that respond to, comment on, or question previous sentences spoken by another speaker. The ellipsis is interpreted from preceding sentences; it avoids repetition so as to focus on the new material. There**??? sultan** fragmentary sentences can be analyzed for clause functions through a reconstruction, based on preceding sentences, of the full forms:

(64) A:Is your daughter at home?

B:Probably.(A-She is probably at home.)

A:Who sent you?

B:The manager.(S-The manager sent me.)

A:I'm leaving.

B:Why?(A-Why are you leaving?)

A:I can't play baseball.

B:I know.(SV-I know you can't play baseball.)

A:No body is here.

B:Obviously.(A-Obviously, nobody is here.)

A:When will you leave?

B:With luck, on Tuesday.(AA-With luck, I'll leave on Tuesday.)

2.3.7 Elliptical Sentences without Change of Speaker

Fragmentary elliptical sentences may also occur without change of speaker or writer. In writing, they appear especially in certain styles of fiction and advertising:

(65) Two stranger figures approached. Martians!

(66) Janet felt uncomfortable. Yes, very uncomfortable.

(67) It has a very distinctive taste. Crisp and fresh.

(68) Designed in Sweden, this teak desk is a terrific buy.

(69) Shown with our exceptionally priced desk chair.

(Lario, 2001:85)

Note:

These fragmentary sentences are to be distinguished from the sentence fragments that are merely the result of a punctuation device to indicate a dramatic pause for emphasis.

(70) They are also common in fiction and advertising:

(71) He was drunk. And penniless.

(72) We have all kinds of contemporary furniture.

(73) For every room in the house.

Section Three

Procedures

3-1 Data Analysis

After analyzing the results of the test, the following tables show the subjects performance at the recognition and production level respectively related to question one:

3.2 Results and Discussion of the Subject's Responses

Analyzing the Students' responses related to question one, the following tables show the subjects' performance at the recognition and the production levels:

Table (1)
Students' Responses Related to Question One

NO.OF ITEM	NO.OF CORRECT RESPONSES	%	NO.OF INCRRECT RESPONSES	%
1	60	60%	40	40%
2	32	32%	68	68%
3	51	51%	49	49%
4	26	26%	74	74%
5	35	35%	65	65%
6	28	28%	72	72%
7	55	55%	45	45%
8	70	70%	30	30%

NO.OF ITEM	NO.OF CORRECT RESPONSES	%	NO.OF INCRRECT RESPONSES	%
9	65	65%	35	35%
10	11	11%	89	89%
Total	433	43.3	567	56.7

As shown in Table (1), the total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (433, 43.3 %), whereas those of the incorrect ones (including avoided items) are (567, 56.7%). The results clearly show that the subjects are unable to know block language and this reflects their lack of knowledge about such block language.

Table (2)
Subject's performance at the Production Level in Question Two

NO. OF ITEM	NO.OF CORRECT RESPONSE	%	NO.OF INCORRECT RESPONSE	%
1	30	30	70	70
2	47	47	53	53
3	19	19	81	81
4	51	51	49	49
5	41	41	59	59
6	11	11	89	89
7	32	32	68	68
8	60	60	40	40
9	37	37	63	63
10	21	21	79	79
Total	349	34.9	651	65.1

From table (2), it has been concluded that the total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (349, 34.0%) in comparison with those of the incorrect ones (including avoided items) which are (651, 65.1 0/0). It is obvious from the results presented in the table above that the number of the incorrect responses is higher than that of the correct ones. This means that Iraqi EFL university learners face difficulties in mastering block language at both levels: recognition and production. Nevertheless, they face more difficulties at the production level since the total number of their correct responses (854, 33.8%) is lower than that of their incorrect responses at the recognition level (911, 36.44%).These results show that Iraqi EFL University learners encounter difficulties in using block language.

From Table (1), the researcher concludes that the total number and

the percentage of the correct responses are (478, 31.8 %), whereas those of the incorrect ones (including avoided items) are (1002, 68.1 %). The results above reveal that the subjects' faced difficulty in block language.

From the table about the total number of the incorrect responses (56.7) is higher that of the correct ones (43.3)

Table (3)

Q1	56.7	567	43.3	
Q2	65.1	651	34.9	349

(Kies, 2004:55)

Section Four

Error Analysis

4.1 Intralingual Transfer

This type of errors happens to improper learning of the foreign language. such errors may be the result of the influence of one language item upon another. According to Penny (2001:97) Intralingual errors encompass the following:

A- Generalization Error: It involves the incorrect application of the previously learned second language material to present second language context.

B-Ignorance of Rule Restriction: it means applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply.

)Richards and Simpson,1974: 40)

C-Incomplete Application of the Rules:

These result fro failure to use certain language structures because they are thought to be too difficult.

(Richards and Schmidt،2002: 185)

D-False Concepts Hypothesized:

These may derive from wrong comprehension of a distinction in that target language.

(Brown,1987:122)

4.2 Context of Learning

This sort of errors arises from faulty methods of teaching or syllabus designers who concentrate on some aspects of the language and neglect other according to their belief or experiences the errors in items Q1،items of Q2.

Section Five

Conclusion
 5.1 Conclusion

The majority of Iraqi university students face difficulty in producing and recognizing participles as the total number of their correct responses (349) is lower than that of incorrect ones(651) this verifies the first hypothesis. The majority of text book writers and syllabus designers do not give the meaning of participles. For this reason, many students are easily liable to commit mistakes when they employ this sort of participles that they do not know their meaning, there are three sorts of errors that can be summarized as following:

a- wrong recognition of participles.

b- incorrect production of such participles.

c- giving no answers

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Appendix I

The Test

Q1/ Complete each of the following with a participial clause making use of the words in the brackets.

1. I'm sorry_____ the news Jane. (on-of-and-about).

2. I _____ you were here. (wish-hope-see-know).

3. I'm having a _____ time. (bad-wonderful).

4. The weather is _____. (clouds-snow-marvelous-cold).

5. The senator _____ to seek reelection. (is-war-am-are).

6.Three Jockeys ____. (play-hurt-swim-flies).

7. Woman _____ drug cancer sues. (give-take-claims-catch).

8. Vitality pole falls kills _____ company worker. (phone-football-computer).

9. The British victory has surprised _____. (stupid-experts-lazy-slack).

10. Oil _____ threat decreasing. (spill-fly-burning-heats).

Q2/ State whether each of the following sentences are true or false.

1.FILM STAR MARRIES EX-PRIEST.

2. Election a landslide for socialists.

3.Jacklin beaten by Bonallack.

4.Study links deaths to crowding in prison.

5.Two Jockeys play football.

6. Camp helps adults rediscover wilds.

7. Oil swim threat decreasing.

8. Five players wounded.

9. Share prices noe higher than ever.

10. Man killed in accident.

Appendix II

The Possible Answers

Q1
1. about.
2. wish
3. wonderful.
4. marvelous
5. is
6. hurt
7. claims
8.phone-
9. experts
10. spill
Q 2
1. True
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. True