



## The Performance of Iraqi EFL University Students in Using English Compound and Complex Sentences: An Error Analysis

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**Abstract.** This study looks at the errors Iraqi university students who are learning English as a second language make when using complicated and compound sentences and punctuation, which is one of the basic linguistic structures. The aim of the study is to find out how well Iraqi EFL university students can identify and employ complicated and compound phrases along with their punctuation marks, as well as how well they can master these sentences to produce grammatically correct sentences and appropriately use punctuation points. It is believed that the majority of Iraqi EFL university students struggle to comprehend and differentiate between complex and compound sentences using punctuation. Sentence construction mistakes include run-on phrases, sentence fragments, comma splices, and missing words. Any break in a sentence's grammatical structure is considered a sentence structure error. Because sentence structure errors are global in nature, they can affect students' understanding of a phrase, a clause, or an entire section of any written text. Numerous problems can lead to the faults mentioned above. Missing clause components and improperly constructed compound and complex phrases are two of the most prevalent of these. In order to help the students identify and fix the aforementioned sentence construction mistakes, the study aims to first introduce them to some fundamental ideas of English clause and sentence structure.



## 1. Introduction

Most Iraqi EFL university students are thought to have trouble understanding and use punctuation to differentiate between complex and compound statements. Sentence construction mistakes include run-on phrases, sentence fragments, comma splices, and missing words. A sentence structure error is any occurrence of grammatical errors in a sentence. Sentence structure errors can impact students' comprehension of a phrase, a clause, or an entire part of any written text because they are global in nature. Numerous problems can lead to the faults mentioned above. Missing clause elements and improper compound and complicated phrase structure are two of the most prevalent examples. In order to help the students identify and fix the aforementioned sentence construction mistakes, the study aims to first introduce them to some fundamental ideas of English clause and sentence structure.

A sample of forty third-stage Iraqi EFL students from the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Babylon will take a diagnostic test that the researchers have developed. These days, punctuation marks like commas and semicolons are used to clarify a sentence's grammatical structure rather than to indicate to the speaker when and how long to pause. These days, the placement of parentheses and brackets in a properly punctuated mathematical expression is comparable to the arrangement of these symbols in a logical assertion. The way the statement is uttered or spoken doesn't actually matter.

Some of the situations when an elementary punctuation mark is deemed appropriate are typically difficult for students to understand. Some of them are unable to determine where to place a semicolon or comma in the sentence structure. When compound and complex sentences are used, the issue may show itself clearly. As a result, commas are a problem for many college seniors, while dashes and semicolons are a problem for many graduate students, including some teachers.

Their lack of basic grammatical distinctions, such as the distinction between clauses and phrases, appositives and participles, appears to be the root of the issues. Such a study will elucidate these differences and demonstrate the relationship between the syntactical structure of the sentences that contain commas, semicolons, dashes, colons, and parentheses and their accepted usage. Rules for using each punctuation mark correctly will be provided in order to validate this study.





## 2. Definition of a Sentence

A sentence is typically understood to be a unit that starts with a capital letter and finishes with an exclamation point, question mark, or full stop (period). Naturally, only written sentences are covered by this. Though it's not quite clear what a "complete thought" is, sentences have also been conceptually described as units that express one. Syntactically defining a sentence as a unit made up of one or more clauses is more helpful.

A sentence is more than just a long string of speech sounds; it is composed of words and phrases that must be arranged in a certain way to achieve the speaker's goals.

In many languages, words can also be divided into smaller parts, each of which has a unique meaning and needs to be organized in a certain way. We must determine the smaller components that make up a sentence and the patterns that dictate how these components should be ordered in order to assess its structure. Students should therefore be familiar with the fundamental components of a sentence, including the verb, subject, complements, and other grammatical categories.

To create a cohesive, grammatically correct sentence, students should also be able to differentiate between words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc.), phrases, and clauses. Sentences can be classified as simple, compound, complex, or compound complex. Although their structural patterns vary, all of them contain at least one independent sentence. To make their work engaging and vibrant, seasoned authors employ a range of sentence structures. For instance, an excessive number of simple sentences would seem jagged and juvenile, while an excessive number of complex sentences will be challenging to read and comprehend. (Quirk et.al, 1985:38- 49)

The number and kind of clause relationships that a sentence exhibits determines its subcategory. The researchers will concentrate on examining the difficulties that students encounter when generating and identifying multiple sentences because simple sentences only contain one clause, whereas compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences contain multiple sentences that are easier for our students to recognize.

## 3. Compound Sentences

### 3.1. Definition of Compound Sentence

"Composite structures" refers to syntactic units that are more intricate than straightforward sentences. When compared to simple sentences, these



structures will have distinct syntactic, semantic, and even phonological characteristics because they are composites of at least two initially simple sentences.

Two or more major, coordinate clauses make up a compound sentence. Both of the sentence's clauses are usually syntactically and semantically equal when they are presented as fresh information. Compound sentences are used to convey related ideas that are about equal in weight and more or less equal. Stated otherwise, the clauses are connected by a paratactic connection. (Quirk and others, 1985: 918) Each clause has a subject and a predicate. As a result, every component is a sentence that is a part of a longer sentence. Neither clause is dependent on or inferior to the other, and each makes sense on its own. (Green: 8)

There are multiple thoughts in the compound sentence. As demonstrated in the following example, any concept expressed in this type has equal value. (Alexander, 1965: 1):

- 1- *The man knocked at the door and waited for an answer.* (Ibid)

### 3.2. Structural Types of Compound Sentences

A compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions, and it may also incorporate one or more subordinate clauses. The phrase "compound sentence" may be associated with "complex sentence" to create what is referred to as a "compound-complex sentence."

From a structural perspective, compound sentences can manifest in various forms and configurations.

- 1- There are two primary clauses in a sentence.
- (2)- The horse reared and the rider was thrown.
- 2- There are three primary clauses in a sentence.
- (3) -They were fond of music, played on various kinds of instruments and indulged in much singing.
- 3- One subordinate clause and two main clauses make up a sentence (4)- They asked him, how he received the wound, but he refused to answer.
- 4- There are two main clauses and two subordinate clauses in a sentence.
- (5)- He says what he means, and he means what he says.

These sentences indicate what a compound sentence is (Close, 1993: 78).

### 3.3. The linguistic Relations of Compound Sentence



Each text's inferential load is crucial. in determining their interrelations throughout connected discourse. Discourse comprises sequences of inferential processes, some of which are grammatical or semantic in nature. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 2) assert that "A text is REALIZED by, or encoded in, sentences." The sentences inside the text must be interconnected to establish the integrity of the composition. A method of connecting sentences is by the utilization of conjunctions.

These conjunctives are used to link sequentially occurring language elements that don't have any other structural connections. The syntactic, meaning, and semantic relationships inside sentences as well as between clauses (or simple phrases) within sentences are the main topics of this debate.

### 3.3.1. Syntactic & Semantic Relations

Four comparable types of conjunctive or syntactic interactions are identified by Additive (copulative), adversative (contrast), alternative (disjunctive), and attentive (logical consequence) are described by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 238) and Close (1993: 79). Since the four categories all work together to generate a text and a sentence, they may be examined from both a syntactic and semantic perspective. The following subsections explain each category.

#### a- Additive (copulative)

The parallelism and resemblance of conjoined sentences that are equally relevant to the conversation are demonstrated by this kind (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 234).

(6)- She is interested in music and enjoys poetry.

The following elements can be used to represent additive relations: and, or, additionally, in addition, by the way, etc. As in the previous example, they can be used to convey a positive addition. On the other hand, negative addition cannot be represented by nor (Halliday, 1985: 304). For instance:

(7)- Many of the settlers were unprepared for the terrible Saskatchewan Fowlers and had never farmed before. (Berube et al, 1996:21)

#### b- Adversative (contrast)

It is an antagonistic or contrasting connection. Only binary associations are possible. Adversative interactions can be expressed in a variety of ways, including but, nevertheless, on the other hand, and instead (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 250). (8)- Peter did not work at all, but Mike put in a lot of effort. (It also suggests the opposite).(Ibid)

#### c- Alternative (Disjunctive)



Indicating a selection among two or more scenarios, with only one deemed valid. The two principal phrases are semantically disjointed, presenting a choice for acceptance between them.

(9)- She had to cry or she will perish.

d- Attentive (logical consequence)

The first clause in this kind makes reference to the second clause.

(10) He is unable to go to work because of his illness. (Close, 1993: 79)

### 3.4. Methods for Connecting Compound Sentences

A compound sentence consists of two or more separate clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions. Compound sentences are joined by two types of coordinators. There are two types of these connectors: Coordinators that are simple, like "and," "for," "but," etc., and those that are complex, like "both," "and," "either," or "not only," but also, etc. (Fowler, 1998: 96)

Punctuation markers like commas and semicolons are used in addition to conjunctions to clarify a sentence's grammatical structure. When and how long a person should pause while speaking the sentence is not indicated by these punctuation marks. These days, the arrangement of parentheses and brackets in a correctly punctuated mathematical phrase is comparable to the placement of these symbols in a cohesive sentence.

There are four ways to construct compound sentences:

1. Adding a comma and the coordinating conjunctions "FANBOYS."
2. Adding conjunctive adverbs to semicolons.
3. Not using conjunctive adverbs while using the semicolon.
4. Just using the colon.

1- Combining conjunctive coordinators with a comma

The collection of terms known as "FANBOYS" are included in conjunctions. The first letters of the following conjunctions combine to make this word.

F: For

(11)- I drink some water, for I was thirsty.

A: and

(12)- He was tired, and he had a headache.

N: nor

(13)- I can't whistle, nor can I sing.

B: but

(14)-Tom studied a lot, but he didn't pass the test.

O: or



(15)- He can buy the book, or he can borrow it from the library.

Y: yet

(16)- Tom studied a lot, yet he didn't pass the test.

S: so

(16) It was cold outside, so she put on a sweater. (Close, 1993: 79)

2- Using a semicolon to compound

A semicolon can connect two separate clauses when their link is evident, as demonstrated in the following sentence:

(17)- I will raise my kids to be critical thinkers; it won't be easy. (Rozakis, 2003: 167)

3- Combining conjunctive adverbs with a semicolon.

Conjunctive adverbs, also called sentence adverbs, are terms or expressions that, like conjunctions, establish a relationship between the sentences they connect. Generally speaking, a conjunctive adverb has greater weight and power than a conjunction. Conjunctive adverbs indicate how one clause relates to another. (ibid: 168)

a- Addition (besides, furthermore, moreover, in addition).

(18)- Some economists oppose legislation restricting foreign trade; in addition, they oppose plans to raise business taxes.

b- Likeness (likewise, similarly, in the same way).

19-Many young Englishmen condemned the English war against France in the 1790; likewise, many young Americans condemned the American war against North Vietnam.

c- Contrast (however, nevertheless, still, nonetheless, conversely, otherwise, instead, in contrast, on the other hand)

(20)-Einstein's theory of relativity was largely the product of speculation, experiments made within the past fifty years, however, have confirmed many of its basic points.

d-Cause and effect (accordingly, consequently, hence, therefore, as a result, for this reason)

(21)-Chamberlain made an ill – considered peace treaty with Hitler after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia; as a result, England was unprepared for the German invasion of Poland.

e-A means – and- end relation (thus, thereby, by the means, in this manner).

(22)-Florence Nightingale organized a unit of thirty – eight nurses for the Crimean War in the 1850, thus she became a legend.

f- Reinforcement (for example, for instance, in fact, in part Indeed).



(23)-Public transportation will also be vastly improved; a high – speed train, for instance, will take passengers from Montreal to Toronto in less than two hours.

g- Time (mean while, then, subsequently, afterward, earlier, later)

(24)-At first, members of the audience were overtly hostile to the speaker, later, they cheered her as one of their own. (ibid: 169)

4- Coordinated clauses with a colon

When attempting to clarify, illustrate, or expand upon the preceding independent clause, a colon can be used to join two distinct sentences, as the following sentence illustrates:

It is clear that they are connected.

(25)-I've just had some good news: I've been offered a job in a law. (Quirk et al, 1985:1615)

### 3.5. The Applications of Compound Sentences

The uses of compound phrases have been divided into two main categories by some grammarians. The applications fall into one of two categories: literary or generic.

#### 3.5.1. Common Applications for Compounds Sentence

The length of compound sentences can vary; nonetheless, an increase in the number of clauses correlates with a decrease in comprehensibility. Typically, we combine phrases to create compound sentences for the following purposes:

\* Compound sentences facilitate intricate conversations, enhancing information and depth beyond what a simple statement would convey.

\* Compound sentences can be employed to provide justification and enhance the persuasiveness of a statement.

\* Compound sentences may be intentionally employed to obfuscate by incorporating excessive details that overwhelm the listener's ability to comprehend. (Fowler, 1998: 60)

#### 3.5.2. The Applications of Compound Sentences in Literature

To prevent the monotony that would undoubtedly arise from all sentences being the same length and brevity, sentences must be combined. Using the accessible musicality of language, which is partially derived from the rhythms produced by various sentence lengths and structures, is one of the writer's responsibilities.



Even poets who follow the technical rules of iambic pentameter occasionally stray from the rhythm, changing the length and structure of their sentences to liven up the writing and draw the reader in.

### 3.6. Functions of Coordinator

There are two categories of coordinator roles: major functions and auxiliary functions.

#### a- Primary Functions

Coordinators' main function is to join big sentences that are equally important and valuable. Run-on sentences are avoided by using the coordinator.

#### b- Secondary Function

To link the components in a series, coordinators are used. They could also be used to start sentences.

#### 3-6 Meanings of Coordinators

As previously seen, the term "fan boys" is spelled out by the initial letter of each coordinate relater.

a- For is employed to provide justification for an action.

b- And s employed to denote a continuation of a concept.

c- Nor is employed as a double negative indicator.

d- But is employed to show a contrast.

e- Or is employed to denote a substitute.

f- Yet is employed to show a contrast.

g- So is employed to show a result. (Fowler, 1998: 79)

## 4. Complex Sentences

Although a difficult sentence comprises one main clause, it varies from a simple sentence in that it contains one or more subordinate clauses that serve as sentence elements. Subordination is an asymmetrical relationship that demonstrates how the sentence and its subordinate clauses are structured in a hypotactic structure, creating a hierarchy where the subordinate clause functions as a component of the entire sentence. (Quirketal, 1985: 987)

### 4.1. Components of Complicated Sentences

Each phrase in a complicated sentence contains its own subject, predicate, object, complements, modifiers, etc., just like in a simple sentence. But there is a difference: a complex sentence utilizes statements or clauses in various



roles, However, there is always a word or phrase that serves as the subject, object, complement, and modifier in a simple sentence. Chalker (1984), p. 239

#### A- Clause

A sentence fragment made up of a verb and its subject is called a clause. It is a linguistic utterance with a subject and a finite verb, according to Jespersen (1933:342). According to Zandvoort (1975:211), referenced in Thakur (1998: 85), it is a structure that has "the form of a two nucleus group with a subject and a finite verb in it."According to Strumpf & Douglas (1999:334-335), a clause is a collection of words that includes a predicate and a subject.

There are two types of clauses: the main clause and the subordinate clause. A primary clause can make sense on its own. For a subordinate clause to fully express its meaning, the main clause must be present. It is not a linguistically sound idea on its own (Andrews, 2006:39). The following example can help to clarify these two parts:

26- He needed the money, so I gave it to him.

There is a major clause and a subordinate clause in this sentence. "I lent him the money," which consists of the predicate (lent him the money) and the subject (I), is the primary clause. It is an entire grammatical concept. Simple sentences are made up of independent main clauses.

With the subject "he" and the predicate "needed it," the sentence's subordinate clause is "because he needed it." It is impossible for this clause to have meaning on its own. The full meaning depends on the primary sentence.

#### 4.2. Complex Sentence Types

Relative clauses and complement clauses are the two types of complex sentences. (a) Relative clauses

The broad classification of relative sentences considers semantic criteria, which are separated into:

1-Restrictive Relative Clauses (RRCs).

2-Non – Restrictive clauses.

1-Restrictive Relative Clauses

From a semantic perspective, they describe a method of referring to a collection of objects by first selecting a broader set (the domain) and then narrowing it down to the members that possess a secondary property (the restricting clause). Therefore, the eligible set is limited by RRCs. RRCs are an essential tool for identifying entities that don't have a lexemic equivalent in the language. For the string to have meaning and sensitivity in the pertinent communication environment, the RRC is necessary.



The pragmatically inadequate usage of the unaltered nominal in the absence of the RRC results in ambiguity and even nonsensical signals. RRCs, which are composed of a head noun and a relative clause, are structural elements of complex noun phrases. RRCs therefore function as nominal modifiers, changing only the head of the antecedent. The deletion takes place in RRCs. The identical nominal in the embedded clause must be removed in RRCs. RRCs are usually written without pauses, inside a continuous intonational contour, and without commas to visibly indicate them. That is indicated by this statement. (27) Men [who drink too much] are not good husbands and fathers. (Cornilescu, 1996: 76)

#### 2-Non- Restrictive Relative Clauses

Semantically, they are different from RRCs in that they offer more details about an antecedent that has already been established rather than limiting its area. NRRCs can be left out without affecting the message's appropriateness and clarity. While NRRCs, being appositives, alter the complete antecedent, RRCs just alter the head. Commas are used to visually distinguish NRRCs, which are frequently expressed inside a clear intonational contour.

(28) My uncle is a bad spouse and father because he drinks too much. (ibid:78)

#### (b)- Clauses of Complement

To identify the forms of complement clauses, it is essential to highlight a significant phenomenon: the embedded complement clause may increasingly adopt a nominal quality and diminish in sentience. Clausal complements fall within one of the following categories:

#### 1-That Clauses

They exhibit the highest degree of sentience, retaining the majority of characteristics of an independent clause. The validity of that clauses is proved by their ability to exhibit the same distribution as non-phrase noun phrases. That clauses and noun phrases are mutually exclusive, as demonstrated by the fact that they are non-phrases.

(29)- [That Helen was nervous] was obvious.

(30) - It was obvious [that Helen was nervous] .

#### 2-Infinitive Clauses

Certain NP locations in Complex Sentences can be occupied by sentential entities, which may then transform into an infinitive clause. Infinitive clauses have reduced sentience and greater nominality compared to THAT clauses, primarily attributable to the absence of tense distinctions.

(31) He is pleased [ to be making progresses]. (Graver, 1986: 116)



### 3-Gerundial Clauses

Gerunds have more nominal characteristics than THAT and infinitive clauses, making them the most noun-like complement clauses.

(32) [His letting the car kill him] was obvious. (ibid: 116)

## 5. The Test

A test is "a systematic method of eliciting performance which is intended to be the basis for some sort of decision making," according to Skehan (1993:03). The test consists of two questions: the first is intended to gauge the subjects' recognition-level responses, while the second is intended to gauge their production-level responses. Twenty items make up the first question, which is designed to assess the participants' ability to finish sentences with an appropriate relative pronoun or adverb. The subjects are given a list and asked to add an appropriate relative pronoun or adverb to each statement. In the second question, which has twenty items, participants are asked to construct compound or complicated statements by combining basic sentences. It seeks to pinpoint the specific locations where Iraqi EFL university students struggle to use compound or complicated sentences while also analyzing the types and causes of their mistakes.

### 5.1. Result Analysis

This section displays the results in relation to the subjects' performance on every test question. It is the basis for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses, meaning they are either confirmed or disproven.

#### 5.1.1. Subjects' Question Performance of the First

The purpose of this inquiry is to gauge the subjects' recognition-level responses. to assess their ability to identify the sentences and finish them with the appropriate adverb or relative pronoun. Given that the respondents' incorrect responses are 23.5%,400 and their right responses are 26.5%,450, their performance at the recognition level is subpar. This confirms the first hypothesis, which states that Iraqi EFL university students have trouble utilizing complicated and compound English sentences.

#### 5.1.2. Subjects' Question Performance of the Second

The test's second question is designed to gauge the subjects' production-level responses. Additionally, it is designed to support or refute the second hypothesis, which holds that pupils' ignorance of fundamental grammatical



distinctions influences them. It has been noted that the overall percentage of right answers (8.7%, 148) is less than the percentage of wrong answers (41.3%, 702). This speaks to the subjects' poor proficiency with sophisticated and compound English sentences. The second hypothesis is therefore confirmed.

### 5.1.3. Subjects' the Whole Test

The total number of wrong replies (41.3%) at the production level was higher than the recognition level (23.5%), according to the performance of employing English compound and complicated sentences. At the recognition level, however, a greater percentage of individuals (26.5%) gave accurate answers than at the production level (8.7%). Additionally, other measures, including the mean and the coefficient variation, are employed to verify the results.

The production level's mean (6.03) is lower than the recognition level's (10.5), and the production level's coefficient variation (40.3) is larger than the recognition level's (34.4). This occurs as a result of the students' superior performance at the recognition level over the production level.

Table (1) The Frequency and Rate of Subjects' Performance at the Recognition and Production Levels in the Whole Test

Level	No. of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Recognition	Q1	450	26.5	400	23.5
Production	Q2	148	8.7	702	41.3

One kind of language analysis that concentrates on the mistakes that students make is called error analysis. It entails contrasting the mistakes produced in the target language with the language itself.

(Taylor, 1975:74)

### 5.2. Possible Sources of Errors

It is evident that "systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching." (Corder, 1974:120)

These blunders can be of great benefit to the learners' in order to identify the places of weaknesses since producing errors can be viewed as a method the learner utilizes in order to learn. (Source: Ibid.)



## 6. Conclusions

A number of pedagogical suggestions and ideas for further study on the subject are included in the section's conclusion. The previous survey and the discussion of the study's findings, objectives, and hypothesis led to the conclusion that third-stage Iraqi EFL university students struggle to identify and construct complicated and compound sentences. Their poor performance in the initial evaluation, as indicated by the percentage of right answers, is proof of this.

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