RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF THE LINGUISTIC ERRORS IN THE INTERROGATIVE AND IMPERATIVE SENTENCES WRITTEN IN TEST PAPERS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Throughout the last decades many studies have been tended to investigate, identify and treat different linguistic or non-linguistic errors made by learners in their spoken and written language. Sometimes instructors' errors are involved in few researches also.
Aims: This study is concentrated on investigating the linguistic errors (LEs) that were found out in the test sentences (TSs)- interrogatives (InTSs) and imperatives (ImTSs)- made by instructors who are non- native speaker nor specialists in English language. This study aims to answer these questions: 1- Which type of TSs are used more frequently? And why? 2- Are there LEs in these TSs? And what are their categories ? 3- What are the reasons behind committing them? and how can they be avoided?
Methods: (323) TSs written in (51) test papers are subjected to the statistical investigation and analysis. These TSs were used to test scientific materials taught in English in Baquba Technical Institute.
Conclusions: Results show that ImTSs are used more frequently than the InTSs because the former easily constructed and achieve the same purpose, i.e., elicitation of information. In these TSs, (439) LEs are identified and divided into three categories: syntactic (which is divided into six classes), punctuation and spelling respectively. The reasons behind these LEs are attributed to the shortage in the instructors' competence of the linguistic principles and rules that govern the language construction. Consequently, *these instructors use English language but they do not know it* systematically. Finally, the present study sets up recommendations to avoid these LEs in the test papers and in other types of writings.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions of Terms

Achievement Tests

Achievement tests are one of the main test types that are used to test knowledge of the instructional content of a material taught on a course or a given grade level, usually in planned instruction. They are designed and written by teachers in classroom or instructors in universities or institutes. An achievement test can be applied in several tasks: multiple choice, transformation, gap filling, matching, open questions, etc (Crystal 1987:377 and Khodadad, 2009:2). All these are performed by test sentences (henceforth referred as TSs) which are syntactically either interrogatives or imperatives and they are called commonly *questions*. In one test paper, several TSs may be written which are considered as the direct means to know the level of mastering materials and the readiness for advanced instruction. The process of making a test is not easy and one of the important characteristics of a well test that it should not suffer from any type of linguistic errors (henceforth

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referred as LEs) so a great deal of attention must be paid in this process. Certainly, the well-linguistic formation of the TSs helps the students to understand correctly what are required from them and that, in turns, leads to well scores and achievement (Al-yaari, Al-Hammadi, and Al-yam, 2013:46).

Interrogatives

This type of sentences is used to ask for or seek information about a certain matter or thing so interrogatives or questions are used to achieve one of the discourse acts of speech that is an elicitation requesting "a *linguistic* (verbal) response". Generally, they imply that the speaker/asker does not know the answer but the situation is different when the written interrogatives are found the achievement tests (henceforth referred as InTSs). These In TSs are considered *elicitation techniques* used to know whether the answers are known by the examinees or not. (Quirk *et al.,* 1985:807 and Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992: 14-19). According to how they are constructed and the kind of reply they expect, interrogatives can be divided into three main types: yes/no questions, wh-questions and alternative questions. The first and second types which have crucial places in this study are identified below:

Yes – No Questions

Stageberg (1981: 177-9) , Huddleston and Pullun (2005:24) and Murphy(2012: 98) state that yes/no questions are syntactically formed by placing the first auxiliary (henceforth Aux.) in the verb phrase(henceforth referred as V) (*be*, *have*, or models) which is called also the *operator* before the subject (henceforth referred as S) and if there is no one   *Do* is introduced. This type must be given a rising intonation and ended with question mark (?). The expected reply is affirmation or negation, i.e., elicit a response which is either yes or no and nothing else. Quirk, *et al.* (1985:807) present the following examples :

-Ann is writing a paper. ~ *Is Ann writing* a paper *?*
-The boat has left.   ~ *Has the boat* left*?*
-She ' ll be waiting outside. ~ *Will she be waiting* outside*?*
-They live in Sydney. ~ *Do they live* in Sydney *?*
-Her efforts proved successful. ~ *Did   her   efforts   prove* successful*?*
-He likes diving.   ~ *Does he like* diving*?*
 -She has a cold .   ~ *Does she have* a cold *? (esp Am E)*
              *Or ~ Has she (got)*a cold *? (esp Br E)*

In a logically well- formed reply , 1st and 2nd person pronouns are exchanged for one another when a question is converted into an equivalent statement (e.g.: *Have I* met you before ? Yes *, you* have and *Do you* like this climate *?* Yes*, I* do.) (ibid).

Wh- Questions

Undoubtedly, there is no wh- questions without the aid of one of these simple interrogative wh- words (or interrogative pronouns) : *Who, whom, whose, what, when, where, how* and *why*. The formation of these questions requires wh-word comes in the first position in the wh-element (i.e., the clause element containing the wh – word) that itself initializes the sentence to perform a various grammatical function. Like the Yes-No questions, the inversion of S and Aux. is required in all cases except when the wh- element is a S, and *Do* is introduced if there is no operator. Wh- questions, phonologically, have falling intonation and their expected reply is from a wide range of possibilities that provide the kind of information indicated by the interrogative word or element that is used to ask the question (Stageberg, 1981:181 and Murphy, 2012:98-100) and Quirk *et al.* (1985: 818) present the following examples of wh-questions indicating the various grammatical functions of the wh-elements

Examples	Wh-word or element Function
Who ever opened my letter ?	S
Which books have you lent him ?	Direct object (henceforth O)
Whose beautiful antiques are these ?	S Complement (henceforth C)
How wide did they make the book case ?	O C
When will you be promoted ?	Adverbial (henceforth A) of Time
Where shall I put the glasses ?	A of Place
Why are they always complaining ?	A of Reason
How did you mend it ?	A of Manner
How much does he care ?	A of Quantity
How long have you been waiting ?	A of Time duration
How often do you visit New York ?	A of Frequency

The rule of the positional priority of wh-word is applied when it functions as adverbials of instrument(e.g.: *What* shall I mend it *with*?) and of purpose(e.g.: *What* did you do that *for* ?) or generally in informal usage(e.g.: *where* are you *from*?), but it is broken in formal usage (e.g.: *On what* did you base your predication?). (Quirk *et al.,* ibid and Murphy, 2012:98) It is important to be mentioned here that there is no wh- word functions as a   V, so the content of prediction can be questioned by *What* (e.g.: A: What are you doing ?   B: I am reading.) and when *Who* and *What* functioning as S normally take a singular V (e.g.: Who *is* making all that noise ?) (Quirk *et al.,* 1985:756).

Alternative questions

The questions of this type have the same syntactic rules- even the punctuated mark (?)- of the above two types but they differ in their expected reply which is one of two or more options presented in the question itself (e.g.: *Would* you like chocolate, vanilla , or strawberry ice cream ?) or *(Which* ice cream would you like? chocolate, vanilla or strawberry?)*.* It is frequently used in multiple choice test(Quirk et.al.1985:823-5).

Note: Other minor types of questions that are used rarely or none in the written TSs :*(a)the rhetorical* questions which have the form of questions and the meaning of statements ,i.e., they have interested or surprised   reaction and generally don't expect any answers (e.g.: *Aren't* his paintings amazing ? and *What* do I care?). (b) *declarative questions* which have final rising intonation and used to "invite the hearer's verification" (e.g.: Pauline gave Tom a digital watch*?*). And (c) *Exclamatory question*s which are structurally questions with having " illocutionary force of an exclamatory assertion "(e.g.: *Wasn't it a marvelous concert*!)(ibid).

Imperatives

Shaw (1986:34) and Crystal (2003:140,227) state that an imperative sentence is normally identified by the obligatory omission of S which is implicitly indicated as *you*, the V must be in the base form or (less commonly) an Aux. in the base form followed by the appropriate form of the main V referring to some future actions and it is punctuated with a period (.) at the end. Therefore, all the seven basic sentence patterns can be imperatives, simply, through the omitting of the S and using the base form of the V (e.g.: *Jump.* V; *Open the door.* VO; *Be reasonable*. VC; *Get inside*. VA; *Tell me the truth*. VOO; *Consider yourself lucky*. VOC; *Put the flower on the table.* VOA (Quirk, et.al. 1985: 827-8). The most frequent pattern used in the imperative TSs is VO (e.g.: Define the following terms.).   All these patterns of imperatives achieve different uses. Codoravdi and Lauer (2012: 38) divide these uses into four groups: directives, wish-type uses, permissions and invitations and disinterested advice. This study concentrates on the first group that is imperatives as *directives* which are the speaker's acts whose purpose is to instruct the addressee do, or sometimes not do, something and the speaker generally expected compliance on the other part. Consequently, the written imperatives used in tests (henceforth referred as ImTSs) are directives used by instructors / examiners to order or instruct the examinees to elicit the required information, answers or other reactions about a certain idea or topic and the

latter is obligated to comply to the former who has the authority of the exams and, in turns, the success or failure. Accordingly, ImTSs perform the same purpose of InTSs in the tests or exams (Matthews, 2007:106 and Codoravdi and Lauer, 2012: 37-8).

Errors

Many definitions have been intended to explain the meaning of the term *error*. Here are some of these presented historically:

1- Long (1977: 279) considers" any phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical deviance … from a standard variety of English which is attributable to the application … of incorrect grammatical rules" as an *error*.
2- Hendrickson (1980:169) defines an 'error'- from the teacher's perspective- as "an utterance, form, or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real-life discourse".
3- Krashen (1982, p.139) refers to 'error' as "any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or cause of the deviation might be".
4- Chaudron, (1986: 67) sees an error as " any additional linguistic … behavior" that is "reacted to negatively" and needed or given a notice of correction or improvement.
5-Ellis (1994 :np) defines error as a deviation from the norms of the target language which is the standard written dialect is generally chosen as the norm particularly in language classrooms.
6- Crystal (2003:165) presents the traditional notion of errors "which was based on the language user's ablity to conform to a set of real or imagined standards of expression".

Recently, all the linguists and specialists nearly agreed that any deviance from or alteration of the linguistic constrains of a target standard language is an *error*. Fromkin *et al.* (1996 :297) specify what is meant by the *standard* when they consider a language that " is usually the most widely spread and used to teach non-native speakers". Until 1965, the concept *error* simply refers to *mistake* even the former, linguistically, seems to be more complicated. The distinction has been begun when the linguist Naom Chomsky stated the difference between the Saussurean paradigm: langue (the linguistic competence) and parole (the linguistic performance). Ellis (1994:12-3) and Crystal (2003:87-8) explained that the former refers to the speakers' mental representation of the linguistic rules that of their native language while the latter refers to the actual use of this competence. Consequently, Corder (1967) and Crystal (2003:165) specify the term *errors* for competence errors and the term *mistakes* for the performance errors and from this view , an error seems to be a deviated language occurring as a result of the shortage of appropriate systematic knowledge of the linguistic rules whereas a mistake is a deviated learner language that occurs when learners fail to perform their linguistic competence and this is the definition adopted in this study. Throughout the last few decades, many researchers {for examples, Kroll (1990) Henning (1991) Kepner (1991) Casanave (1994), Ishikawa (1995), Frantzen (1995), Hamplyons and, Polio (1997), Fischer (1984), Robb, *et al.*

(1986), Zhang (1987), Carlisle (1989), Kitao and Kitao (2000), Sarfraz (2011), Gustilo and Magno (2012), etc.} have been worked in the area of *error analysis*, a brench of applied linguistics, which deals with the systematic identification, classification and analysis of the linguistic or non-linguistic errors found in spoken or written language of second language *learners*. This technique is carried out through the comparison with the linguistic principles and rules of the target language and it provide valuable information for teachers, researchers and learners (James, 1998 cited in Gustilo and Magno 2012: 96-9, Crystal, ibid and Erdo an, 2005:262). Each research has manipulated different data samplings, methods, perspectives and treatments. Essays have been investigated more than any other type of learners' productions but no two researches share the same perspective or classification of errors. The errors that are excluded by a researcher become very crucial to another and those which are classified into three types are divided into more than thirty classes and subclasses although all these classes may be cycled around four categories: omission, addition, selection and (mis)ordering (Corder, 1973 and Ellis, 1997 cited in Erdo an, 2005:264). Few researchers have focused their error analysis studies on investigating the linguistic teachers' or instructors' language like Al-yaari, Al-Hammadi, and Al-yam (2013).

Aims

The present study is concerned with investigating the ELs of the TSs (InTSs and ImTSs) written in the *achievement test papers* (or what is commonly known as question papers) that are used in the terms or finial exams. These TSs were made by the *instructors* of Baquba Technical Institute, *who are non native-speakers or specialists in English language*, to test scientific-academic materials taught in English language exclusively. The study agrees with the known and acceptable truth that "it is inevitable that all *learners* make mistakes and commit errors" (Erdo an, 2005:262) but what is the situation with those *instructors* who write TSs? Accordingly, it aims to answers the following questions:

1- Which type of TSs are used more frequently by those instructors? And why?
2- Are there LEs in these TSs? And what are their categories?
3- What are the reasons behind committing them? And how can they be avoided?

Methods and Procedures

To carry out the objectives of this study, (51) achievement test papers made by the instructors of Baquba Technical Institute are investigated wholly . They were used in the terms and final exams to test scientific materials taught exclusively in English language in the medical, technological and administrational departments of this institute. The test papers consist of (323) TSs distributed into InTSs (yes/no questions and wh-questions) and ImTSs. The following procedures are applied to achieve the objectives:

1- Identifying, linguistically, the correct and erroneous TSs (InTSs and ImTSs) in the sample.
2- Classifying the LEs of erroneous sentences into types, and then categorizing each type if it is needed.

3- Calculating the frequencies and percentages of the occurrences of each type and category to determine its rank among the others.

4- Discussing the LEs with examples selected from the erroneous sentences *quoted exactly* as they appeared in the sample.

5- Diagnosing the LEs of these examples and providing the corrections of them.

6- Setting up conclusions and recommendations to use the basic linguistic rules of writing TSs properly that qualify the instructors/test writers to avoid these LEs in future.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The sample that includes (323) TSs is distributed into two types : (280) ImTSs and only (43) InTSs (yes/no questions and wh –questions) . This indicates that the most frequent type of TSs used by the instructors is the ImTSs . These quantitative results are tabulated in Table 1 below :

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Total Occurrences of the TSs Types

No.	Imperative	Interrogative		Total
Freq.	280	Wh- question	Yes/no question	323
		41	2	
		43		
Percent	87%	13%		100%

All the (323) TSs are examined to find out its linguistic status, i.e., if they are correct or erroneous. Any TS will be considered erroneous if it is not formed or punctuated according to the general rules of English grammar –mentioned in 1.1.2 (I and II) and 1.1.3 above- or it has word(s) spelt wrongly. Generally, the results show that only (115, 36%) TSs are correct linguistically while (208, 64%) are erroneous as illustrated in Table (2) below:

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Total Occurrences of the Correct and Erroneous TSs

TS Types / Linguistic Status	ImTSs Freq.(%)	InTSs Freq. (%)	Total(%)
Correct sentences	95(34%)	20(47%)	115(36%)
Erroneous sentences	185(66%)	23(53%)	208(64%)
Total	280(100%)	43(100%)	323(100%)

It is important to clarify the following two notes about Table (2) above :

1- The ratios of the occurrences of the erroneous ImTSs(185,89%) and erroneous InTSs(23,11%) of the total erroneous TSs(208) are not exposed in this table since they are *nearly* the same of the occurrences of them as *types* in the sample appeared in Table (1) above.

2- The frequencies and ratios of the correct and erroneous TSs of each type are shown only for additional information and not for the analysis or detailed discussion.

This study adopts the three-category classification of the LEs and these categories are: *syntactic*, *punctuation*, and *spelling* and the frequencies of them are (220,45%) TSs, (192, 39.5%) TSs, and (27 , 5.5%) TSs respectively. The investigation shows

that the majority of these erroneous TSs suffer from two or more errors belonging to different categories and few ones have only one error, as a result, (439) linguistic errors are identified. To illustrate, consider the following Table :

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Total Occurrences of the Errors Categories

Category / No.	Syntactic	Punctuation	Spelling	Total
Freq. (%)	220(45%)	192(39.5%)	27(5.5%)	489(100%)

Analysis and Discussion of the Results
The dominance of ImTSs

As it was shown in Table (1) that the most frequent type of TSs used in the sample of this study is the ImTSs (280 ,87%). This result can be attributed to the syntactic and semantic simplicity of this type. As it was explained in (1.1.2), constructing an ImTS is simply done by using the base form of any V that can be used to elicit information or instruct to apply a certain idea or matter (the test requirement) ,that is, the O. As punctuation marks, the ImTS begins with a capital letter and ends with a period (.). The matter is syntactically more complex with the construction of the InTSs (43 , 13%) which requires choosing the appropriate operator and Wh-word or element, converting of S /V and using the question mark(?) at the end. Therefore , the writers of the TSs who look for simplicity and get rid of the syntactic constrains prefer to use the ImTSs.

The dominance of Erroneous TSs

The quantitative results illustrated in Table (2) and Table (3) show that (115, 36%) are correct TSs , i.e., they do not suffer from any kind of LEs, while (208, 64%) TSs have in (489) LEs their constructions of the three categories: *syntactic*, *punctuation*, and *spelling*. Consequently, each one of these (208) TSs *is semantically wrong* since any LE of these categories causes a real damage in the meaning of the TS. Each category will be discussed separately and provided with examples of TSs *quoted exactly* as they are appeared in the test papers of the sample.

Errors Categories

(I) Syntactic Errors

The analysis of this study shows that the category of syntactic errors is ranked firstly (220, 80%) TSs and it appears in six classes. Each class will be explained through presenting examples from the sample erroneous TSs to show *only* the syntactic LEs and provide the correct option (s), that is, the punctuation and spelling errors will be out of the discussion here. These classes are shown in Table (4) below:

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Total Occurrences of the Syntactic Errors Classes

No.	Classes	Freq.(%)
1	Misuse or Absences of Auxiliary	75 (34%)
2	Misuse or Absences of Determiners	40 (18%)
3	Misuse of Suffixes	36 (16%)
4	Misuse or absences of prepositions	28 (12%)
5	Word Classes Misrecognition	26 (11%)
6	Misuse or absences of words	15 (9%)
	Total	220 (100%)

Misuse or Absences of Auxiliary

This category of LEs is the most frequent one occurring in the sample. It is a matter of misusing or an absence of the appropriate auxiliary which is related to what is called S/V concord, i.e., "a formal relationship between elements, whereby a form of one word requires a corresponding form of another". (Crystal, 2003: 93-4). In constructing sentences and specifically questions, the relationship between the primary auxiliaries (Be, Have, Do) and concord is considered a basic and primary knowledge for any English user and the righteous usage is obligatorily recommended. As it was explained previously, these are the block stones of building InTSs. In this study, (75) errors of this class are identified. For examples, in [1] the use of Aux. *is* with the plural noun *pathways* and the presence of Aux. *are* with the noun *method* plus the singular possessive pronoun *its* in [2] are the LEs. Semantically, the ImpTS (*explain one …*) that is the second part and the complement of [2] states that there are methods not only one and proves the correctness of using the Aux. *are* which requires plural noun *methods* and plural possessive pronoun *them* instead of *its*. The correct formations of [1] and [2] are explained below :

[1] What *is* the ... pathway*s* …. ?
      Correct : What *are* the … *pathways* … ?
[2] What *are* the *method* of … , explain one method of *its* ?
     Correct : What *are* the *method*s of … ? Explain one of them.

The ignorance of using Auxs. in [3] makes he syntactic constructions is linguistically unacceptable. To compensate the inevitable Aux. *do* after the Wh-word *What* and since this TS is intended to test the examinees' knowledge of the scientific terminology *Ketosis* that is actually defined by academic authorities, so it is preferred to get rid of the personal pronoun *we* by depersonalized this TS through replacing the active voice by the passive that is used commonly in the "language of technical and scientific description" as in option 1 (Widdowson, 1974 :288, Quirk *et al.,* 1985:23 and Crystal, 1987:230) or using another two active and simple as options 2 and 3. To correct [3] completely, the Aux. *does* must be introduced in the second part as shown below :

[3] What we mean by *Ketosis* ? And why this condition occur ?
    Correct 1: What *is* meant by … ? and why *does* this ….?
          2: What is ... ? and why *does* this ….?
          3: What does ... mean ? and why *does* this ….?

It can be noticed that [4] suffers from the same problem. The presence of the Wh-word *what* with the plural noun *types* needs surely to the Aux. *are* and the use of the *of* construction is correct but for the sake of simplicity it can be replaced by the singular possessive pronoun *its* (Quirk *et al.,* 1985:362 and Murphy 2012:4). The correction is shown below:

[4] Define the key and what the type*s* *of it* ?
     Correct : …… , and what *are* the type*s* *of it* ?
      Or : ……, and what *are its* types ?

The inaccurate concord is not only the problem of the InTSs but the ImTSs also suffer from it when the imperative Vs reflect a collective or plural semantic sense. For example, the use of the V *Enumerate* (or *list*) at the beginning of [5] requires only a plural noun (*qualifications*) as an O because its semantic sense indicates " to name *things* on a list one by one" (Hornby 2000: 420 ,750). This error is corrected below :

[5] Enumerate the *qualification* of a nurse.
     Correct : Enumerate the qualification*s* of a nurse.

Misuse or Absences of Determiners

Crystal (2003:134) defines Determiners as " a class of items whose main role is to co-occur with nouns to express a wide range of semantic contrasts, such as quality or   number ". The articles *the/a* and other words such as *all/each/every*, *this/that*, *these/those*, *some/any* etc. are the most common determiners used in forming any sentence. The recent study shows that (40) TSs have LEs of this type. In [6], the absences of both articles *a* before the noun *diagram* and *the* before the noun phrase *word program* which is a known program used for printing make this TS wrong grammatically and meaningfully and the addition of these articles will correct it as appeared below:

[6] Show in diagram … in word program … .
     Correct : Show in *a* diagram … in *the* word program … .

The LE in [7] is the prior position of the definite article *the* which is a central determiner and must be preceded by the predeterminer *all* not the reverse and the use of *the* is optional here (Quirk *et al.,*1985 : 258). The correct TS is shown below :
[7]Enumerate *the all* … ?
     Correct : Enumerate *all* (*the*) … .

The misuse of the demonstrative determiner *this* before the plural noun *methods* is a crucial LE in [8] since *This* which is a central determiner cannot occur with plural common nouns unlike *the* and *no* that have complete paradigm i.e., they can occur with all three noun classes (singular count, plural count, and singular noncount) (Hornby, 2000:1352 and Quirk *et al.,* Ibid : 255).To correct this TS and create proper number concord, the determiner *these* must replace *this* as shown below:
[8] Write *this* methods.
     Correct : Write these methods .

Misuse of Suffixes

The sample of this study have (36) TSs suffering from problems of misusing (inflectional or derivational) suffixes. As simple grammatical basics, Vs in the base form (stem) have zero suffixes, while those in the simple present tense (third-person singular) need adding the inflectional suffix (-s) (e.g.: she *works*). The addition of the inflectional suffix (-ed) is sufficient for coining the simple past or the past participle of Vs(e.g.: I (have) *worked*) whereas the addition of the *–ing* suffix to the Vs forms either *present participle* used in the continuous aspect (e.g.: I am working), as postmodifier of a noun, (e.g.: a *laughing* face), a *gerund* functioning as a noun, (e.g.: *smoking* is forbidden) or as a prepositional complement (e.g.: I am thinking *of/about buying* a house.) (Stageberg 1981:97,140; Quirk *et al.,* 1985:1063; Crystal, 2003: 337-8 and Murphy, 2012:124). One of these (36) TSs is [9] which ,as it is

known from its writer, is intended to be ImTS for *instructing* the examinees to make a matching of the items belonging to two columns, but s/he commit an error in using the gerund (*matching*) instead of a V in the base form (*match*) as it was explained in (1.1.3). This replacement and using a proper construction (option 1 or 2) which is recommended to be used with matching test type will cure the problem completely, as shown below :

[9] *Matching* between the followings
  Correct 1 : Match the following items in column A with
      those in column B.
    2 : Match the items on the left to those in the right.

The LEs in [10] can be solved in two ways. First, without changing the TS construction, using the nominal derivational suffix –*ing* that is obligatorily recommended with the Vs *promote* , *print* to make them postmodifiers of the noun phrase *the following tasks*. Second, omitting this noun phrase and using the present-s suffix those Vs will treat the LEs and change the construction of this TS to a briefer one. The correct options are illustrated below :

[10] Write a program that does the following tasks:
   1-Promotes … . 2 – *Print* … .
Correct 1 : Write a program … the following tasks:
   1-promot*ing* … . 2 - print*ing* … .
  2 : Write a program that 1- promote*s* … . 2 – Print*s*… .

The writer of [11] uses the (-ing) suffix incorrectly for three times. First , the gerund *containing* cannot be used as a head of the supposed noun phrase , that it already suffers from the absence of a determiner, and it must be replaced by the plural noun *contents* preceded by *the screen* or simply the possessive pronoun *its* . Second, the use of the prepositional complements *painting* and *limiting* after the preposition *with* coordinated to imperative structure is grammatically unacceptable so this *with* must be omitted. One TS having four requirements (draw, enumerate, paint, and limit) with these LEs may be confused to the examinees who may forget a requirement and in turns lose scores. To simplify the [10] structure, these directives are converted into branches as explained below:

[11] Draw Excel screen and enumerate screen *containing* with
  painting and *limiting* position of the following Cells?
Correct : Draw an Excel screen, and then
  a) enumerate its contents,
  b) paint and limit the positions of the following cells in it.

Misuse or absences of prepositions

In this study, the investigation shows that there are (28) cases of the misuse or absence of important items belonging to one of the close word class called *prepositions*. They "typically precede noun phrases to form a single constituent of structure." Sometimes these items are called particles when they come after certain verbs to form phrasal verbs. (Crystal 2003:352,368). The absence of the preposition *of* is one of the LEs found in [12], and [13]. In the former, the absences of (i) determiners (*a* before the noun *table* and *the* before *word program*) , (ii) a preposition and (iii) a appropriate suffix cause syntactical incorrectness. As one of the phrasal Vs, *consist* requires obligatorily a preposition (*in* or *of*) and in [12] its companion *of* is suitable. The position of this phrasal V after a noun phrase indicates that it functions a postmodifier needed

for the addition of the verbal inflectional suffix –*ing* so consist*ing of* is the correct choice unless *that-clause* with the (-s) suffix(*that consists of*) is used as a substitute for it (Murphy 2012:270). The correction will be :
[12] Draw table in word program *consist* … and … .
 Correct : Draw *a* table in *the* word program *consisting of* ….

In latter, the wh-word *which* is used in questions to ask the examinees " to be exact about one or more … things from a limited number " so it requires its companion *of* that certainly must be followed by a plural noun in this context, i.e., the singular *address* must be *addresses* (Hornby 2000: 1475). This type of question but without S/V inversion is like the other alternative questions (as explained in1.1.2 III) that are employed frequently in the multiple choice tests. The correct form of [13] can be shown below:
[13] …, which the following *address* can access … ? a-…
  b- … c-… d-….
  Correct : which *of* the following *address*es …? a-… b-…
   c…. d-…

The presences of the prepositions *of* and *with*in [14] and [15] respectively are the LEs and make the situation wholly the reverse of the previous TSs . In [14] , there is absolutely no need to use *of* before the plural demonstrative determiner *these* which can be substituted by the phrase *the following* only, while in [15] the preposition *with* must be deleted and either the coordinator *and* followed by the V *give* in its base form making V to V coordination or only the gerund *giving* is used as happened with [11] above (Quirk et al 1985:948). The corrections of these two TSs are shown below:
[14] Answer *of these* questions:
  Correct : Answer these questions .
  Or : Answer *the following* questions .
[15] Define … , *with* give …
  Correct 1 : Define … and give ...
   2 : Define … giving … .

The misuse of a preposition is one of LEs in [16]. The writer uses the preposition *on* with the word *example* which needs obligatorily its companion *of*. The other LE is the misuse of the central definite determiner *the* before or after the universal determiner *each* (Quirk *et al.,*1985:383, Hornby.2000: 432). The former must be omitted as explained below:
[16]Enumerate the … and give examples *on the* each one ?
  Correct: Enumerate the … and give examples *of* each one.

Word-Classes Misrecognition

There are (26) TSs having LEs of misusing items of the open word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) which is clearly attributed to the defects in the instructors' linguistic competence. Consequently, those instructors have a misrecognition among these classes and this will certainly create a real damage in the syntactic and semantic construction of TSs. For example, the writer of [17 used the adjective *different* instead of the noun *difference* although the definite article *the* is present. This LE indicates that s/he has no distinction between these word classes and no awareness of the grammatical rules that govern their correct uses and positions ,for instances, a noun is identified by articles(e.g.: the *difference*) not an adjective and the later can be preceded by an article only if it is used as a modifier of the former (e.g.: the

different quality, feature, etc) Crystal (2003:134). To correct this LE, one of the two options below can be used :

[17]: What are the *different* between … and … .

　　Correct 1 : What are the *differences* between … and … ?

　　　2 : What are the *different qualities* between … and … ?

This category of errors is noticed also in [18] below . The writer used wrongly the adverb *mathematically* instead of the adjective *mathematical*. S/he may ignore or forget that the adverbial derivational suffix -*ly* is added to *most* adjectives to form adverbs of manner functioning as modifiers of Vs not nouns and they cannot be preceded by an article or followed by a noun as the situation with adjectives. This TS also suffers from the misuse of the preposition after the noun *expression* so it needs to replace *for* by *of* (Stageberg 1981:99 and Hornby,2004:442) . The correction is shown below:

[18] Write down the *mathematically* expression *for* ….

　　Correct : Write down the *mathematical* expression *of* …

The words order of [19] is not proper. To achieve the examiner's directive in this TS , that is , writing the names of the bones constructing the cranium - the noun *cranium* is used as an adjective functioning as a modifier of *bones* , the position of the preposition *of* is reconsidered and the use the definite article *the* before *cranium* will be necessary. The corrections of these LEs are explained below :

[19] Write the name bone s *of* cranium.

　　Correct: Write the names of the cranium bones**.**

Misuse or absence of words

Errors of this type are exemplified in two cases: (a) the presence of words that cause a redundancy, that is, using "more information than is strictly necessary to decode the message", (b) the absence of appropriate ones that are needed to complete the meaning and syntactic structures of the TSs. Both break Grice's conversational maxim of quantity. It is observed that [20] below suffers from the presence of redundant word *procedure* and the use of the two types of purpose structures (*for+…-ing* and *to+base V*) in the same TS which is better to be avoided since it does not serve the syntactic consistency. Also, the prepositional phrase *for the following tasks* can be substituted by either past participle plus the preposition such as *used for* or simply *that clause* (Crystal 1985:117,146 and Murphy 2012:128,184). Three options can be the corrections of [20] as shown below:

[20] write the procedures *for* the following tasks:

　　a- *procedure for add*ing an item…　　b- *procedure to* print … ?

　　　Correct 1: Write the procedures *for* the following tasks:

　　　　　　a- *add*ing … .　　b- *print*ing … .

　　　2: Write the procedures *used* for : a- *add*ing …

　　　　b- *print*ing … .

　　　3: Write the procedures *that* : a- *add* … .　　b- *print* …

The [21] (which is syntactically and semantically not a sentence nor TS), [22] and [23] suffer from the absence of words that are needed to complete their senses as TSs. The addition of a V in its base form like *state*, *mention, give* ,or *write* at the beginning of [21] , after the coordinator *and* in [22] and after the question mark(?) in [23] will solve the problems. The wh- question construction is also suitable with the [21] and the use of *Explain them briefly* can also be a proper substitute for *Short notes* in [23] as shown below :

[21] the difference between serum and plasma ?

　　Correct : *State* the difference between serum and plasma.

　　 Or : *What is* the difference between serum and plasma ?

[22] Define and the objective of …?

　　Correct : Define and *mention* the objective of …. .

 [23]what are the stages … ? Short notes

　　Correct : What are the stages of …? *Give* short notes .

　　Or: What are the stages of …? *Explain them briefly* .

As it has been explained above that any TS of the yes /no interrogatives requires either *yes* or *no* response and -as it is known from the writer - this is not sufficient to be the answer of [24]. The instructor looked , in addition to the affirmation or negation , for more scientific information about the question so there is a need to add an eliciting V such as *explain*, *discuss* , *prove* ,etc. after the question mark and get rid of *or not* that is here redundant . Also in [24] there is a misuse of the determiners *this* and *the* since the figure that shows the system was drawn in the test paper so using *the* before the word *system* and *this* before the word *figure* is more correct as shown below :

[24] Is *this* system shown in *the* figure in equilibrium *or not* ?

　　Correct : Is *the* system shown in *this* figure in

　　　　　equilibrium? Explain.

Errors in Punctuation

The punctuation system is manipulated for two purposes, these are, the separation and the grammatical, semantic, or pragmatic specification. They are achieved by the presence of various punctuation marks that are not flexible ,i.e., they are used according to fairy strict conventions (Quirk *et al.,* 1985:1610-11). For example, the presence of the question mark (?) at the end of a sentence indicates generally that it is grammatically an interrogative sentence and semantically a question needing for a reply. This study investigates the punctuation system used in the constructions of the InTSs and ImTSs of the sample-which are mainly limited with the capitalization and terminated marks (.) and (?)- to identify the correct use or incorrect use of the punctuation marks. As has been explained previously that a TS begins with capital letter and ends with a period(.) if it is an ImTS or with a question mark (?) if it is an InTS. The results show that (131, 41%) TSs are correctly punctuated and (192, 59%) TSs are not, i.e., having inappropriate punctuation marks that change the linguistic characteristics of these TSs. Punctuation errors are less frequent in the InTSs (9, 21%) since it is commonly known and even from the nomination of the mark that (?) is for questions ,i.e., interrogatives. The incorrect ImTSs are the most frequent ones (183 , 65%) and the majority of the errors are the use of the (?) or other marks instead of the (.) which is generally known to the writers of these TSs as the end mark of statements and cannot be for the ImTSs that are used to elicit information like the InTSs. These quantitative results are illustrated in Table (5) below:

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of the Total Occurrences of the Correct and the Incorrect Punctuated TSs

Types　　　　Punc. Uses	ImTSs	InTSs	Total
Correct	97 (35%)	34 (79%)	131(41%)
Incorrect	183(65%)	9 (21%)	192(9%)
Total	280(100%)	43(100%)	323(100%)

Spelling Errors

The investigation shows that (27, 5.5%) LEs are in the spelling of words which cause serious damages and changes in the intended semantic sense of these words and then in the whole meaning of the TSs. This category comes finally because all the TSs are computing typed, i.e., certain spelling errors are auto-corrected. Crystal (1986:213) states that spelling is "a more conscious, deliberate process, which requires awareness of linguistic structures, and a good visual memory, to handle the exceptions to the regular patterns" so it is concerned with the user's linguistic competence which its shortage is the problem of the instructors of this sample as all the results show. He (ibid) also refers to studies that classify the spelling errors into four types: omission, addition, substitutions, and inversions. In the present study, the identified *ill-spelt words* are classified into two types :

(i) meaningful word (e.g.: discus قرص for *discuss* ناقش, mach اثنان for *two* سحب, تطابق for *match* وحدة قياس سرعة الطائرة, fined for *find* , and defend for *define*).

(ii) meaningless word (e.g.: fillin for *fill in*, inustrate for *illustrate*, clinicl, for *clinical*, digram for *diagram*, and explan for *explain*) .

In [25], the examiner has no distinguish between the word *fill* and the word *full* which belong to different word classes and have different meanings (*Fill* is V أكمل and *Full* is Adj كامل). Undoubtedly, the intended meaning belongs to *fill* and not to *full* in [25] as shown below:

 [25] *Full* the blanks

       Correct : *Fill* the blanks.

The semantic problem with [26] is more serious than the above TS because the two cases (i) and (ii) are found, i.e., the meaningful word *val**u**es* and the meaningless word *araise*. It is known from the instructor that *val**u**es* was intended wrongly for *val**v**es* and *araise* was intended for *arise* that means *to happen* or *occur* and not to *raise* that means *increase* or *move upward* (Hornby, 2000: 54,1045). The misuse of the wh-word with its proper Aux. is another LE in this TS. In the interrogative part, the *who* must be replaced by *how* followed by the Aux. *does* because it is intended to ask about the manner in which the action of the V happened nor about a personal S as illustrated below:

[26] list the heart *values* ? *who* heart sound *araise*?

       Correct : List the heart *valves* and *how does* the heart sound

              arise ?

The Reasons behind these LEs

After investigating all these categories and classes of the LEs that are identified in this study, it is possible to know the reasons behind committing them. All these LEs are attributed to the shortage in the instructors' linguistic competence simply because these instructors are not specialist in English language nor native speakers. They are engineers, physicians, biologists, administers, etc. who learned English language indirectly when they were under- or postgraduates in their specializations. After these studying periods, they become instructors of scientific-academic materials which have to be taught in English

language exclusively in the recent years. They use this language without systematic knowledge of the linguistic principles and rules that govern its structures. They depend only on the content words and ignore, for example, the functional word classes like determiners and prepositions which are for them only accessories. Therefore, these LEs are not noticed or may be ignored deliberately by the writers who have no or little awareness of the necessity of using Auxs. (be ,have , and do or models) as building stones in interrogatives and making correct concord between these items and the other elements. The arbitrary use of suffixes or prepositions is also a clear evidence of the instructors' competence problem. All these things and others compose "the system of rules" which they have been mastered by the users of English language so that these users will be able to "produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences"(Crystal, 2003:87-8). Although they had had chances to study them directly in the primary and secondary schools but with the long passage of time, certainly, they were forgotten because they have been used unsystematically or may not be used. Consequently, the recent study has shed lights on the truth that these instructors *use English but they do not know It systematically*

Conclusions

Throughout the statistical investigation and analysis of the (323) TSs of the sample, the following conclusions have been drawn :

- The ImTSs (280, 87%) are the most frequent type of TSs used by the istructors since they are easily constructed and achieve the same purpose - eliciting information about the test topic- of the InTSs which come next with only (43, 13%),
- There are (489) LEs in the erroneous TSs which are (208, 64%) of all the (232) TSs and this indicates that the majority of erroneous TSs have more than one LEs.
- The identified LEs are divided into three categories: syntactic (220, 45%), punctuation (192, 39.5%), and spelling (27, 5.5 %) respectively.
- The syntactic category comes firstly and it is divided into six classes: misuse or absence of Aux., determiners, suffixes, prepositions, word classes misrecognition and misuse or absence words.
- The category of the punctuation errors has the second rank and the problems are mostly with the capitalization and the use of proper terminated marks especially in the ImTSs.
- The final rank of the spelling errors category is attributed to that all TSs are computing typed with auto–correction. The ill-spelt words are either meaningful words with different intention or meaningless words.
- All these results are attributed to the shortage in the instructors' linguistic competence, i.e., the lack of the systematic knowledge of the linguistic principles and rules that govern the correct constructions of these types of sentences. The LEs are clear indications that these instructors *use English but they do not know It systematically*.

Recommendations

According to the above results, the following recommendations are set up :

- For appropriate use of English language for general and scientific purposes, the instructors who are non native speakers nor specialist in English language have to get periodically courses in the basic linguistic rules of this language to enforce and improve their linguistic competence.
- TSs are the main tools used to test examinees and determine their levels of mastering the studied materials, so learning how to construct these sentences correctly is necessary for any instructors to avoid any confusion or ambiguity.
- Ready-made patterns of TSs that are written and revised by language specialists can be good solutions for instructors who have a little awareness in English language so the instructors' role is only to fill the gaps with the test requirements (e.g.: What are ----s ? or Define the ----- .,etc.)
- The use of hard or soft English - Arabic dictionary is so useful and important for the checking and writing the correct spelling and choosing the proper words.

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