





















\*Vehicles have provided us with a lot of convenience that we require it very much.

Vehicles have provided us with a lot of convenience that we require very much.

In the above example, in the first sentence, the EFL learner adds the pronoun (it) as a result of fossilization.

#### **e. The Transfer of Training**

This normally takes place when EFL learners apply rules learned on textbooks or their teachers in the learning process. However, if the instructions or textbooks put emphasis on specific grammar point structures at the expenses of others, learners tend to develop their language acquisition skills on one side. Odlin (1990) stated that in the case that either the book or the teacher's instructions are incorrect, learners will also be inclined to make wrong set of the taught structures. Based on this, EFL learners are likely to overproduce the subject relative and under produce other English relative constructions such as the direct object relative. This is attributed to the consequences of their exposure through textbook contexts which emphasizes on subject relative. Hence using the textbooks, EFL learners follow the same trend from textbooks by emphasizing on subject relative and advocating for low frequency on the direct object relative.

#### **f. Overgeneralization**

Richard( 1985) defined overgeneralization as a process through which the learner extrapolates the use of a grammatical rule of linguistic item past its acceptable uses in a foreign language. This phenomenon takes place when learners formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions.

With regard to English language relative clauses , EFL learners tend to be unaware of the existing differences between restrictive relative clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses (Richard ,1985).

The following are examples that illustrate the problem associated with overgeneralization:

My uncle, **who** works in New Zealand is rich.

\*My uncle **who** works in New Zealand is rich.

### **g. Avoidance**

Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in the foreign language. According to Ellis(1993) learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic structures as a result of differences between their native language and the target language. EFL learners' native language causes them to produce numerous errors in English language.

Avoidance technique makes EFL learners omit some aspects of the English language construction features they are unsure of through the use of fewer relative clauses in sentence construction , EFL learners unlikely to make a high number of errors. Gass(1996) pointed out that English language structure avoidance by EFL learners is related to the relative clause level of frequency. In this sense, most frequent relative clauses have a higher likelihood of being avoided.

For example:

The daughter to the man **who** I know is currently studying in London.

\*The daughter to the man I know is currently studying in London.

In the above example the learner has been to effectively use avoidance without having to compromise the grammar or logic of the sentence.

### **h. Native language transfer:**

Lado(1999) stated that foreign language learners rely on mother tongue knowledge when faced with specific problems in the process of communication process. EFL learners are able to transfer the form and meanings from the native language to the production and comprehension of English language.

The following are some examples that illustrate the problem associated with native language transfer.

The man who I loaned my guitar to is my friend.

\*The man who I loaned my guitar to him is my friend.

### **i. Motivation**

Motivation is another factor that can contribute to EFL relative clauses difficulties, it plays a crucial role in the learning process and should be put into consideration when teaching English language structure. Lack of motivation from the side of the teacher leads to poor achievements in the language learning process.

Being aware of the above mentioned factors enables both the teacher to effectively identify learners' weakness and think of appropriate ways of overcoming these weaknesses towards holistic development of the learners' skills.

## **12. Previous Related Studies**

Chang(2010) made a study entitled "Second Language Relative Clauses Acquisition: An Examination of Cross-Linguistic Influences" with the aim to analyze and describe the difficulties that EFL learners encounter in acquiring relative clauses. A total of 237 English-major freshmen participated in the study. One written composition from each participant was collected. In addition, a 44-item-multiple-choice test on relative clauses was administered. Data were analyzed in terms of:

- 1) The total number of relative clauses in each pattern.
- 2) The number of errors produced in each pattern of relative clauses.

The findings of the study suggested that the main causes of English difficulties of relative clauses for EFL students were limited knowledge of grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of English syntactic structure.

Mohammed (2016) studied "Problems Encountered by University Students In Using Relative Clauses " with the aim to direct the students' to master the utilization of relative clauses and to show EFL learners how to utilize relative pronouns correctly and how to use commas in relative clauses. In addition, the study intended to guide the students to the best means which can lead them to overcome relative clauses errors. The results of the study revealed that EFL students face some serious problems in using relative pronouns and clauses; students do not know how to use commas within relative clauses; in addition, the students are not aware of reducing relative clauses. The researcher recommended that students should extend their

knowledge in grammar field; and they shouldn't just restrict their study on academic curricula hence they should read books which contain relative clauses.

Gao (2014) studied "An Exploration of Using Relative Clauses Problems and Their Causes" with the aim to identify relative clauses problems experienced by EFL university students at intermediate level through multiple perspectives, a mixed method approach was used; integrated questionnaire surveys, participants' self reflections, the Aural-Lex tests and dictation transcriptions conducted both at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The findings of the study suggested that the main causes of relative clauses difficulties were limited knowledge of English grammar, inadequate vocabulary and poor awareness of the features of connected sentences.

### 13. Data Analysis and Discussion

The questionnaire consists of two parts, part one contains ten statements which investigate the causes of the difficulties that EFL learners face in using relative clauses, the second part consists of ten statements to elicit some of the solutions of relative clauses problems from the teachers' point of view. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese secondary schools.

**Table (1) the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for the study Hypothesis:**

1. Relative clauses difficulties are attributed to many factors.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	The complicated nature of learning English is attributed to syntactic structure differences between EFL learners' native language and English .	3.6	.80	29	0.023
2	Language structure, mother tongue interference , differences and similarities between the first and the foreign language lead to EFL learners' difficulties.	2.4	.50	28	0.010

<b>3</b>	EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary	<b>3.3</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0.006</b>
<b>4</b>	Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is one of the reasons for the commonality of errors by EFL learners	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0.046</b>
<b>5</b>	EFL learners tend to develop a personal system which is a mix of first and foreign language system	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>6</b>	EFL learners transfer parametric values from their first language to English which affects significant elements of a sentence such as relative clauses thus affecting the sentence's grammatical correctness	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>7</b>	Avoidance plays a key role in the acquisition of relative clauses in EFL learning as learners tend to avoid using difficult linguistic features; they tend to omit structure they are unsure of	<b>2.9</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>8</b>	EFL learners tend to formulate a linguistic rule based on the exposed language data or instructions with no consideration for exceptions as a result of overgeneralization	<b>2.7</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>9</b>	Limited textbooks contents or teachers' instructions results in overuse or no use of relative clauses not taught	<b>2.9</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0.023</b>
<b>10</b>	Teaching relative clauses is neglected in the curriculum at many schools and universities because teachers and students are more interested in other English skills and do not consider it an important part of their courses.	<b>2.6</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.036</b>

It is clear from the above table that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (10) statements are greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents. According to the above findings, we can say that EFL Sudanese secondary students face some problems in using relative clauses because of the above factors, so the first hypotheses of the study is verified.

**Table No.(2 ) Chi-Square Test Results for Respondents' Answers of the Questions of the study Hypothesis No. (2)**

2. Teachers can help students to overcome relative clauses difficulties by using proper methods and teaching materials that maximize students' benefits from the entire teaching process and raising their awareness about the importance of English language structure and using relative clauses for learning in general.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling them to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
2	A focus on the mistakes and problems of EFL learners alongside the teaching of relative clauses enables better effective learning	2.5	2.6	17	0.00
3	The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize students' benefits from the entire teaching process	2.4	2.4	13	0.00
4	Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in teaching relative	3	.80	25	0.03

	clauses as a way of increasing students participation and confidence				
5	Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills	2.9	1.6	20	0.00
6	Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses	2.4	1.9	12	0.00
7	EFL teaching in small classes can be rewarding for both teachers and students	2.5	1.4	17	0.00
8	Students should be aware of different structure aspects such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling as they contributed to the students' difficulties in using relative clauses	2.7	2.6	15	0.00
9	Students should be aware of the importance of English syntactic structure in the process of EFL learning	3.6	.80	29	0.023
10	Teachers should teach English stucture systematically and comprehensively and allow sufficient practice time	2.4	.50	28	0.010

**Source: The researcher from applied study, SPSS 24**

From the above table, it is obvious that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (10) statements is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, so the second hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

#### **14. Conclusion and Recommendations**

According to the findings of the questionnaire which conveys the views of teachers about the problem of the study, EFL Sudanese secondary school



students face serious problems in using relative clauses due to many causes such as the following:

- Limited exposure of English relative clauses is a major reason for interchanging pronouns and putting them in the place of relative clauses.
- Effects of L1 transfer , lack of practice , motivation and self-confidence.
- Teachers do not use suitable learning materials and tasks that suit the level and the needs of the students.
- Language structure, mother tongue interference, differences and similarities between the first and the foreign language lead to EFL learners' learning difficulties in the acquisition of relative clauses.
- EFL learners construct sentences with relative clauses in the direct object position hence making the use of relative clauses unnecessary.
- Constructive differences in English and other languages internal structure is one of the reasons for the commonality of errors by EFL learners.
- Weakness of students in lexis, semantics and syntax lead to some relative clauses difficulties.
- Students' lack of awareness of different aspects such as content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling contribute to their relative clauses difficulties .
- Learners develop a tendency of transferring old language habits to the process of learning English thus making it difficult to learn the new language.

According to the responses of the teachers to the questionnaire, the following are some suggestions to overcome relative clauses difficulties:

- Frequent exposure of relative clauses increases the students' ability and confidence in English thus enabling them to make grammatically correct sentence structure as the accuracy of relative clauses tend to improve with time as a result of exposure .
- The teacher should be effectively able to identify proper methods and teaching materials that maximize students' benefits from the entire teaching process.

- In order to improve their English skills, students need to practice as without sufficient practice students can never develop their language skills.
- Syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning English language structure.
- Teachers should adopt the strategy of generated relative and null pronouns in the teaching of English relative clauses as a way of increasing students' participation and resulting confidence.
- Teachers should focus on the overall structure of English relative clauses as a way of facilitating holistic development of English skills.
- Teachers should try to raise the students' awareness about the importance of relative clauses ,motivate and encourage their students.
- Inter- language enables the EFL teacher to better understand the source of the learners' problems and provide effective solution.
- Understanding of errors is helpful in the teaching and learning process of EFL learners since it enables both the teacher and students to identify the causes of the errors and find appropriate solutions towards improving the students' learning process.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points :

- Teachers should raise the students' awareness about the importance of the use of relative clauses in foreign language learning.
- Teachers should provide students with the necessary structure and vocabulary that students are likely to encounter during their tasks.
- Teachers should provide students with immediate feedback to correct errors and promote self-confidence.
- The teacher should allow students to brainstorm vocabulary and grammatical structures they are likely to use, by doing so he/she encourages them to use them effectively.
- Teachers should use authentic materials that suit the level of the students, needs, interest and background knowledge.

- Teachers should be well-trained and experienced; having good English language skills help students to be good language users and applying teaching techniques helps to improve students' English learning abilities.
- EFL students should practice collaborative learning strategies as curriculum designers must take into their account the importance of using collaborative learning strategies in the syllables of different stages.
- Students should practice the grammatical structures they are taught.
- Students should be aware of the importance of relative clauses in the process of foreign language learning .



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