
Investigating Iraqi EFL Learners' Ability in Using English Compound Verbs

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Abstract: *This study aims at: (1) Identifying and classifying the errors made by fourth year students in the Department of English language / College of Basic Education / University of Babylon, (2) locating the areas of difficulty that the Iraqi EFL learners encounter in learning categories of compound verbs.*

To achieve the two goals mentioned above the study hypothesizes that: (1) Iraqi EFL learners are unable to identify properly compound verbs. This is due to the nature of English system which is different from Arabic system in phonology, morphology and syntax, (2) Such learners are unable to use compound verbs properly in communication and (3) Intralingual Transfer has a greater influence on recognizing and producing compound verbs than other strategies such as intralingual transfer, context of learning... etc.

These hypotheses have been verified through adopting a diagnostic test of two questions. A test has been applied to a sample of 100 Iraqi EFL university learners at their third year from Departments of English, Colleges of Education for Human Sciences, Universities of Babylon, during the academic year 2017 – 2018. The findings of this study shows: (1) Iraqi EFL university learners at the third year face difficulty in mastering compound verbs. The subjects' performance in the test has also revealed that EFL university learners encounter more difficulties in using compound verbs at the production level than at the recognition one.

The subjects' errors are attributed to the following factors: a. Intralingual transfer accounts for (545, 42.05%) of all the subjects' errors. b. The second – highest rate of error cause is communication strategy which is (367, 28.31%) of all the subjects' errors. c. The rate of errors pertaining to context of learning is (16.74 %) of all the subjects' errors. d. Interlingual transfer has been found to be responsible for only (12.9 %) of all the subjects' errors. e. Some of errors are due to the student's lack knowledge of the English compound verbs since they are not aware of their different types.

Keywords: *EFL Learners, Ability, Compound Verbs*

SECTION ONE

1.1 The Problem

Compound verbs are special type of complex predicates consisting of a sequence of two or more verbs acting as a single verb and express a single expression of meaning.

Compound verbs are to be distinguished from serial verbs which typically signify a sequence of actions, and in which the verbs are relatively equal in semantic and grammatical weight. They are also to be distinguished from sequences of main plus auxiliary verbs (Wikipedia:2012)

Iraqi EFL university learners may face difficulties in learning English as a foreign language and it is difficult to comprehend all the verbs especially those compound verbs.

Nevertheless, a variety of types exist which may be distinguished according to their structure:

(1) verb-verb (VV): stir-fry, freeze-dry

(2) noun-verb (NV): hand-wash, air-condition, steam-clean, take a walk or commit suicide.

(3) adjective-verb (AV): dry-clean, whitewash

(4) preposition-verb (PV): underestimate, outrun, overcook.

(Delahunty and Garvey, 2010: 134)

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims at:

- 1-1- Identifying and classifying the compound verbs errors produced by the target subjects;
- 1- 2- categorize and describe errors grammatically;
- 2- 3- find the relative frequency of each category' and
- 1- 3- account for the possible cause of errors.

1.3 The Hypotheses

1- Iraqi EFL learners are unable to identify properly compound verbs. This is could be due to the nature of English system which is different from Arabic system in phonology ,morphology and syntax. 2- Such learners are unable to use compound verbs properly in communication.

3- Intralingual transfer has a greater influence on recognizing and producing compound verbs than other strategies such as intralingual transfer, context of learning and communication strategy.

1.4 Procedures

The procedures followed in carrying out the research include:

- 1- Presenting a brief and relevant background of compound verbs.
- 2- Conducting a diagnostic test based on the compound verbs under the study. The test will be administered to (100) of fourth – year students in the Department of English / College of Basic Education / University of Babylon.
- 3- Analyzing subjects' responses in term of interlingual and intralingual and developmental processes to relate these responses to their possible causes.

1.5 Limits of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

- 1-Iraqi EFL learners of the fourth – year, Department of English language, College of Basic Education / University of Babylon during the academic year 2017- 2018.
- 2-Identifying, classifying and analyzing errors made by those learners in the use of compound verbs.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the following :-

- 1- Providing pedagogical insights to those concerned people in foreign language teaching and learning such as syllabus designers, learners, teachers, textbook writers and testers.
- 2-Tracing the errors made by fourth year students, classifying and analyzing them in order to suggest some remedies addressing such errors .

1.7 Definition of Basic Terms

1. EFL Learners: They are learners who study English as a foreign language as their major subject in the departments of English in Iraqi universities (Dehham,2006:9)

2.Ability: the mental or physical power or skill needed to do something. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus:2018)

3. Compound Verbs: a compound verb is made up of two or more words that function as a single verb. Conventionally, verb compounds are written as either one word ("to *housesit*") or two hyphenated words ("to *water-proof*"). Also called a *compound* (or *complex*) *predicate* (Nordquist, R: 2017)

SECTION TWO

2. Literature Review and Previous Studies

2. Compound Verbs

In English, compound can be spelled as a word or two words connected by hyphen. Compounding is the process of combining at least two words spelled as one or the combination of a head and a modifier into one (Tsujimura 2000:154).

Bauer (1983:202) mentioned the classification of compound based on its part of speech as follows: 1. Compound nouns, 2. Compound verbs, 3. Compound adjectives and 4. Compound adverbs

Compound verbs :Verbs formed by compounding are much less usual than verbs derived by affixation.

A **compound verb** or **complex predicate** is a multi-word compound that functions as a single verb. One component of the compound is a light verb or vector, which carries any inflections, indicating tense, mood, or aspect, but provides only fine shades of meaning. The other, "primary", component is a verb or noun which carries most of the semantics of the compound, and determines its arguments (Wikipedia,2012).

A compound verb is also known as a "complex predicate" because the semantics, as formally modeled by a predicate, is determined by the primary verb, though both verbs appear in the surface form.

Generally, the term complex predicate usually includes N+V compounds, whereas the term compound verb is usually reserved for V+V compounds (Fernandini,2013:2).

Compound verbs are to be distinguished from serial verbs which typically signify a sequence of actions, and in which the verbs are relatively equal in semantic and grammatical weight. They are also to be distinguished from sequences of main plus auxiliary verbs.

There are four classification of forming of compound verbs, which can be formulated as follow:

- (1) verb-verb (VV):** stir-fry, freeze-dry, sky-dive
- (2) noun-verb (NV):** hand-wash, air-condition, steam-clean , take a walk
- (3) adjective-verb (AV):** dry-clean, whitewash, fine-tune
- (4) preposition-verb (PV):** underestimate, outrun, overcook
- (5) Adjective + Noun:** brown-bag

(Delahunty and Garvey,2010: 134; Ningsih and Rosa, 2013: 14)

Only the phrasal verb type is really common, however, and some compounds with under-, over- and out- do not need to be classed as lexical items. For example, out- can create a transitive verb meaning 'outdo in Xing' from any verb denoting a competitive or potentially competitive activity (e.g., outsail, outsing, outswim), while new words with over- can also be created freely (e.g. overpolish, overcriticise, overbleach)) McCarthy,2002:60).

It is worth mentioned that all these compounds have a verb as the rightmost element, and also that, with most of them, the activity denoted by the compound as whole is a variety of the activity denoted by that rightmost element. Let us call these compounds right-headed, the rightmost element being the head(McCarthy ,ibid.)

We will notice that all these compounds have a verb as the rightmost element, and also that, with most of them, the activity denoted by the compound as whole is a variety of the activity denoted by that rightmost element. Let us call these compounds right-headed, the rightmost element being the head. Most English compounds are right-headed, but not all.

2.1 Forms of Compound Verbs

Compound verbs can be formed in several ways. You can add a preposition, make a phrase, add a "helping" verb or combine two words together.

2.1.1 Prepositional Verbs

When a preposition combines with a verb to form a new verb, the result is called a prepositional verb. A prepositional verb is when a verb and a preposition come together to form a new phrase. Prepositional verbs may not be separated within a sentence.

For example:

(1) Mr. DeJulius **asked for** sources to be cited on our research paper.

(2) Michael **argues with** Robert about politics.

(3) Thieves **broke in** and stole the silver .

(Thomason & Martinet, 1986:319)

(4) The old man **fell down on** the pavement. (Eastwood,2006: 314)

Other examples include:

(5) believe in , rely upon,

2.1.2 Phrasal Verbs

A **phrasal verb** is when a verb and a word from another part of speech combine to function as a verb. Phrasal verbs are sometimes disconnected within the sentence. Frequently, the two words that comprise a phrasal verb do not retain their literal meaning.

For example:

(6) Tammy **ran away** from home.

(7) Patrick **looked up** the phone numbers of all the members.

(8) He took off his hat. (Thomason & Martinet, 1986:315)

(9) A woman got into the car and **drove off**. (Murphy, 2004:274)

When a verb combines with another type of word, such as an adverb, the result is a phrasal verb.

Some examples include:

(10) tear up, take away, take down, work on

2.1.3 Verbs with Auxiliaries

In this form, a verb combines with another verb called a helping verb. The helping verb is typically have, has, had, am, be, been, is, are, was or were.

For example, in the following sentences, the first word is the auxiliary verb and the second verb follows. Together they are a compound verb.

(11) was walking, will meet , are running, was swimming, will be considering, are running, *was starting, had lived, had been seen* . (Payne, 2011)

A **verb with auxiliaries** combines a helping verb (have, has, had, am, be, been, is, are, was, or were) with another verb.

For example:

(12) Mrs. Behrens **was helping** another student, so she could not answer my question.

(13) Tiffany **is washing** her car.

2.1.4 Compound Single-word Verb

Sometimes a single verb is a combination of multiple words. Both words might be verbs or one of the words might be a descriptor word. The words may run together as one word or they may be joined by a hyphen. Regardless of the spelling, when used together, the words function as a single verb.

For example:

(14) babysit, water-proof, stir-fry, kick-start, force-feed, Color-code, Double-click, Rely on, wear away, water-proof

A **compound single-word verb** is when a compound word, whether separated by a hyphen or not, functions as the verb.

For example:

(15) Jaimie *daydreams* during class.

(16) Darlene *sight-reads* sheet music

SECTION THREE

3. Procedures and Data Collection

3.1 The Test

The test is applied on 100 subjects from the third stage at Department of English / College of Basic Education / University of Babylon during the academic year 2017-2018. The aim of the test is to investigate Iraqi University subjects responses in using compound verbs. It consists of two parts. The first one takes the form of recognition test to reveal the subjects abilities in distinguishing the compound verbs. The second part of the test intended to elicit information about the subjects' use of the strategies to express the compound verbs at the production level. The test is regarded very important to teacher because a good test enables him to assess the subject's problems. Testing is only criterion of the subjects' evaluation. The sample of the test is 100 students out of 187 total number of the study of the fourth stage in department of English - College of Basic Education /University of Babylon. The reason behind choosing such a stage because they have studied this subject in the first course.(see **Appendix 1**.the test)

3.2 The Results of the Test

The following tables show the percentage of errors related to Question One and Two of the test:

Table (1) Percentage of Committing Errors at Recognition Level in Q.1

No. Of Items	No. of Correct Items	%	No. of Incorrect Items	%
1	35	35	65	65
2	55	55	45	45
3	45	45	55	55
4	33	33	67	67
5	22	22	78	78
6	70	70	30	30
7	34	34	66	66
8	56	56	44	44
9	19	19	81	81
10	36	36	64	64
Total	405	40.5	595	59.5

As shown in Table (1), the total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (405, 40.5 %), whereas those of the incorrect ones (including avoided items) are (595, 59.5%). The results clearly show that the subjects are unable to recognize compound verbs.

Table (2) Percentage of Committing Errors at Production Level in Q.2

No. of Items	No. of Correct Items	%	No. of Incorrect Items	%
1	31	31	69	69
2	28	28	72	72
3	43	43	57	57
4	36	36	64	64
5	12	12	88	88
6	18	18	82	82
7	19	19	81	81
8	32	32	68	68
9	27	27	73	73
10	53	53	47	47
Total	299	29.9	701	70.1

From Table (2), it has been concluded that the total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (299, 29.9 %) in comparison with those of the incorrect ones (including avoided items) which are (701, 70.1%). 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.

Table (3) Subjects' Performance at the Recognition and the Production Levels throughout the Whole Test

Level	No. of Correct Items	%	No. of Incorrect Items	%
Recognition	405	40.5	595	59.5
Production	299	29.9	701	70.1
Total	704	35.2	1296	64.8

As shown in Table (3), the highest rate of the subjects' incorrect responses (including avoided items) are (1296, 64.8 %) as compared with their correct ones (704, 35.2%). This means that Iraqi EFL university learners face difficulties in mastering compound verbs at both levels: recognition and production. Nevertheless, they face more difficulty at the production level since the total number of their correct responses (299, 29.9 %) is lower than that of their correct responses at the recognition level (405, 40.5%). These results show that Iraqi EFL University learners encounter difficulties in using compound verbs.

SECTION FOUR

4.1 Errors Analysis

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that the learners make. It involves a comparison between the errors made in the target language and that target language itself (Taylor, 1975:74).

According to Corder (1973:256) errors are indicators of an imperfect knowledge of the language to be internalized. Mistakes are committed because of the influence of conditions under which communication occurs while errors depict the EFL learners' inability to communicate with native speakers as they do under ideal circumstances where no violation of code takes place. Furthermore, Corder (1974: 30) remarks that the purpose of error analysis is "discovering the degree to which the learner expresses his messages by means of the categories and rules that the native speaker of the target language uses" (Dehham, 2016:92).

Errors seem as inevitable part of language learning (Thornbury, 2000). Traditionally, errors were deemed as the negative part of language learning and they had to be eschewed or eradicated. Recently, errors are regarded as natural processes of language learning, (Yule, 2006).

4.2 Sources of Errors

Erdoğan (2005) states that the tool for identifying and understanding the sources of errors rests on the nature of errors that involves the existence of reasons for errors that occur. According to Brown (1987:75), learners' errors can be classified into four categories : (i) interlingual transfer. (ii) intralingual transfer. (iii) context of learning. and (iv) communication strategies:

4.2.1 Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer is a form of generalization that takes prior language experiences and applies them correctly (Brown (1987: 8).The learner depends on his native language to solve problem of foreign language (FL) because of the deficiencies of his knowledge of the foreign language (Corder.1981:48). This kind of error occurs due to the effect of Iraqi EFL university students' mother tongue language on the foreign one (Brown, 2001).Some of the errors in items (1) and (6) of **Q.1** can reflect the influence of the mother tongue:

(1) *John will daydreams for us tonight.

(6) * The meeting will be waiting in an hour.

The total number of errors that belong to this strategy is (167,12.9 %).

4.2.2 Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual Transfer is the extending patterns from the target language (TL) or overgeneralization of a learner's rule . The error may be because of the influence of one target language item upon another (Penny. 2001:9).

This type of errors happens owing to improper or partial learning of the foreign language. Such errors may be the result of the influence of one language item upon another (Penny, 2001). Intralingual errors encompass the following:

1. Overgeneralization error: It involves the incorrect application of the previously learned second language material to a present second language context (Brown, 1987).

The subjects try to over generalize a pattern that leads to irregularity of the structure in English language. The influence of this strategy can be seen in items (4) and (7) of **Q.2**:

(4)* The cashier second guess me fifty cents.

(7)* Darlene shortchanged sheet music

2. Ignorance of rule restriction: it means “applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply” (Richards & Sampson, 1974, p. 70).

In this case, the learners apply a rule to a category which is incorrect that leads to errors committing. The influence of such errors can be noticed in items (7, 8, and 10) in **Q.1**in which the subjects choose compound verbs relations wrongly:

(7) *Someone will need to proof read my manuscript.

(8) *I really want to test-drive that sports car

(10) *We really need to air-condition the house

3. Incomplete application of the rules: These result from “failure to use certain target language structures because they are thought to be too difficult” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 185).

According to this strategy, the learners fail to apply complex rules since they are complex and hard in learning and use. Instead, they tend to use simple constructions to achieve effective communication. This type of intralingual transfer is found in items (1, 5, 7, and 9) in **Q. 2**:

(1) * John will shortchanged for us tonight.

(5)* You will reconvene in the role

(7)* Darlene second guess sheet music

4. False concepts hypothesized: these may derive from wrong comprehension of a distinction in the target language (Brown, 1987) and (Chanier et al., 1992).

This kind of errors may result from faulty comprehension of any distinction in the target language (Ellis, 1984, 171). It is a well-observed phenomenon in the field of second language (Richards, 1980: 178). The learners try to adopt the wrong hypothesis or build rule about the second language. These errors can be seen in items (1, 6, and 8) in **Q.1** in which the subjects use prepositions of place in incorrect places:

(1)* . Mary will take off her makeup before bed

(6)* He was looking for a nice place to camp.

(8)* I really want to test - drive that sports car.

These types of errors constitute (545.42.05 %)

4.2.3 Context of Learning

Context of learning is defined as "other features that may be of negative influence in the teaching / learning environment, are lacking explanations by foreign language teachers as well as the textbook writers who may wish to emphasize some point at the expense of some other points depending on their own beliefs about how language and grammar should be taught", (Salebi, 2004:210).

These kinds of errors are also called "induced errors", which refer to the errors caused by the way in which language items have been taught (VanPatten, 1990: 4).

This sort of errors arises from faulty methods of teaching or syllabus designers who concentrate on some aspects of the language and neglect others according to their belief or experiences (Brown, 1987). It is worth mentioning that compound verbs receive little focus in grammar textbooks and other books of grammar. The errors in items (4,5 and 9) in **Q. 1** may be attributed to the context of learning:

(4) * I had water-proofed the boat, but not well enough.

(5) * We opted for the cheaper room without a view.

(9) * Egg cartons can sound - proof a room.

The total number and percentage of these errors are (217, 16.74)

4.2.4 Communication Strategies

Brown (1987:80) says that communication strategies are the conscious employment of verbal or nonverbal mechanisms for communicating an idea when practicing linguistic forms or for some reason not available to the learner at the point in communication. They are four main communication strategies:

1. Avoidance. It means not saying what one wants to say, so one has the ability to solve the problem of how to express it (Yule, 2006: 197).According to this strategy, the subjects may tend to give no responses or make no choices. In other words, avoidance strategy has been used and represented by the items that were left by the subjects with no responses. The influence of this strategy can be seen in items (2, 4, 7, 8,9 and 10) in Q.1 and items (3, 5, 7, 8, and 9) in Q.2 in which the subjects left these items without answer.

2.Guessing: When the learners are in doubt about the correct answer, they begin to guess (Brown, 2001). Most of the incorrect response of **Q.1** might be attributed to guessing:

(1) * Mary will take off her makeup before bed.

(6) *He was looking for a nice place to camp.

(7) * Someone will need to proof read my manuscript.

(10) *We really need to air-condition the house.

These errors constitute (367,28.31)

Finally, the following table shows the frequency and percentage of the sources of errors of the whole sample:

Table (4) Sources of Errors

Type of Strategy	Frequency of Errors	%
Intralingual Strategy	545	42.05
Communication Strategy	367	28.31
Context of Learning	217	16.74
Interlingual Strategy	167	12.9
Total	1296	64.8

SECTION FIVE

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The error analysis carried out in this study reveals the following points: 1. Iraqi EFL university learners at the third year face difficulty in mastering compound verbs. This is indicated by their low performance in the test as the rate of their correct responses (704, 35.2%) is lower significantly than that of their incorrect ones (1296, 64.8 %). 2. The subjects' performance in the test has also revealed that EFL university learners encounter more difficulties in using compound verbs at the production level than at the recognition one. This is due to the fact that the total number and the percentage of the correct responses at the production level (229, 29.09 %) is lower than the total the total number and the percentage of the correct responses at the recognition level which are equal (405, 40.05 %).

The subjects' errors are attributed to the following factors: a. Intralingual transfer accounts for (545, 42.05%) of all the subjects' errors. b. The second – highest rate of error cause is communication strategy which is (367, 28.31%) of all the subjects' errors. c. The rate of errors pertaining to context of learning is (16.74 %) of all the subjects' errors. d. Interlingual transfer has been found to be responsible for only (12.9 %) of all the subjects' errors.

3. Some of errors are due to the student's lack knowledge of the English compound verbs since they are not aware of their different types.

5.2 Recommendations

In the light of the discussion of the results of the present study, the following recommendations can be posited:

1. Students should be encouraged to think in English as a separate language that differs from their own native tongue. Teachers should be careful in that all language practice must focus, in a systematic manner, on those points of language use that present significant learning problems as shown by error analysis.
2. More emphasis should be given to the topic under investigation at all levels of education.
3. English language must be taught by means of communication tasks and real -life situations which provide meaning or in the form of conversation.
4. More practices and exercises should be conducted among students in types of verbs so that the students can recognize the types .
5. Depending on the types of the errors made by the subjects of this study, the teachers/ instructors should take these errors into consideration and ask their students to avoid such errors.

6. Due attention should be giving to teaching verbs forms in English as it is a problematic area for Iraqi EFL university learners.

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APPENDIX (I)

The Test

Q.1/Underlined the compound verbs in the following sentences:

1. Mary will take off her makeup before bed.
2. The town was destroyed by the tornado.
3. Everything will work out eventually.
4. I had water-proofed the boat, but not well enough.
5. We opted for the cheaper room without a view.
6. He was looking for a nice place to camp.
7. Someone will need to proofread my manuscript.
8. I really want to test-drive that sports car
9. Egg cartons can sound-proof a room.
10. We really need to air-condition the house.

Q.2/ Fill in the blanks with suitable compound verbs from the words given below:

second guess, will be waiting, shortchanged, baby-sit, will be amazing, sight-reads, daydreams, is washing, was helping

1. John will for us tonight.
2. Sometimes, we the outcome.

3. Dad at the train station.
4. The cashier me fifty cents.
5. You in the role.
6. The meeting in an hour.
7. Darlene sheet music
8. Mrs. Behrens another student, so she could not answer my question.
9. Tiffany her car.
10. Jaimie during class.

APPENDIX (II)

The Possible Answers of the Test

Q.1

1. Mary will take off her makeup before bed.
2. The town was destroyed by the tornado.
3. Everything will work out eventually.
4. I had water-proofed the boat, but not well enough.
5. We opted for the cheaper room without a view.
6. He was looking for a nice place to camp.
7. Someone will need to proof read my manuscript.
8. I really want to test-drive that sports car
9. Egg cartons can sound-proof a room.
10. We really need to air-condition the house.

Q.2/

1. John will baby-sit for us tonight.
2. Sometimes we second guess the outcome.
3. Dad will be waiting at the train station.
4. The cashier shortchanged me fifty cents.
5. You will be amazing in the role.
6. The meeting will reconvene in an hour.
7. Darlene sight-reads sheet music
8. Mrs. Behrens was helping another student, so she could not answer my question.
9. Tiffany is washing her car.
10. Jaimie daydreams during class.