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Obstacles Encountered by Secondary School Students in Using Comparison of English Adjectives and Adverbs.

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Abstract:

This study investigates the difficulties faced by students in using the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs. The purpose of this study is to determine the degree to which students struggle with comparing English adjectives and adverbs; it also to identify potential remedies.

The researcher used two data collection instruments: students' tests and teachers' questionnaires, these were conducted to explore the obstacles in using comparisons of English adjectives and adverbs, the sample of the study was composed of 40 students and 10 teachers in Al- Motred secondary schools in Zawia. The researcher used the Spear Brown method with an expert in analyzing the results.

The findings of the study is that the students encounter obstacles in using comparison of English adjectives and adverbs,. It is also found that the learners confused adjectives with adverbs since some words are similar in adjectives and adverbs. Moreover, they end with "ly" such as early and daily the study also confirms that the students confused adjectives with adverbs since the adjective "good" and adverb "well" have the same comparatives and superlatives forms. Finally, the study proved that most of English teachers do not give enough explanation in teaching the comparison of adjectives and adverbs. It is recommend that teaches should focus both oral and written practice to reinforce students' knowledge of the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs. It is also recommended that teachers should emphasize on the different treatments of comparison

of English adjectives and adverbs by different schools of grammar.

Key words :Difficulties, English adjectives and adverbs, Students ' test, Secondary schools, English teachers.

الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب في المرحلة الثانوية عند استعمال المقارنة بين الصفات والظروف في اللغة الإنجليزية

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الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب عند استع المقارنة بين الصفات والظروف في اللغة الإنجليزية. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التعرف على هذه الصعوبات والطرق المقترحة لعلاجها استعمل الباحث وسيلتان في هذه الدراسة وهي اختبار للطلاب واستبانة للمدرسين.

مجموع الطلاب الذين اشتركوا (40) طالباً من المرحلة الثانوية بالزاوية (المطرد) وكذلك (10) مدرسين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية في هذه المنطقة.

استعمل الباحث طريقة Spear Brown لتحليل النتائج ومن أهم النتائج التي توصل إليها الباحث هي أن الطلاب يواجهون صعوبات في المقارنة بين الصفات والظروف في اللغة الإنجليزية كما أنهم يواجهون صعوبات في التمييز بين الصفات والظروف لان بعض الصفات تنتهي بحرفين وهما (L,Y) وكذلك الصفات والظروف التي لها نفس المقارنة ونفس صفة التفضيل العليا Good,beet–best,well,better–best أما بالنسبة للمدرسين فإنهم لا يهتمون بشرح المقارنة بين الصفات والظروف ، وللتغلب على هذه الصعوبات والمشاكل وضع الباحث بعض التوصيات ومنها حث المعلمين على عدم التركيز على الأعمال التحريرية وإهمال الاعمال الشفوية وذلك لتعزيز الفهم عند الطلاب في هذا المجال وكذلك أوصى الباحث على التركيز على المقارنة الصفات والظروف وذلك باستخدام طرق مختلفة في تدريس القواعد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصعوبات، المرحلة الثانوية، اختبار الطلاب، التمييز بين الصفات والظروف، التوصيات

1. Introduction

English language is used all over the world. In Libya, English is learned as a foreign language. English is difficult due to the big difference between English and Arabic. "The difference between the native language and the target language creates learning problems" (Al. Tae, 2005:137).

"Errors" can be observed , analyzed and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner, led to rush forward of the study of learners ' errors " (Brown,1994,206).

Comparative forms compare one entity or process with another. The most common comparative forms are adjectives and adverbs add with suffix (-er) or remodified by (more) the object of the comparison in most commonly with that. Superlative forms involve comparison by singling out one thing as having a unique quality. A superlative defines a specific member of a set. An adjective or adverb with an -(est) ending or which is pre-modified by most is a common marker of a superlative form. (Carter and Maccathy 2006:759).

It has been observed that a number of learners of English face obstacles in using comparison of English adjectives and adverbs.

1.1 Statement of the problem

As English teacher language for many years, the researcher has found out that secondary school students in Zawia make errors when they use the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs, Therefore, the researcher will investigate these problems and the causes behind them.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- To find out how students in third-year secondary schools in Zawia use the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs.
- To find out the factors behind the errors made by secondary school students.
- To investigate how teachers explain the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs.

1.3 Questions of the study

The study tries to find answers to the following questions.

- What are the errors made by secondary school students in using comparison of English adjectives and adverbs?
- What are the factors behind these errors?
- To what extent do teachers of English give attention to the importance of comparison of English adjectives and adverbs?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is important in field of teaching and learning English because it deals the comparison of adjectives and adverbs. It will discover the difficulties of using the comparison by foreign language learners. Hence, they will know comparatives and superlatives of English and adverbs and their irregular forms. It will also help teachers how to choose methods in teaching English. The other value of this study is that it will be beneficial to authority of education in Libya to take the responsibility of preparing and training teachers to teach English at secondary school.

2. Literature review

2.1 Difficulties in using comparison

Some adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

adjective	comparative	superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
ill	worse	worst
old	older/elder	oldest/eldest
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest
little	smaller	smallest/littlest

- The weather in Scotland was better than we thought.
- He was ill last week, this week he is worse.

* The same applies to the use of these words in compound adjectives.

- Don't think she is a better-looking than her sister.
- It's always advisable to book with the best-known company.

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- That was one of the worst-organized trips I've ever been on.
(Carter and McCarthy 2006:464)

The degrees of comparison of adverbs resemble those of adjectives like adjectives, adverbs of one syllable form their comparative and superlative degrees by adding the suffixes (-er,-est). Respectively to their positive forms.

Examples:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
fast	faster	Fastest
hard	harder	Hardest

However, most adverbs of manner have two or more syllables from their comparative and superlative degrees by means of more and most placed before their positive forms.

positive	comparative	Superlative
slowly	more slowly	most slowly
clearly	more clearly	most clearly

Some adverbs form their comparative and superlative irregularly.

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
well	better	Best
badly	worse	Worst
late	later	Latest
little	less	Least
much	more	Most
far	farther-further	farther/furtherst

(Shawish and Grenat 2008:70)

Before the comparative of adjectives and adverbs you can use.

A bit a little much a lot far (=a lot)

- Let's go by car. It's much (or a lot) cheaper.
- Don't go by train. It's much (or a lot) more expensive.
- Ann works a lot (or much) harder than most of her friends.
- Could you speak a bit (or little) more slowly?
- Her illness was far more serious than we at first thought
(Murphy 1987:202).

2.2 Comparative meanings.

A comparative form relates one entity to another. If a person says I feel better today, they are comparing their present state with how they felt before, which may have been "not well/bad" rather than "well/good":

- Their house is smaller than ours (both houses may be big, or both may be small, depending on context)
- The use of even makes the meaning of the quality being compared inherent rather than relatives:
- You're there for semester, it's not just three months, it may be even longer.
- Still and yet are more formal alternatives to even
- The last lap of the race was still more exciting.
- Yet more perplexing was the loss of 200 from the main company office.

Even and still are often used in end position, especially in spoken contexts.

- They played badly, didn't they, worse than last week even.
- The journey home was more boring still in informed spoken contexts the comparative and the superlative form are both used, with general preference for the superlative.
- Both brothers are very bright, but Paul is the brightest.
(or, more formal: both brothers are very bright but Paul is the brighter).
- Which of these two photos do you think is the best? I need one for the passport form in formal contexts, the + comparative + of may be used

The more relaxed of candidates didn't in fact get a job

(less formal: the more relaxed candidate in fact got the job.)

The sooner we leave, the faster we'll get there. The older I get, the crazier everything seems. (Yule 2006:120).

- Comparatives are often used in advertising to make things sound less definite.

- Less expensive clothes for the fuller figure (compare cheap clothes for fat people) (Swan, 2005:141).

2- We can use comparative forms, repeated with and, to emphasize that something is increasing or decreasing (1). We use that comparative ... that comparative that one development is connected to another (2).

(Carter and MacCarthy 2006:794)

2.3 Previous studies:

Purwitasari (2008) in her study "Errors in the Use of Comparative and Superlative Degrees of Adjectives " indicated that most common errors made by students were errors in comparative form and misinformation form. The errors made by the students might be caused by two factors, enteral and external. The enteral factor, which frequently happened to the students, was students' carelessness. This carelessness might be triggered by their lack of motivation to do the task and pay attention to their teacher when explaining the material. The second factor came from outside, on the other word , The environment plays an important role in the students 'errors .The factor included the class situation and the exercises that were given .

Ahmed H. R. (2020). Concluded in her Paper that students of EFL at the Ministry Education (ME) face difficulties in driving the adjectives from adverbs and vice versa. They also do mistakes when they use suffices to drive an adjective from an adverb and vice versa and cannot derive and an adjective from an adverb and vice versa.

3. Methodology

This paper used the descriptive method to investigate and handle these problems. The researcher chose a questionnaire for teachers .The questions were derived from researcher's experiences in teaching English.

The researcher also conducted a test for the students that is based on multiple-choice questions in order to investigate the main problems faced by secondary school students in using comparisons of English adjectives and adverbs.

3.1 Sample of the study

The participants of the study are the third-year of secondary phase in Al-Motred in Zawia. The second group of participants are teachers of English language. The sample investigated in this study composed of 40 students and 10 Libyan EFL secondary school teachers.

3.2 Instruments

"A language test is a systematic method and a means of checking the student's performance through the elicitation of certain behaviors to make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual." (Bachman, 1990:20).

The researcher used two main instruments of data collection. The first tool was a test given to the students to investigate the obstacles encountered by the students in using a comparison of adjectives and adverbs. The test contains multiple choice questions.

The second instrument was a questionnaire conducted with teachers of English.

4. Data analysis and discussion results

Dulay (1982: 2) states that most errors are resulted from the interference of learner's first language or mother tongue.

Davis (1968:162) states that "items analysis is a means of speculating how much information each single item contributes to the information by the test".

In analyzing data, the researcher explains the statistical approach he applied for the data analysis technique in analyzing the results of the tools of the present study.

4.1 Students' test

1. Amina is than Asma.

Table (4.1) (Results of item1)

Option	Percent	Frequency
more polite	20%	8
most polite	17.5%	7
politer	55%	22
politest	7.5%	3
Total	100%	40

In this item, only eight students (20%) answered correctly. Twenty-two learners (55%) recognized "politer" instead of more polite. Seven students (17.5%) chose "most politely", and only three students (7.5%) chose "politest". The students confused between adjectives which have one syllable with those which have two syllables or more which means that they face difficulties in using comparison of adjectives and adverbs

2. She speaks than her sister

Table (4.2) (Results of item2)

Option	Percent	Frequently
more politely	35%	14
most politely	10%	4
politer	40%	16
politest	15%	6
Total	100%	40

In this result, sixteen learners 40% chose "politer" instead of more politely as they could not distinguish between comparative of adjectives and adverbs.

3. Hani is than his brother

Table (4.3) (Results of items3)

Option	Percent	Frequently
better	25%	10
gooder	50%	20
more good	15%	6
best	10%	4
Total	100%	40

The results showed that twenty learners 50% recognized "gooder". Ten students (25%) could answer correctly by choosing "better". Six students (15%) chose "more good", and four students (10%) chose "best". The learner did not know the rules of comparative forms of irregular adjectives.

4. He is the boy in his family.

Table (4.4) (Results of items4)

Option	Percent	Frequently
most good	7.5%	3
best	22.5%	9
better	15%	6
goodest	55%	22
Total	100%	40

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As can be seen, twenty-two participants (55%) were unable to answer correctly by choosing "goodest". Only nine participants (22%) could give correct answer.

It is clear, that the learners failed to regard with superlative forms of irregular adjectives.

5. Ahmed plays than Akram

Table (4.5) (results of items5)

Option	Percent	Frequently
better	10%	4
more well	30%	12
best	15%	6
weller	45%	18
Total	100%	40

In this result, only four students (10%) could give the right answer. Eighteen learners(45%)gave incorrect answer by choosing "weller".

The learners did not know the comparative of the adverb "well". Therefore; they were unable to give the right answer.

6. We all played well, but Sami the of all

Table (4.6) (results of item6)

Option	Percent	Frequently
most well	17.5%	7
better	12.5%	5
best	17.5%	7
wellest	57.5%	21
Total	100%	

The results showed, only seven students (17.5%) answered correctly. Twenty-one learners (57.5%) were unable to answer by choosing the "wellest" the participants did not recognized the superlative of the adverb well by choosing "wellest".

7. Aisha walked than her friend.

Table (4.7) (results of item 7)

Option	Percent	Frequently
most slowly	50%	20

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more slowly	20%	8
slowlier	4.5%	7
slowlies	12.5%	5
Total	100%	40

In this item, only eight students (20%) answered correctly. Twenty students (50%) "most slowly". It appears that some students confused between comparative and superlative forms of adverbs.

8. They all walked slowly, but Ali walked of all

Table (4.8) (results of item 8)

Option	Percent	Frequently
most slowly	5%	2
more slowly	15%	6
slowliest	5%	2
slowly	75%	30
Total	100%	40

In this table, only two students (5%) have chosen the correct answer. Thirty students (75%) recognized "slowly" since they did not know the meaning of this sentence. Therefore, they failed to distinguish between the positive and superlative degrees of adverbs.

9. Sana wasthan I expect.

Table (4.9) (results of item 9)

Option	Percent	Frequently
most early	12.5%	5
more early	62.5%	23
earliest	7.5%	3
earlier	22.5%	9
Total	100%	40

The answer showed that only nine participants (22.5%) were able to answer correctly. Twenty three learners(62.5%) have chosen "more early" because they thought that early is an adverb as it ends with (-ly).

10. Nuri got up than they thought.

Table (4.10) (results of item 10)

Option	Percent	Frequently
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most early	12.5%	5
earlier	22.5%	9
earliest	7.5%	3
more early	57.5%	23
Total	100%	40

In this item, only nine students(22.5%) answered correctly, twenty-three learners(75.5%)did not know the answer.

The participants did not recognize that early could be an adjective or an adverb and their comparative is (-er) and superlative is (-est) in both as adjective or as adverb. The students do not have any idea that "earlier" is comparative of adverb "early" since it modifies on the verb got up.

11-All the boys got up early but Fadi theof all.

Table (4.11) (results of item 11)

Option	Percent	Frequently
more early	25%	10
earliest	20%	8
earlier	10%	4
most early	45%	18
Total	100%	40

In this table, the learners who answered correctly are eight (20%) Eighteen participants (45%) have chosen the word most early.

It seems that the learners were not able to recognize the superlative form of the adverb early; therefore, they failed to choose the right answer.

4.2 Teachers' questionnaire

The researcher conducted questionnaire for teachers who teach the secondary phase. Ten teachers participated in this study. Most of the questions were answered clearly since each teacher knew the goals of the study which related to the difficulties encountered by the learners in using the comparison of adjectives and adverbs in English. The teachers' questionnaire which was in Al-Motred secondary school showed that the majority of them assured that the students face difficulties in using comparison of adjectives and adverbs, four of them confessed that they do not give more practice while teaching them. Six participants confirmed that they do not

explain the rules of the comparison of adjectives and adverbs in details, as they have not enough time to do that.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the obstacles encountered by secondary school students in Zawia (Al-motred secondary school) in using comparison of English adjectives and adverbs has been carried out successfully. The study used the descriptive method that consisted of two main instruments in obtaining the results. The findings of the study proves that the students face difficulties in using comparison of English adjectives and adverbs students also confused adjectives with adverbs because some words are similar in adjectives and adverbs since they end with "ly" such as early, daily, weekly. Learners also confused English adjectives with adverbs as some adjectives and adverbs have similar comparatives and superlatives such as "good" and "well" English teachers do not give enough explanation to the comparison of adjectives and adverbs because they do not have enough times to do that.

Recommendations

- 1) Teachers should focus both oral and written practice to reinforce students' knowledge of the comparison of English adjectives and adverbs.
- 2) Teacher should pay attention to word-syllables i-e: a student should be able to recognize words of one, two or more syllables in order to use correct forms of comparative and superlative forms. Moreover, irregular comparative and superlative should be learnt through drilling.
- 3) Even though Libyan students have studied English language for at least eight years, they are weak in English especially in comparison of English adjectives and adverbs.
- 4) The authority of education in Libya should give attention to the importance in-service training which makes the teacher of English more qualified .

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