



An Analysis of Adjective-Related Errors Made by Jordanian EFL Students

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Received: 23/2/2023
Revised: 7/5/2023
Accepted: 14/6/2023
Published: 15/12/2023

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Citation: Assaf, M. M. . (2023). An Analysis of Adjective-Related Errors Made by Jordanian EFL Students. *Dirasat: Educational Sciences*, 50(4), 330–341.
<https://doi.org/10.35516/edu.v50i4.4261>



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Abstract

Objectives: This study investigates the adjective-related errors that Jordanian EFL students make in their speech and writing.

Methods: Based on the researcher's observation record of his students' spoken and written assignments from the eighth to twelfth grades, the researcher compiled a list of adjective-related errors that were common among his students. To find out whether such errors were generalizable nationwide, 252 English language teachers, who were randomly selected, completed a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire by marking how often their students committed each adjective-related error.

Results: The study showed that there were seven adjective-related errors commonly made by students, and such errors can be generalizable nationwide. The most common error was the use of adjectives with wrong prepositions. Among the potential sources of the seven errors were first language interference, failure to apply the rule completely, and intralingual overgeneralization of the rule.

Conclusions: One the areas that requires special attention by Jordanian students is the use of adjectives. Assisting students to identify the causes of the adjective-related errors and laying more emphasis on using adjectives in meaningful contexts are instrumental in dealing with such linguistic errors.

Keywords: Error analysis, adjectives, EFL, Jordan.

دراسة تحليلية للأخطاء المتعلقة باستخدام الصفات في اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب الأردنيين

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ملخص

الأهداف: تبحث هذه الدراسة في الأخطاء المتعلقة بالصفات في اللغة الإنجليزية والتي يرتكبها الطلاب الأردنيون في حديثهم وكتاباتهم.

المنهجية: بناءً على سجل ملاحظات الباحث لأعمال طلابه المنطوقة والمكتوبة في الصفوف من الثامن وحتى الثاني عشر، تم التوصل إلى قائمة بأخطاء شائعة بين طلابه تتعلق باستخدام الصفات. ومن أجل معرفة ما إذا كانت هذه الأخطاء السبعة قابلة للتعميم على صعيد الأردن، تم تصميم استبانة من خمس نقاط بمقياس ليكرت تستهدف معلمي ومعلمات اللغة الإنجليزية في جميع أنحاء الأردن. تم اختيار مائتين واثنتين وخمسين معلماً ومعلمة عشوائياً للإجابة عن الاستبانة من خلال تحديد مدى تكرار طلابهم للأخطاء المتعلقة بالصفات.

النتائج: توصلت الدراسة إلى أن هناك سبعة أخطاء متعلقة باستخدام الصفات في اللغة الإنجليزية شائعة بين الطلاب، وهذه الأخطاء قابلة للتعميم على صعيد الأردن. وقد كان الخطأ الأكثر شيوعاً هو استخدام حروف الجر الخاطئة مع الصفات. وكان من الأسباب المحتملة للأخطاء السبعة: تدخل اللغة الأم، والإخفاق في التطبيق الصحيح والكامل للقواعد، والتعميم المبالغ فيه للقواعد ضمن اللغة نفسها.

الخلاصة: يعد استخدام الصفات في اللغة الإنجليزية أحد المجالات التي تتطلب اهتماماً خاصاً من قبل الطلاب الأردنيين، وإن إعانة الطلاب على فهم الأسباب وراء ارتكاب الأخطاء المتعلقة بالصفات والتركيز بشكل أكبر على استخدام الصفات في سياقات ذات معنى تعتبر أمورا أساسية في التعامل مع هذه الأخطاء اللغوية.
الكلمات الدالة: تحليل الأخطاء، الصفات، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الأردن.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics, or the scientific study of language, encompasses varied branches such as phonology, sociolinguistics, semantics, syntax, and applied linguistics. The latter deals with the practical applications of language studies, such as translation and language learning and teaching. Identifying how two languages are similar or different and studying how this relates to second language learning is not beyond the realm of contrastive analysis, which is a branch of applied linguistics. The focus of contrastive analysis on those thorny areas that translators or second language learners are likely to encounter and which are attributed to the dissimilar systems of the two languages makes it an intriguing subject to study.

Contrastive analysis became the central part of applied linguistics in its infancy due to the fact that teaching techniques were devised by emphasizing how the learner's first and second languages appear to be similar and different (Rajagopalan, 2004). Nevertheless, not all errors that second or foreign language learners make are caused by the interference of the learner's mother tongue. Emerging as an alternative to contrastive analysis, error analysis accounts for a wider range of second language learners' errors. That is why researchers such as Keshavarz (2012) and Ellis (1994) regarded error analysis as a vital pedagogical tool in the area of second language teaching and learning. Error analysis was defined by James (2013) as the study of linguistic ignorance. Crystal (2008:173) defined error analysis as "a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language".

In language teaching and learning, a distinction is usually made between errors and mistakes. Although Corder (1981) attached no significance to mistakes in the language learning process, he stressed the importance of errors to the teacher and learner. Ellis (1997) elaborated that when learners do not know a rule, they make errors, but when they fail to apply what they have learned, they make a mistake. Errors, according to Richards and Schmidt (2010), stem from incomplete knowledge, whereas mistakes are made out of carelessness or lack of attention. For Keshavarz (2012), errors are systematic, rule-governed, and caused by the learner's insufficient knowledge of the rules of the target language, while mistakes are random deviations from rules and therefore do not appear to be systematic. Harmer (2018) clarified that learners make errors when they either do not know something well or are affected by developmental or interference factors.

There are several causes of language learner errors. The role of learner's first language in learning a second or foreign language has long been a matter of debate for centuries (Khelalfa & Kellil, 2023). When second language learners attempt to speak or write in the second language, they might be influenced positively or negatively by their first language. Gass and Selinker (2008) differentiated between positive transfer, or facilitation, and negative transfer, or interference, based on whether transfer results in something correct or wrong respectively. Significantly, Richards (1971) distinguished three broad categories of learner errors: interlanguage errors, or those caused by the interference of the first language, intralingual errors, which are due to the language being learned, and developmental errors, indicating learners' false development of hypotheses about the second language based on their limited exposure to that language.

Richards (1971) subdivided intralingual errors into overgeneralization errors, referring to creating deviant structures based on those of the mother tongue, ignorance of rule restrictions, and the failure to apply the rules completely. Dulay and Burt (1974) introduced three categories of errors: developmental, interference, and unique errors, which were neither the former nor the latter. For Richards and Sampson (1974), language transfer, intralingual interference, sociolinguistic situation, and modality of exposure and production of the second language are among those factors influencing the second language learner system.

As far as using English adjectives is concerned, EFL students are likely to commit a number of errors in their language production. In this regard, Parrott (2004) listed several typical difficulties in using adjectives in speaking and writing, including creating plural adjective forms, confusing present with a past participle adjectives, and not knowing which adjectives can be intensified. Such errors might be attributed to different causes such as first language interference and overgeneralization.

This study has been done in Jordan, where Arabic is spoken as the first language. In Jordanian schools, colleges, and universities, English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught to students as a compulsory subject. In schools, students learn all English language skills as well as grammar and vocabulary in their English language classes. Schoolchildren in Jordan

receive ten years of basic education, from the first to the tenth grade, and two years of secondary education: the eleventh and twelfth grades. As English is not the first language in Jordan, EFL learners occasionally make mistakes and errors when they speak or write English. One of the areas that schoolchildren find difficult to grasp, according to the researcher's in-class observation, is using adjectives in speech and writing.

In addition to nouns and verbs, adjectives make an integral component in grammar. Adjectives are rich in carrying subtle nuances of meaning (Tagliamonte & Pabst, 2020). Adjectives are modifiers, in the sense that they describe or qualify nouns and pronouns. For example,

(1) This car is *spacious*, and I am *enthusiastic* about buying it.

There are several groups of adjectives. Essential groups are qualitative adjectives, such as *cheerful*, which describe the qualities of a person or thing, classifying adjectives that identify someone or something as a member of a category or class, such as *intellectual*, color adjectives, such as *green*, emphasizing adjectives, such as *complete*, which emphasize how one feels about someone or something (COBUILD English Grammar, 2017). Adjectives, for Carter and McCarthy (2006), may express permanent qualities, such as *true*, transient conditions, such as *hungry*, relations between entities, such as *fond of*, entities in terms of their actions, like *generous*, and classifications or types, such as *wooden*.

Many adjectives have suffixes. Among common ones are *-able* (*acceptable*), *-ful* (*beautiful*), *-ous* (*famous*), *-ive* (*inventive*), *-ish* (*childish*), *-y* (*snowy*), *-ory* (*obligatory*), and *-al* (*personal*). The prefix *a-* occurs with several adjectives such as *alive* and *awake*. Nevertheless, many common adjectives, such as *good* and *nice*, do not have suffixes or prefixes to identify them as adjectives. Interestingly, the *-ing* and *-ed* forms of verbs can be used as adjectives, such as *thrilling* and *thrilled*, and they are termed participial adjectives.

Adjectives can be predicative, coming after the noun they modify, or attributive, preceding the noun modified. The adjective *willing* acts as a predicative adjective, and the adjective *new* is attributive in this example:

(2) My friend is *willing* to buy a *new* laptop.

Most everyday adjectives, such as *hot* and *short*, are gradable, which means that the speaker can express different levels or degrees of the quality denoted by those adjectives. Non-gradable adjectives, on the other hand, describe absolute qualities. Typical examples include *dead*, *finished*, and *married*. Gradability is related to comparison. Gradable adjectives can be used in the comparative and superlative forms (*larger* and *largest*), comparing two or more than two items respectively.

Problem of the Study

The researcher, who is a teacher of English at a secondary school, has noticed that his students in the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades commit a number of errors when they use adjectives both in their speech and writing. Such errors include double comparatives, (**more safer*) and confusing *-ing* and *-ed* participial adjectives (**a frightened scene*). Therefore, the researcher regarded it significant to list the most common adjective-related errors from the students' talks and compositions, look into the sources of these errors, and suggest ways to help overcome these errors.

Questions of the Study

This study aimed at investigating and analyzing the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when they use adjectives in speech and writing. Thus, the researcher attempted to answer the following three research questions:

(1) What are the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing based on the researcher's observation record?

(2) What are the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing from their teachers' perspectives?

(3) What are the potential sources of the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the present study will probably be of particular interest and benefit to EFL curriculum designers, educational policymakers as well as EFL teachers and students, in Arabic-speaking countries and particularly in Jordan.

Not enough attention has adjectives received in EFL textbooks and research (El Shaban, 2017). Similarly, the research into Arabic adjectives has not been clearly identified (Al Mahmoud, 2014). Thus, the present study, targeting Jordanian EFL school students, has added pieces of research into the errors EFL learners commit while producing English adjectives in their speech and writing. Richards and Schmidt (2010) emphasized that both the study and analysis of errors committed by foreign or second language learners are supposed to lead to better teaching and preparation of teaching materials. Explanation of errors, for Ellis (1994), is concerned with determining the cause of the error, which is the most important stage. Tajareh and Khodareza (2015) concluded that error analysis had a positive effect on the subjects' knowledge of English adjectives. Corder (1981) pointed out that teachers could tailor their teaching techniques and materials and vary their pace of progress in light of the information they obtain from their learners' errors.

Literature Review

Having thoroughly searched the Internet, the researcher has only found little research on potential errors related to the use of English adjectives. Most of the studies on the topic were done in the 2010s, ranging from 2012 to 2020. The literature on this topic has been outlined below.

Al-Harafsheh (2012) conducted an error analysis of using English adjectives among Jordanian university students. One hundred and fifty students, aged 22, studying English at Al-Albeyt University in Jordan sat for a test on adjectives. In his study, he addressed four patterns of errors, represented by these statements: (1) *The man is bigger form his son*; (2) *He is a boy tall*; (3) *The rich men will help the poor men*; and (4) *She is much richer than my sister*. The main findings were that the subjects faced difficulties in using English adjectives in their writing, particularly in using comparatives, superlatives, and adjectives with prepositions, and the subjects relied on their first language, Arabic, when they attempted to use English adjectives.

Hamza (2013) explored the types and causes of errors that Iraqi EFL four-year university students made in using attributive and predicative adjectives. One hundred students at the Department of English, University of Babylon, took a test on adjectives. The major finding was that Iraqi university students encountered difficulty in mastering attributive and predicative adjectives, especially at the production level, and it was recommended that more emphasis should be given to English adjectives.

Tajareh and Khodareza (2015) investigated the effect of error analysis on 60 intermediate-level Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of English adjectives. A pretest, treatment, and posttest were used to achieve the purpose of their study. The main finding was that error analysis had a positive effect on the subjects' knowledge of English adjectives.

El Shaban (2017) looked into the difficulties that encountered Libyan university students in using English adjectives across different levels of English proficiency. Sixty students, 15 from each year, at the English Department, Benghazi University, sat for an adjective use test. It was concluded that there was no significant difference in two types of errors, namely developmental and interference, made by the students of the four years.

Connolly (2020) examined the challenges faced by Colombian learners and factors affecting adjective-noun order in two languages: English and Spanish. Both languages were compared and contrasted in terms of adjective-noun order. It was concluded that the overemphasis on fluency at the expense of accuracy through communicative teaching is a potential factor behind adjective-related errors made by Colombian learners of English. Eventually, a combination of different teaching approaches and using translation activities were suggested to solve the problem.

In light of the research done on the topic, the following remarks can be made. First, of all of the studies reviewed, no study has targeted schoolchildren- a gap this research is bound to fill. Second, most studies, especially Al-Harafsheh (2012), Hamza (2013), and El Shaban (2017), targeted university students majoring in English, while this study targeted those who study English as one subject among others. Finally, contrary to all of the research reviewed, this is the only study that looked into students' errors in using English adjectives from their teachers' point of view as well as the researcher's observations.

Methodology

The researcher followed the [descriptive research](#) method, making use of observation and a questionnaire to identify and analyze the adjective-related errors committed by the participants of the study.

Participants

The study population consisted of 4357 male and female teachers who teach English to the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades throughout Jordan. As for the study sample, 252 English language teachers participated in the study by completing a questionnaire on adjective-related errors that their students make. The participants were 171 female and 81 male English teachers randomly selected. Stratified random sampling was used, in which a random sample was taken from each of the 12 governates of Jordan: Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, Mafraq, Balqa, Karak, Ma'an, Jerash, Ajlun, Madaba, Tafilah, and Aqaba.

Instruments

In this study, there were two main sources of data: an observation record and a questionnaire. First, to address the first question, the researcher recorded his students' adjective-related errors from their spoken assignments (talks and conversations) and written assignments (compositions) in the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Based on his notes, the researcher made a list of the most common adjective-related errors.

Second, to answer the second question and find out whether these errors, which numbered seven, were generalizable nationwide, randomly selected EFL teachers from different Jordanian cities responded to a researcher-designed five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The instrument consisted of eight questions. In the first seven question, the respondents marked how often their students commit each of the seven adjective-related errors by ticking one of the following options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. The last question required the respondents to state whether there were any other errors not mentioned in the first seven questions. The researcher used the following scale (Table 1) as representative of the participants' responses to the items of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Levels of Participants' Responses

Means Value	1-1.80	1.81-2.60	2.61-3.40	3.41-4.20	4.21-5
Level of Frequency	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

To assure the questionnaire content validity, the instrument was reviewed and refereed by a validation jury, consisting of experienced university professors, English language supervisors, and English language teachers. The questionnaire was approved by the jury. To ensure reliability, a pilot sample of 20 English teachers initially responded to the questionnaire. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS), the internal consistency reliability using the Cronbach Alpha test was calculated. The result was 0.80, which indicates that the questionnaire is reliable and its items measure the same underlying measure.

Findings and Discussion

First Question

The first question reads as: What are the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing based on the searcher's observation record? To answer this question, the researcher, who has been teaching English for about 20 years, constructed a record of the adjective-related errors that his students in the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades made. The researcher observed and recorded his students' errors in their oral and written assignments. Having analyzed his observation record, the researcher found out that there were seven adjective-related errors commonly made by his students (Table 2).

Table 2: The Seven Adjective-Related Errors

No.	Adjective-related error	Sample from students' speech and writing
1	Using the verb <i>to do</i> for negation.	*I don't happy today.
2	Double comparatives.	*That is a more deeper pool.
3	Placing attributive adjectives after the noun they modify.	*He lives in a house small.
4	Confusing <i>-ing</i> and <i>-ed</i> participial adjectives.	*We are exciting about the school journey.
5	Wrong order of adjectives.	*We have a Japanese lovely new car.
6	Adjectives followed by wrong prepositions.	*My brother is afraid from insects.
7	Using <i>very</i> before non-gradable adjectives.	*His work is very perfect.

As shown in Table 2, the researcher's observation record of students' adjective-related errors consisted of seven major types. These error types are as follows: Using the verb *to do* for negation, double comparatives, placing attributive adjectives after the noun they modify, confusing *-ing* and *-ed* participial adjectives, wrong order of adjectives, adjectives followed by wrong prepositions, and finally using *very* before non-gradable adjectives. Such errors are peculiar to the researcher's students in the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. To find out whether these errors were common nationwide, over 250 English teachers were given a questionnaire.

Second Question

The second question reads as: What are the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing from their teachers' perspectives? To ensure that the researcher-created seven-error list (Table 2) is generalizable nationwide, the researcher designed a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, on which 252 English language teachers marked how often their students made the seven errors and were supposed to add any other error -if any- that was common among their students. The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire were calculated using SPSS. The results are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' Frequency of Making Adjective-Related Errors as Observed by their English Language Teachers

No.	Error	N	Mean	SD	Order	Level of Frequency
1	Using the verb <i>to do</i> for negation.	252	2.63	1.192	7	Sometimes
2	Double comparative	252	2.69	1.128	6	Sometimes
3	Placing attributive adjectives after the noun they modify.	252	2.78	1.264	5	Sometimes
4	Confusing <i>-ing</i> and <i>-ed</i> participial adjectives.	252	3.17	1.138	4	Sometimes
5	Wrong order of adjectives.	252	3.32	1.225	2	Sometimes
6	Adjectives followed by wrong prepositions.	252	3.54	1.065	1	Often
7	Using <i>very</i> before non-gradable adjectives.	252	3.25	1.134	3	Sometimes

As shown in Table 3, the participants reported that their EFL students did make adjective-related errors. The frequency of such errors was *sometimes* for six errors and *often* for one. The participants did not add any other adjective-related error common among their students. Taking the questionnaire results in consideration, the seven errors on the researcher's observation record can be generalizable nationwide, and this is consistent with Al-Harafsheh (2012) and Hamza (2013).

Third Question

The third question of the research reads as: What are the potential sources of the errors that Jordanian EFL students make when using English adjectives in their speech and writing? To approach this question, each of the seven errors has been discussed and qualitatively analyzed below, in descending order of their means, by the researcher.

The First Most Common Error

Based on the questionnaire results, the first most common challenge concerning adjectives that Jordanian EFL students face is using the right preposition after the adjectives. This finding substantiates Al-Harafsheh's (2012) claim that Jordanian students encounter difficulties in using adjectives, particularly those followed by prepositions.

A preposition expresses a relation between two elements or entities. Most of the common English prepositions are simple, consisting of one word. Typical examples include *in*, *out*, and *with*. However, prepositions such as *owing to* and *in front of* are complex as they are made of more than one word. A preposition along with its object, such as *without hesitation*, constitutes a prepositional phrase. One of the syntactic functions of prepositional phrases is the complementation of adjectives (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1995). For example, the adjectives *interested* and *addicted* are followed by prepositional phrases in this sentence:

(3) My son, who is *interested* in learning online, became *addicted* to his smartphone

Many adjectives are followed by prepositions. Four of such prepositions that are commonly used with adjectives are *to*, *of*, *with*, and *for*. These are a few examples.

(4) He continued to work, *impervious to* the noise around him.

(5) The way he plays the piano is strongly *reminiscent of* his father.

(6) The article was *fraught with* spelling mistakes.

(7) the kids are *eager for* the school trip.

Similar to the adjective *impervious*, the preposition *to* usually follows the adjectives *allergic*, *accustomed*, *devoted*, and *susceptible*. As well as the adjective *reminiscent*, the adjectives *heedless*, *aware*, *capable*, and *indicative* occur with the preposition *of*. Like the adjective *fraught*, a few adjectives, such as *filled*, *compatible*, *satisfied*, and *bored*, are used with the preposition *with*. Finally, other than the adjective *eager*, certain adjectives are followed by the preposition *for*, including *eligible*, *sorry*, and *famous*.

Learners of English think of prepositions as a big hurdle since there is a considerable number of them and many choices have nothing to do with meaning (Parrott, 2004). Unlike English, Prepositions in Arabic are all simple, consisting of one single word, and are not as many as those in English. The researcher noticed that students translate the Arabic prepositions literally into English. Table 4 shows some examples of their phrases.

Table 4: A Sample of Students' Phrases Containing Adjectives with Prepositions

Arabic phrase	Literal Translation	Accurate Translation
مشغولٌ بالمشروع mashghūlun bil-mashrū‘	Busy <i>with</i> the project	Busy <i>with</i> the project
متزوج بابنة عمه mutazawwijun bibnati ‘ammih	Married <i>with</i> his cousin	Married <i>to</i> his cousin
مفيد للصحة mufīdun lil-ṣiḥḥah	good <i>for</i> health.	Sleep is good <i>for</i> health
جذابٌ للأطفال jadhdhabatun lil-aṭfāl	appealing <i>for</i> children.	appealing <i>to</i> children.
مصنوعٌ من القطن maṣnū‘un min al-qutn	Made <i>from</i> cotton	Made <i>from</i> cotton
محرومٌ من النوم maḥrūmun min al-nawm	Deprived <i>from</i> sleep	Deprived <i>of</i> sleep

As demonstrated in Table 4, three Arabic prepositions, namely ب [bi], ل [li], and من [min], were translated literally by students. These prepositions were translated into the English language prepositions *with*, *for*, and *from*, respectively. The first, third, and fifth phrases were translated correctly, while the rest were not. Thus, the main source of errors of this type

could be Arabic interference. Students tend to translate prepositions literally from Arabic into English. To avoid such errors, EFL students need to be exposed to authentic texts more often and learn vocabulary in chunks, such as *kind of you*, and *contrary to popular belief*.

The Second Most Common Error

The second most common adjective-related error, as reported by the participants, is the wrong order of adjectives. Al-Nuaimi and Izreji (2022) asserted that it is not unusual for learners of English to use English adjectives in the wrong order. In English, when multiple adjectives modify the same noun, they normally follow a particular order: opinion or evaluation, size, physical shape, age, color, origin, material, and purpose. Table 5 illustrates some of the phrases taken from the researcher's observation record of the students' use of adjectives in speech and writing.

Table 5: A Sample of Students' Errors Concerning Order of Adjectives

No.	Students' Phrases	Correct Phrases
1	A wooden brown table	A brown wooden table
2	A bathing, Spanish, round tub	A round, Spanish, bathing tub
3	An old, mid-sized, nice vehicle	A nice, mid-sized, old vehicle

As shown in Table 5, students failed to comply with the preferred order of adjectives. They should have placed color before material in the first phrase, shape before origin and origin before purpose in the second phrase, and opinion before size, and size before age in the third phrase.

The main cause of this error could be the ignorance of the right sequence of adjectives or failure to apply the rule completely. In this regard, the researcher created a mnemonic: ESFACOMP, standing for **e**valuation, **s**ize, **p**hysical shape (f for ph), **a**ge, **c**olor, **o**rigin, **m**aterial, and **p**urpose, which might be handy for reminding students of the preferred order of adjectives.

The Third Most Common Error

The third most common adjective-related error, as per the English teachers' responses to the questionnaire, is using *very* before non-gradable adjectives. The fact that adjective are divided into gradable and non-gradable is common among all languages, including English and Arabic (Alkhuli, 1999). In English, most adjectives are gradable, which can be modified by adverbs that express different levels of intensity of those adjectives. Qualitative adjectives, or those that describe quality, are gradable, including *active*, *wet*, *thick*, *sensible*, *pretty*, and *efficient*. They can be used with grading or degree adverbs, like *slightly*, *highly*, and *extremely*, to specify different degrees of the quality mentioned. One can say *fairly hot*, *rather hot*, *very hot*, and *extremely hot*. Such gradeability includes comparison: *hotter* and *hottest*.

Some adjectives, on the other hand, are non-gradable and cannot vary in intensity. Therefore, they do not usually have comparative and superlative forms. Examples include *impossible*, *superb*, and *dead*. Classifying adjectives, such as *Asian*, *female*, *financial*, *daily*, *eastern*, and *international*, are typically non-gradable. One could use non-gradable adjectives alone or with non-grading adverbs, such as *absolutely*, *completely*, *totally*, and *almost*.

Since *very* is a common adverb in English and can be used with a plethora of adjectives, EFL students wrongly overgeneralized this combination and use this adverb with any adjective they desire, whether gradable or not. Thus, phrases such as *very enormous buildings*; *very impossible tasks*; and *very awesome performances* are not alien in their writing or speech. Such intralingual overgeneralization of the rule could be the underlying source of this error.

Making a clear distinction between gradable and non-gradable adjectives and using the right adverbs accordingly might be instrumental in avoiding this error. More importantly, learning and using adjectives in collocations is quite crucial. In other words, students should know which adverb usually collocates or co-occurs with which adjective. For example, the adverbs *extremely*, *fairly*, *very*, and *slightly* collocate with the gradable adjectives *big*, *tired*, *difficult*, and *interested*.

However, the related non-gradable adjectives *huge*, *exhausted*, *impossible*, and *fascinated* can be used with the adverbs *absolutely*, *completely*, and *totally*. Furthermore, EFL students need to learn how to use extreme adjectives instead of repeatedly using *very* with the adjective. For example, they might sound more natural if they use *freezing*, *hideous*, and *distraught*, more often than *very cold*, *very ugly*, and *very upset*, respectively.

The Fourth Most Common Error

In light of the questionnaire analysis, the fourth most common adjective-related error is concerned with a major subclass of adjectives: the participial adjectives. Similarly, Ter-Sargsyan (2020) has noticed that her students commit errors when using participial adjectives in English. Participial adjectives are easily recognized by their endings: *-ing* and *-ed*. However, some *-ed* forms, like *understood* or *broken*, do not end in *-ed* at all. These adjectives are called participial adjectives because they have the same endings as verb participles: the present participle, such as *interesting*, and the past participle, like *interested*.

Many *-ing* adjectives have a related transitive verb used to describe the way one is affected by someone or something. For example, if one speaks of *an astounding increase in sales*, it means that the increase in sales astounds that person. This applies to other adjectives such as *alarming*, *charming*, *depressing*, *worrying*, *convincing*, and *tempting*. Other *-ing* adjectives describe a state or process continuing over some time and are related to intransitive verbs. For example, *a booming economy* is one that grows and becomes successful. The adjectives *aging*, *increasing*, *decreasing*, *living*, and *dying* belong to this group and are all classifying adjectives occurring only in front of nouns. In some cases, however, *-ing* adjectives have nothing to do with verbs. Prominent examples include *cunning*, *appetizing*, and *neighboring*.

Concerning *-ed* adjectives, a large number are related to transitive verbs and indicate that something has happened to the person or thing being described. *A satisfied client*, for example, is one that has been satisfied by the business. This list includes the adjectives *delighted*, *distressed*, *inhibited*, *pleased*, and *troubled*. Some *-ed* adjectives are used for classifying or to determine the type of something. *An abandoned villa*, for example, is one type of villa, contrasting with one that is being used and not abandoned. Other classifying *-ed* adjectives include *cooked*, *closed*, *armed*, and *concentrated*.

The researcher has noticed that some EFL students keep confusing the *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives, producing these sentences:

- (8) *I got *boring* with studying for long hours.
- (9) *I am *interesting* in chess.
- (10) *It's been a *worried* time for everyone.
- (11) *Doing homework is *tired*.

A possible reason for such wrong replacement is that the adjectives *boring*, *interesting*, *worried*, and *tired* are more familiar to EFL students than *bored*, *interested*, *worrying*, and *tiring*. This adjective-related error may be attributed to the unfamiliarity or ambiguity of the rule governing the use of such adjectives.

It is particularly beneficial for EFL students to be exposed to participial adjectives in context. For example, the participial adjectives *relaxing* and *relaxed* can be taught in context, and therefore can be more conducive to understanding, as in these sentences:

- (12) A nice warm bath is so *relaxing* after a long day.
- (13) The guy was lying in the sun looking *relaxed* and cheerful.

The Fifth Most Common Error

The fifth most common adjective-related error, as reported by the English teachers participating in the present study, is placing attributive adjectives after the noun they modify. This finding is consistent with Hamza (2013) who concluded that EFL students faced difficulty in mastering attributive and predicative adjectives.

The major syntactic functions of adjectives in English are attributive and predicative. They are termed attributive when

they premodify or come immediately before nouns. Many adjectives can function as attributive and predicative, such as *an angry man* or *the man is angry*. Some are attributive only, such as *awake* and *utter*, whereas others are predicative only, like *afraid* and *alive*.

In Arabic, on the other hand, adjectives always follow the nouns they modify. Therefore, in Arabic it is natural to say رجلٌ ثري [rajolun tharī], translated word-to-word as **a man wealthy*, which is labelled ungrammatical in English. Taking such a language difference into consideration, this first language interference is probably the most direct cause of EFL students' placing attributive adjectives after the nouns they modify. Some phrases that the researcher has noticed in language classrooms include *the lady beautiful*; *a test difficult*; and *meals delicious*. EFL students should be taught that each language has its own grammatical system, and word-to-word translation from Arabic into English is not always a preferred approach.

The Sixth Most Common Error

According to the questionnaire results, the sixth most common adjective-related error is using double comparatives. This result supports Al-Harafsheh's (2012) finding that Jordanian students face difficulties in using adjectives, especially the comparative and superlative.

There are three levels of comparison in English: absolute, comparative, which is a comparison between two, and superlative, involving more than two (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1995). Those three levels are represented in the sentence:

(14) Smith is *young*, but John is *younger*, yet Philp is the *youngest* of all.

Comparative and superlative adjectives are realized by adding the inflected forms: *-er* for the comparative and *-est* for the superlative for monosyllabic and some disyllabic adjectives. Participial, trisyllabic and many disyllabic adjectives are preceded by periphrastic forms: *more* for the comparative and *most* for the superlative.

Some EFL students, as noticed by the researcher and reported by English teachers in Jordan, use the inflected and periphrastic forms at the same time for the same adjective, forming a double comparative. For example,

(15) **This motorcycle is more faster than that one*

Unless used jokingly, double comparative forms are stigmatized and unacceptable (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Such double comparison is caused by mixing up the rules of the comparative and superlative and failure to apply these rules properly.

The Seventh Most Common Error

In the present study, the seventh most common adjective-related error is using the verb *to do* for negation. This finding is consistent with Kjellmer (2005), who highlighted the problem of negation of adjectives in modern English. A sample of the errors concerning negation of adjectives, taken from the researcher's observation record, are provided below :

(16) **I don't happy today.*

(17) **He didn't absent yesterday*

EFL students who have limited exposure to authentic English tend to use the negative forms of the auxiliary verb *to do*: *don't*, *doesn't*, and *didn't*, whenever they desire to form a negative sentence. This overgeneralization might be the key source of such type of adjective-related error.

EFL students need to determine the type of verbs that precede adjectives before they decide on how to negate such verbs. They need to be aware of the rule that auxiliary or modal verbs take *not* for negation, such as *They aren't disappointed*, whereas lexical verbs take the verb *to do* for negation in the present simple and past simple, such as *The food didn't smell nice*.

Conclusion

An adjective is a part of speech which can be used to describe, identify, or quantify a noun or a pronoun. With its various types, suffixes and prefixes, comparative and superlative forms, *-ing* and *-ed* participial forms, gradable and non-

gradable categories, the adjective in English can be quite challenging to EFL students.

Through close observation in the EFL classroom, the researcher has identified seven errors that students make when they use English adjectives. Based on the researcher's observation record, a questionnaire has been designed to find out whether the seven errors are common nationwide. Two hundred and fifty-two EFL teachers in different cities and towns of Jordan participated by filling out a researcher-designed questionnaire, and their responses confirmed the researcher's adjective-related error list.

It was concluded that the three most common adjective-related errors that Jordanian EFL students make, according to the participants' responses to the questionnaire, are as follows: adjectives followed by wrong prepositions, wrong order of adjectives, and using *very* before non-gradable adjectives. Of the seven errors, the least common one is using the verb *to do* for negation.

The sources of the seven adjective-related errors could vary. A major source is the first language interference through over-reliance on the Arabic language. Other sources of such errors are failing to apply the rule completely, intralingual overgeneralization of the rule, and mixing up or ambiguity of the rules.

EFL teachers need to place more emphasis on using adjectives in a meaningful context. The researcher strongly endorses Tamimi and Razeq's (2020) suggestion that EFL teachers should use authentic English language in their classrooms. EFL teachers could, for example, ask their students to describe an image, their best friends or pets, or growing given sentences by adding appropriate adjectives. This way, learning adjectives may become more engaging, motivating, and fun.

Recommendations

In the light of the results, the researcher highly recommends that EFL teachers highlight the seven research-based errors to their students, identify the potential causes of such errors, and assist their students in avoiding them. The researcher also recommends that EFL teachers use an observation record to note down their students' repeated linguistic errors and help them to find ways to minimize such errors. In this regard, the researcher supports Alenezi's (2021) recommendation that EFL teachers should be trained to conduct classroom research. The Another major recommendation is that the issue of interference of the Arabic language should be discussed in the EFL classroom, supported by a plethora of representative examples of students' oral and written production.

To further generalize the findings of this study, more research into the topic should be done in different Arabic-speaking countries. Additionally, quasi-experimental studies on the topic, collecting data from tests and interviews and considering variables such as gender and proficiency levels, are particularly recommended.

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