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Assessing the Ability of Sudanese English Learners when Using Grammatical Structures Communicatively

Omer Elsheikh Hago Elmahdi

Associate Professor in Linguistics, Open University of Sudan Affiliated to Taibah University
KSA

Abstract: This study aims at explaining the confusion that led by the misuse of English grammatical structures when conveying meanings in written English texts. Indicating how committing certain errors in written English structures constrains Sudanese English learners' performance. Investigating English grammatical structures experienced by Sudanese learners who are preparing to graduate with B.A. in English. Therefore, the roles that grammatical structures play in models of communicative competence are discussed in this paper. Additionally, the study explains the role of mastering these structures in communicative purposes. The obtained results revealed that Sudanese students are incompetent in using grammar well enough for some real-communicational purpose. Grammatical structures play a role in language communicative competence for the learners of English language. Learners' mastery of the language communicative ability is affected when language learners are unable to successfully communicate in L2 without cultural knowledge of what is considered appropriate according to a particular context in the target language.

Keywords: Grammatical structures; Learners communicative competence; Communicative purposes; Language communicative ability.

1. Background

Language is a significant means of communication that helps people to contact with each other. Each language has its own importance and features that differentiate human beings from other living creatures. Talking about an international language for communication generally comes in mind is English. It attracts many language learners to study this language for distinct purposes. Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is important for most of the students because it increases their chances of employment where English is a predominant language. Additionally, by studying EFL, learners can exchange information, ideas, and thoughts through speech or writing with other English language speakers all over the world.

There are several methods of assessing Language Communicative ability of learners and how language teachers and second language acquisition (SLA) researchers drew on these methods to pave the road to non-native speakers of English to improve their communicative ability. Also there are so many discussions that have discussed how different instructional practices influenced how learners acquire knowledge of English as a second or foreign language.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The performance of Sudanese EFL learners shows many errors when communicating in written English, as noted by many Arab EFL specialists. The misuse of English grammatical structures leads to the confusion of the conveyed meanings of the written texts. Therefore, committing certain errors in written English structures constrains Sudanese English learners' performance. The causes of such errors are too many. This research is aimed at investigating English grammatical structures experienced by Sudanese learners who are preparing to graduate with B.A. in English. Sudanese learners of English language at the university level face many problems in expressing themselves in English, so they make poor English texts. This issue has been experienced by the researcher as a teacher of English at the university level, therefore, the researcher intended to study (assess) one of these problems that is the English language communicative ability of learners of English language at the Open University of Sudan. The researcher thinks that assessing language communicative ability of learners of English language would be the proper area to study for its value is seen, in particular, in helping researchers, educationalists, teachers of English for any techniques would improve learner's practical language skills. This paper concentrates only on the study of grammar which has had a long and important role in the history of second language and foreign language teaching. For centuries, to learn another language, or what referred to generically as an **L2**, meant to know the grammatical structures of that language and to cite prescription for its use. Grammar was used to mean the analysis of a language

system, and the study of grammar was not just considered an essential feature of language learning, but was thought to be sufficient for learners to actually acquire another language (Rutherford, 1988).

Grammar in and of itself was deemed to be worthy of study – to the extent that in the Middle Age in Europe, it was thought to be the foundation of all knowledge and the gateway to sacred and secular understanding (Hillocks and Smith, 1991).

Thus, the central role of grammar in language teaching remained relatively uncontested until the late twentieth century. Even a few decades ago, it would have been hard to imagine language instruction without immediately thinking of grammar.

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1. This Study Aims at

Explaining the confusion that lead by the misuse of English grammatical structures when conveying meanings in written English texts.

Indicating how committing certain errors in written English structures constrains Sudanese English learners' performance.

Investigating English grammatical structures experienced by Sudanese learners who are preparing to graduate with B.A. in English.

3. Research Questions

In investigating the research problem, the researcher will try to find answers to the following questions:

What is the misuse of English grammatical structures when conveying meanings in written English texts?

To what extend does committing certain errors in written English structures constrain Sudanese English learners' performance?

What are the types of English grammatical structures experienced by Sudanese learners who are preparing to graduate with B.A. in English?

4. Literature Review

4.1. Grammatical Competence for Communication

In their model, Canale and Swain (1980) defined grammatical competence as knowledge of the rules of phonology, the lexicon, syntax and semantics. Grammatical competence embodied the lexico-grammatical or semantic-grammatical features of the language. However, even though Canale and Swain acknowledged that both form and meaning constituted interrelated features of grammatical competence, they failed to distinguish how the two were associated. Similarly, they failed to articulate the relationship between grammatical competence and the other competencies in their framework. In other words, no explanation was provided on how their framework accounted for cases in which grammar was used to encode meanings beyond the sentence level or meanings that were implied without being said. Finally, when put to the test of validation, Canale and Swain (1980) model was only partially supported by research data (Harley *et al.*, 1990).

In spite of these caveats, Canale and Swain (1980) model of communicative competence, with its broadened view of language, has had an enormous impact on the field of second or foreign language education. It is credited for having provided the main theoretical framework underlying communicative language teaching and materials development, and it has succeeded in generating considerable discussion and research activity-Building on this work and that of many others, Bachman (1990b) and later Bachman and Palmer (1996) proposed a multi-componential model of communicative language ability which has provided the most comprehensive conceptualization of language ability to date. Instead of limiting their model to components of language knowledge, Bachman and Palmer also specified non-linguistic components of communicative language ability invoked in test-taking and language use. For example, in their model of language use, a test-taker's language knowledge, along with her topical knowledge and personal characteristics, is hypothesized to interact with her strategic competence (i.e., metacognitive strategies) and affect (i.e., anxiety, motivation). This, in turn, is said to interact with the characteristics of the language-use or test-task situation. In short, this model views language ability as an internal construct, consisting of language knowledge and strategic competence, that interacts with the language user's topical knowledge and other internal characteristics (e.g., affect), as well as with the characteristics of the context. Language use thus consists of internal interactions among learner attributes (e.g., language knowledge, strategic competence, topical knowledge, affect) together with external interactions between these attributes and features of the language-use context.

In describing language knowledge, Bachman and Palmer (1996) specified two general components: (1) organizational knowledge or how individuals control language structure to produce grammatically correct utterances or sentences and texts, and (2) pragmatic knowledge or how individuals communicate meaning and how they produce contextually appropriate utterances, sentences or texts.

Organizational knowledge is further divided into grammatical knowledge, or 'how individual utterances or sentences are organized', and textual knowledge, or 'how utterances or sentences are organized into texts' (*ibid.*, p. 68). Grammatical knowledge is defined as an individual's knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and phonology/graphology, while textual knowledge refers to an individual's knowledge of cohesion (e.g., pronouns, lexical repetition), rhetorical organization (e.g., logical connectors) and conversational organization (e.g., turn-taking

strategies, topic nomination). In short, grammatical knowledge in this model accounts for grammar on the sub-sentential and sentential levels, while textual knowledge accounts for language on a suprasentential or discourse level.

In sum, many different models of communicative competence have emerged over the years. The more recent depictions have presented much broader conceptualizations of communicative language ability; however, definitions of grammatical knowledge have remained more or less the same - morphosyntax. Also, within these expanded models, more detailed specifications are needed for how grammatical form might interact with grammatical meaning to communicate literal and intended meanings, and how form and meaning relate to the ability to convey pragmatic meanings. If our assessment goal were limited to an understanding of how learners have mastered grammatical forms, then the current models of grammatical knowledge would suffice. However, if we hope to understand how learners use grammatical forms as a resource for conveying a variety of meanings in language-acquisition, -assessment and -use situations, as I think we do, then a definition of grammatical knowledge which addresses these other dimensions of grammatical ability is needed.

In sum, the models proposed by [Canale and Swain \(1980\)](#) and [Bachman and Palmer \(1996\)](#) on the one hand, and those proposed by [Rea-Dickins \(1991\)](#) and [Larsen-Freeman \(1997\)](#) on the other are similar in many respects. Both groups deal with linguistic form, semantic meaning and pragmatic use on some level. Certainly, Larsen-Freeman's model is the most explicit in describing how a single linguistic form can encode different meanings. It is simple and it is intuitive, but in her view and in that proposed by [Rea-Dickins \(1991\)](#), grammar is, in essence, coterminous with language. I believe, however, that there is a fundamental difference in how grammatical forms and meanings are used to evoke literal and intended messages, and then how they are used to convey implied meanings that require pragmatic inference. For example, I may understand the literal meaning of a joke, but may completely fail to see the double meaning (pragmatic inference) that makes it funny.

To view all three components as 'grammar' is misleading. If these dimensions constitute 'grammar', what then is 'language'? Nonetheless, it's agreed that the boundaries among the three components, with certain forms, are at times blurred.

From both an instructional and an assessment perspective, there are times, especially for beginning and intermediate learners, when we might only expect students to demonstrate their ability to use correct forms to express fairly transparent, literal meanings in a given context. For example, we might expect a beginning student to say or understand: 'Close the window' (literal meaning embodying a context-transparent directive), whereas we might expect this learner to understand, but perhaps not say: 'It feels like winter', meaning 'Close the window.' In this case, the relationship between the words used and the intended meaning was indirect and highly dependent upon contextual clues. To expect learners to use a broad range of linguistic devices to express contextual subtleties of meaning with native-like appropriateness at lower proficiency levels may be beyond their capability, especially when the subtleties relate to complex interpersonal, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, or rhetorical nuances. For this reason, grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge will be treated as separate components of language ability, knowing full well that in order to communicate certain meanings; these two components are inextricably related.

4.2. Grammatical Knowledge

Theoretical definition of language knowledge consists of two distinct, but related, components. These components refer to grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.

Bellow, is a discussion of grammatical knowledge in terms of grammatical forms and grammatical meanings (both literal and intended) at the sentential and suprasentential levels. I will then discuss pragmatic knowledge in terms of how grammatical forms and meanings can use context to extend the meaning of an utterance. Grammatical knowledge embodies two highly related components: grammatical form and grammatical meaning. I will use the term grammatical form to refer to linguistic forms on the sub-sentential, sentential and suprasentential levels, as described in the syntactocentric approaches to language discussed previously. Grammatical form includes a host of forms, for example, on the phonological, lexical, Morphosyntactic, cohesive, information management, and interactional levels. Knowledge of grammatical form, therefore, refers to the knowledge of one or more of these linguistic forms. Grammatical meaning is sometimes used to refer to the literal meaning expressed by sounds, words, phrases and sentences, where the meaning of an utterance is derived from its component parts or the ways in which these parts are ordered in syntactic structure. Some linguists have referred to this as semantic meaning, utterance meaning or the compositionality of an utterance ([Jaszczolt, 2002](#)). Others ([Grice, 1957](#); [Levinson, 1983](#)) have referred to it as literal meaning, sentence meaning or conventional meaning. In this study we will refer to this as literal meaning.

[Jaszczolt \(2002\)](#) notes that some utterances may not be sufficiently informative for the speaker's meaning to be fully conveyed (p. 54). In these cases, we must resort to contextual clues, including the speaker's intentions, to interpret the meaning of an utterance in relation to a real or possible situation. For example, in a story about painting, ladders and buckets, if someone says, 'she kicked the bucket', this could be taken literally to mean an action that might result in the paint spilling or it could be taken idiomatically to mean that she died. Therefore, in addition to literal meaning, grammatical meaning encodes the meaning associated with the propositional intention that the speaker has in mind while conveying a message. Some linguists have referred to this as speaker meaning, conveyed meaning

Since meaning is a critical component in the assessment of grammatical knowledge, let us examine this notion in much greater detail. Grammatical meaning refers to instances of language use in which what is said is what is meant literally and is closely related to what the speaker intends to communicate. First, the notion of 'conveying literal meaning' is important since in many cases, the primary assessment goal is to determine if learners are able to use forms to get their basic point across accurately and meaningfully. This is especially true for test-takers who need to express literal meaning in a particular situation or who, due to the decontextualized nature of the task or their level of proficiency, are able to express only literal meaning. This depiction of grammatical meaning allows us to identify and assess individual forms and their literal meanings, especially in contexts where the characteristics of the communicative event are either reduced or unknown (e.g., a fill-in-the-blank or a complete-the-sentence task). Secondly, the notion of 'conveying the speaker's intended meaning' is also important, since, as we will see, the literal meaning of an utterance can be used by a speaker in a given context to convey an intention that is different from what the literal meaning might suggest. Therefore, this definition of grammatical meaning allows us also to assess both literal and intended meanings, where the characteristics of the communicative event are rich or impoverished. In rich communicative contexts, the range of meanings associated with grammatical forms is much broader than in impoverished communicative contexts, and the probability of meaning extension or even the probability of multiple meanings occurring simultaneously is much greater, as we will see.

However, in addition to the words arranged in syntactic structure, the form-meaning relationship of an utterance is also determined by the speaker's intention or locutionary meaning (Searle, 1975), and to some degree by information in the context that exists beyond what can be derived from the words alone. For example, in the context of a father talking to his daughter about her room, the literal meaning ('Clean up your room') and the father's intended meaning in this context ('Clean up your room') are the same. Intended meaning is derived primarily from the speaker's communicative intention and from the forms used to express this intention. Thus, every utterance expressed in context encodes both literal and intended meaning. Sometimes literal and intended meanings are similar, other times, they are different.

Out of context, the literal meaning of an utterance can evoke one or more possible language functions. The speaker's intended meaning in context, however, is usually associated with one primary function. The language function associated with intended meaning. Thus, the functions associated with both literal and intended meaning in this example are similar. In order to assess the meaning of grammatical forms expressed in context, grammatical meaning thus embodies the literal and intended meanings of the utterance and the language functions associated with these meanings.

In addition to the intended meaning of an utterance and the function associated with that meaning, an utterance may simultaneously encode other layers of pragmatic meaning (e.g., sociolinguistic meaning, socio-cultural meaning) in a given context. These extensions of meaning are derived primarily from context and may be intentional or unintentional on the part of the speaker. They are highly dependent upon an understanding of the shared norms, assumptions, expectations and presuppositions of the interlocutors in the communicative context. Thus, while grammatical meaning is defined as the literal and intended meanings of an utterance along with the function, pragmatic meaning is defined in terms of the other implied meanings (e.g., sociolinguistic, sociocultural) that an utterance can encode.

This is not the case when the intended meaning of a speaker's utterance is derived more from the information in the context than from the actual words used in the utterance.

If so, communication transpires smoothly; if not, a complex negotiation of grammatical and pragmatic meanings by the interlocutors is entertained. For assessment purposes, the addition of an interlocutor, while authentic, significantly complicates the measurement of meaning.

Therefore, while the relationship between form, meaning and function is still relatively direct. According to Hatch (1992), the degree of directness seems to be in direct relation to the degree to which we expect that a person will comply with a request we have made. In other words, as the risk of refusal increases, so does the indirectness of the request.

According to Hatch (1992), the degree of directness seems to be in direct relation to the degree to which we expect that a person will comply with a request we have made. In other words, as the risk of refusal increases, so does the indirectness of the request. Also, the relationship between literal and intended meaning is increasingly less direct. Nonetheless, it is still possible, for the most part, to derive the intended meaning of the utterance principally from the words expressed. The contextual contribution to meaning is minimal.

Now it could be said that a relatively good illustration of how grammatical meaning, when assessed explicitly in language tests, has been conceptualized. In other words, grammatical meaning is assessed in terms of the degree to which test-takers are able to use linguistic resources to convey literal and intended meanings, predominantly when the relationships between form and literal and intended meanings, along with their associated functions, are relatively direct, and minimally dependent upon context. In some language tests, grammatical meaning has been characterized in terms of the communicative success or effectiveness of test-takers to complete some task - in other words, their ability to get their point across effectively. Restricting the measurement of meaning in terms of form-meaning directness provides testers with the advantage of having control over responses. However, communication is also full of instances of language use where the relationships between form, meaning and function are indirect. In these instances, a more complete depiction of grammatical meaning might be useful for the assessment of grammatical ability.

To recap, grammatical meaning embodies the literal and intended meanings of an utterance derived both from the meaning of the words arranged in syntax and the way in which the words are used to convey the speaker's intention. Phonological meaning, lexical meaning and the Morphosyntactic meaning of an utterance are all components of grammatical meaning. The current depiction of grammatical knowledge involves grammatical forms together with the literal and intended meanings they encode as well as the language functions they are used to express. Pragmatic meaning embodies a host of other implied meanings that derive from context relating to the interpersonal relationship of the interlocutors, their emotional or attitudinal stance, their presuppositions about what is known and the sociocultural setting of the interaction. These meanings occur simultaneously. Sometimes they are intentional and sometime not. In short, pragmatics refers to a domain of extended meanings which are superimposed upon forms in association with the literal and intended meanings of an utterance. The source of pragmatic meanings may be contextual, sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, psychological or rhetorical. Grammar in this research, therefore, encompasses grammatical forms and grammatical meanings (literal and intended), but views pragmatics as separate. For the purpose of assessing grammatical ability, it is important, to the extent possible, to keep what is 'grammatical' distinct from what is 'pragmatic', so that inferences about grammatical ability can be made.

To summarize, pragmatics refers not so much to the literal meaning of the utterance (What did you say?) or to the intended meaning (What did you want to say?), but to the implied or pragmatic meaning of the utterance interpreted by another person (What did you mean by that?). It can also refer to the relative appropriateness of the utterance within a given context (Why did you say it that way in this context?), to the relative acceptability of the utterance within the general norms of interaction (Is it OK to say that?), or to the naturalness of the utterance in terms of how native speakers might say it (Does this sound like something native speakers would say?). Finally, pragmatics refers to the conventionality of the utterance in terms of how speakers from a certain regional or social language variety might express it (Does it sound like something that someone from my social or regional dialect would say?). The determination of what is meaningful or pragmatically appropriate, acceptable, natural or conventional depends on the underlying contextual, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, psychological or rhetorical norms, assumptions, expectations and presuppositions of the interlocutors in a given situation. Grammar used beyond the sentence level. As seen in Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Hasan (1976), grammar also encompasses grammatical form and meaning at the suprasentential or discourse level.

4.3. Method of the Study

This study is restricted to assess the grammatical usages for communication purposes experienced by learners of English language at the Open University of Sudan as a case study in the academic year 2009 – 2010. The open university of Sudan covers the whole country, but this study is limited to Khartoum State only. It has taken its results through a formal test given to students. It consists of three types of questions. The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method and a test as a tool for collecting data.

4.4. Participants

One hundred students were randomly chosen from the fourth year, department of English at the education programme, Open University of Sudan to represent the original population in this study. The subjects have had an average of ten years of formal instruction in English as a FL at school and university. So the selected group is homogeneous with the respect to educational level and linguistic background. Out of 150 students 30 students were randomly chosen as subjects for the pilot study. They were excluded from taking the main test. This leaves 120 males and females to constitute the main simple random sample in this study. These subjects were given a test of thirteen questions that covered three language communicative functions in different grammatical structures.

5. Results and Discussions

Would you mind helping me? A request

Table-1. The distribution of frequencies of expressing a request

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	105	88%
Wrong answers	15	12%
Total	120	100%

Figure-1. The distribution of frequencies of expressing a request

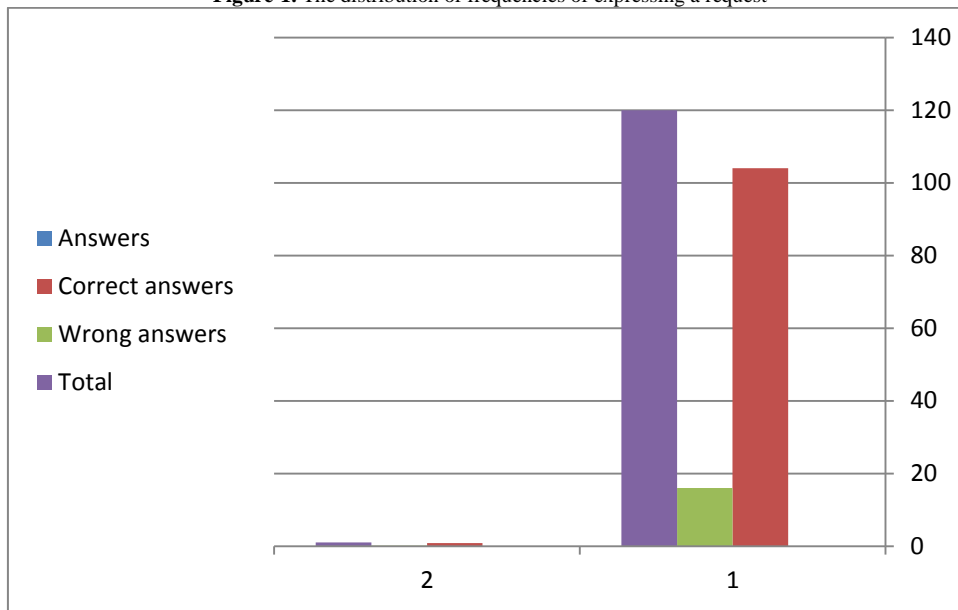


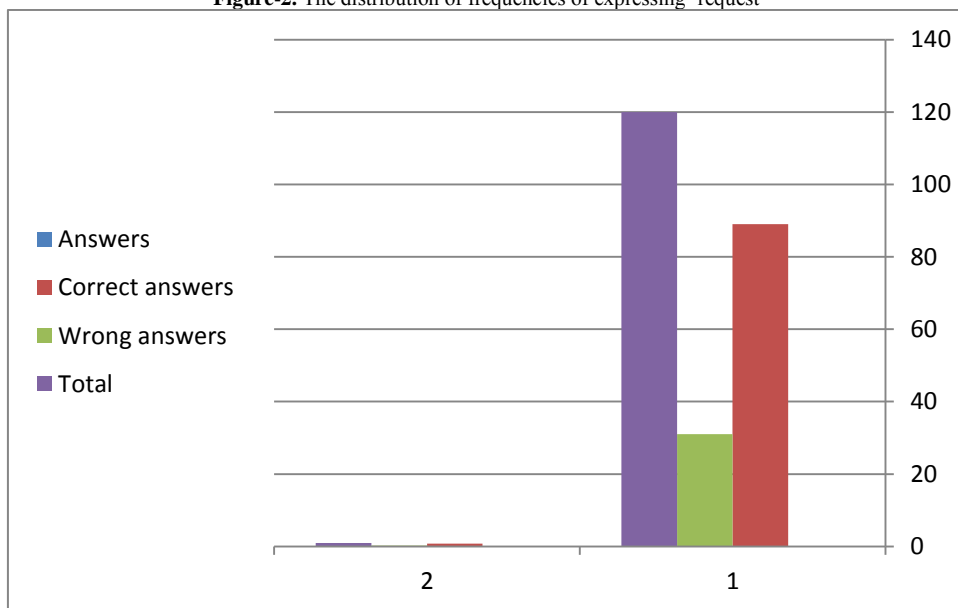
Table and figure number 1 revealed the occurrence of frequencies of the correct and the wrong answers referred to the language communicative ability of the respondents' skill at selecting the option which was appropriate for expressing a request from these given options: “ Advice – blame – request - approval – agreement” in this question ‘Would you mind helping me?’ the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 105 out of 120, which was 88%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 15 out of 120, which was 12%. The results obtained in table and figure 6 indicate sociolinguistic ability that refers to the respondents' skill at selecting appropriate option to express the particular strategy used to realize language communicative in the specification of the objective of a request. As well they indicate sociolinguistic ability is the students' control over the actual language forms used to realize the language function, as well as their control over register or formality of the utterance from most intimate to most formal language.

May I have this jacket, please? Request

Table-2. The distribution of frequencies of expressing release from blame

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	89	74%
Wrong answers	31	26%
Total	120	100%

Figure-2. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘request’



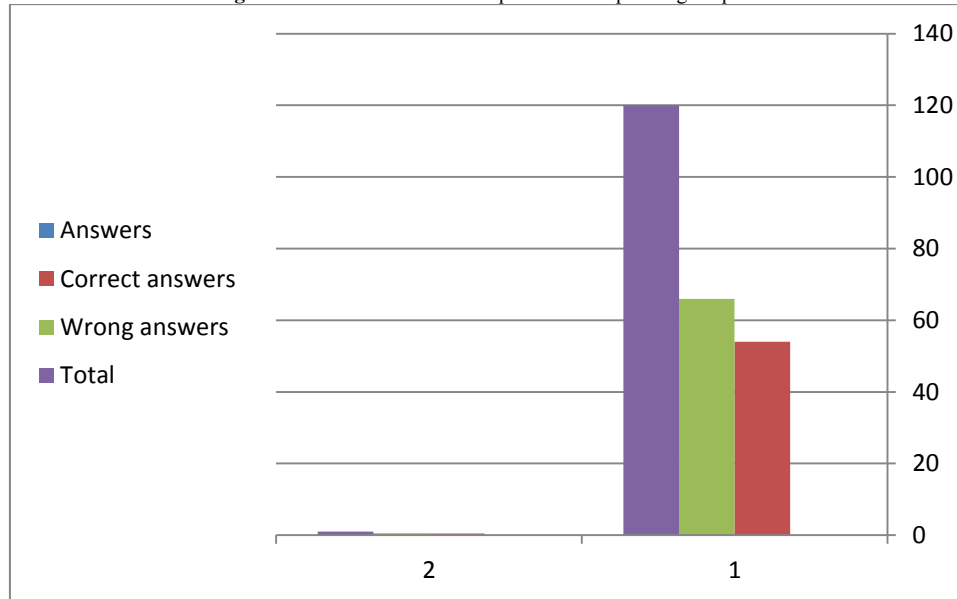
The statistical analysis of the occurrence of frequencies for the correct and wrong answers in the table and figure 2 revealed that the occurrence of the correct answers was only 89 out of 120 of a percentage of 74%, and the occurrence of the wrong answers was 31 out of 120 of a percentage 26%. These results were obtained when students were asked to choose the correct option from the coming series of options: ‘Request – blame – want – anxiety – release from blame’ to this statement “May I have this jacket, please? ”. That correct option was ‘Request’.

I wonder if you could tell the way to the nearest hospital. Request Request

Table-3. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘request’

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	54	45%
Wrong answers	66	55%
Total	120	100%

Figure-3. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘request’



Descriptive statistical analysis of the data in table and figure 3 in response to test question 35, the data showed that the occurrence of the correct answer frequencies of the students was 54 out of 120, which represented 45% whereas the occurrence of wrong answers frequencies was 66 put of 120 that represented 55%. These percentages were obtained when the students tried to express ‘request’ in “I wonder if you could tell the way to the nearest hospital.” and the options given were: (Request – prohibition – probability – surprise - suggestion). It’s worth mentioning that table and figure number 6 revealed the occurrence of frequencies of the correct and the wrong answers referred to the language communicative ability of the respondents' skill at selecting the option which was appropriate for expressing a request from these given options: “ Advice – blame – request - approval – agreement” in this question ‘Would you mind helping me?’ the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 105 out of 120, which was 88%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 15 out of 120, which was 12%. The results obtained in table and figure 6 and table & figure 3 indicate the respondents' skill at selecting appropriate option to express the particular strategy used to realize language communicative in the specification of the objective of a request. Having two different results of the same language function is an indication of a severe problem.

Table-4. request

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
6	Would you mind helping me?	105	88%
24	May I have this jacket, please?	89	74%
35	I wonder if you could tell the way to the nearest hospital.	54	47%
48	Would you mind helping me?	99	83%

In table 4 there are four structures about expressing ‘request. Three of these structures are direct structures: questions 6, 24, and 48. One of these questions looks an indirect request, which is question 35 where the students’ results are below the average. This point indicates that the students are unable to use linguistic resources to convey literal and intended meanings. Now it could be said that a relatively good illustration of how grammatical meaning, when assessed explicitly in language tests, has been conceptualized. In other words, grammatical meaning is assessed in terms of the degree to which test-takers are able to use linguistic resources to convey literal and intended

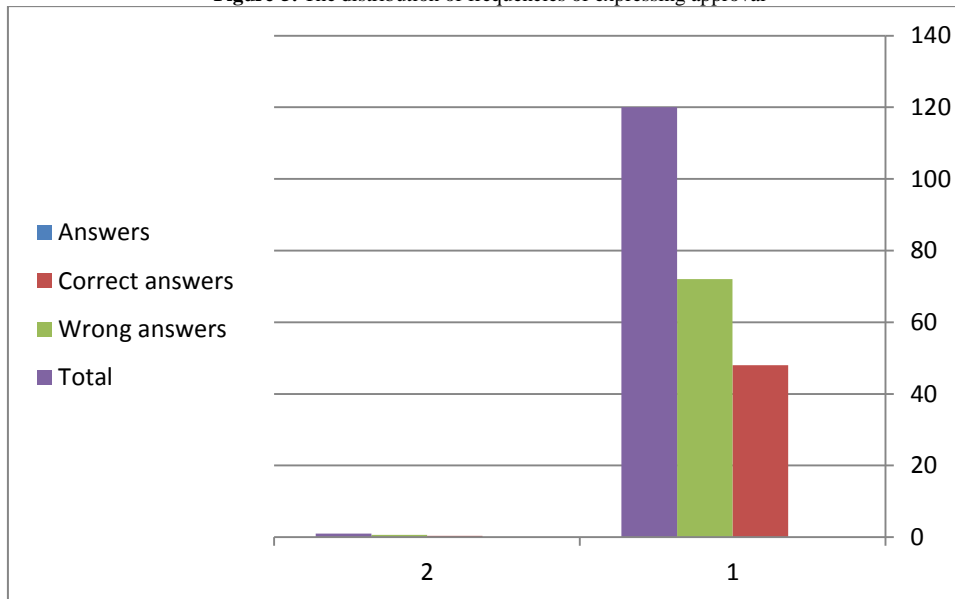
meanings, predominantly when the relationships between form and literal and intended meanings, along with their associated functions, are relatively direct, and minimally dependent upon context. Therefore, while the relationship between form, meaning and function is still relatively direct. According to Hatch (1992), the degree of directness seems to be in direct relation to the degree to which we expect that a person will comply with a request we have made. In other words, as the risk of refusal increases, so does the indirectness of the request.

I approve of what you are doing. Approval

Table-5. The distribution of frequencies of expressing approval

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	48	40%
Wrong answers	72	60%
Total	120	100%

Figure-5. The distribution of frequencies of expressing approval



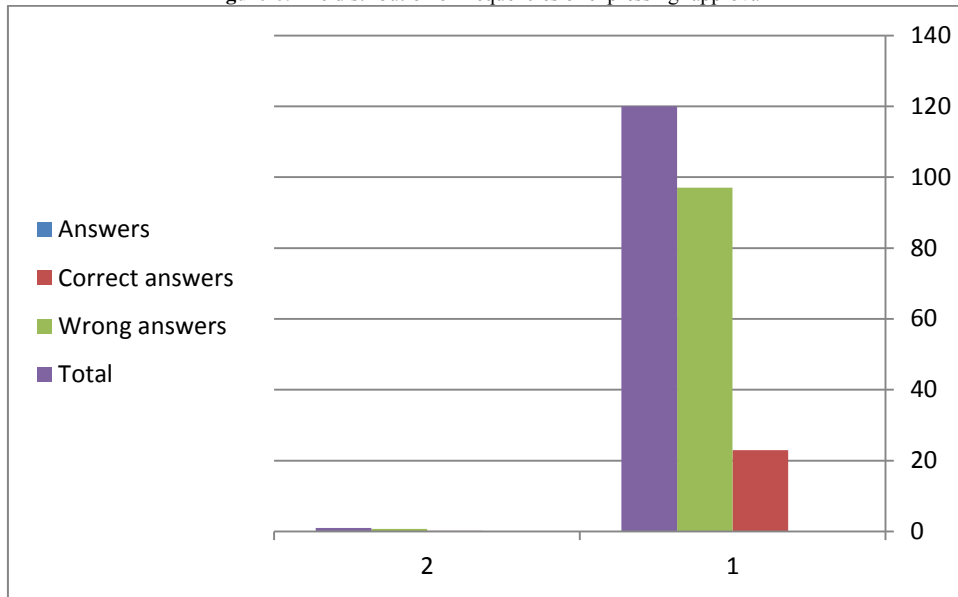
The students were given these options: ‘Advice – blame – request - approval – agreement’ and they asked to choose the correct option for this statement: “I approve of what you are doing.” The statistical analysis of table and figure 9 indicated that the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 48 out of 120 that represented 40%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 72 that represented 60%. One could say, though the approval as an important sociolinguistic function, the performance of the students was below the standard.

I enjoyed it. Approval

Table-6. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘approval’

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	23	19%
Wrong answers	97	81%
Total	120	100%

Figure-6. The distribution of frequencies of expressing 'approval'



In the table and figure 6 there was something extraordinary concerning the results obtained by the students. The statistical analysis of the occurrence of frequencies for the correct and wrong answers revealed a very low level of performance of the students. The occurrence of the correct answers was only 23 out of 120 of a percentage of 19%, and the occurrence of the wrong answers was 97 out of 120 of a percentage 81%. These results were obtained when students were asked to choose the correct option from the coming series of options: ‘Approval – certainty – disapproval – pleasure – preference’ to this statement “I enjoyed it.” That option was ‘approval’. This result should be highly considered.

Table-7. approval

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
9	I approve of what you are doing.	48	40%
29	I enjoyed it.	23	19%

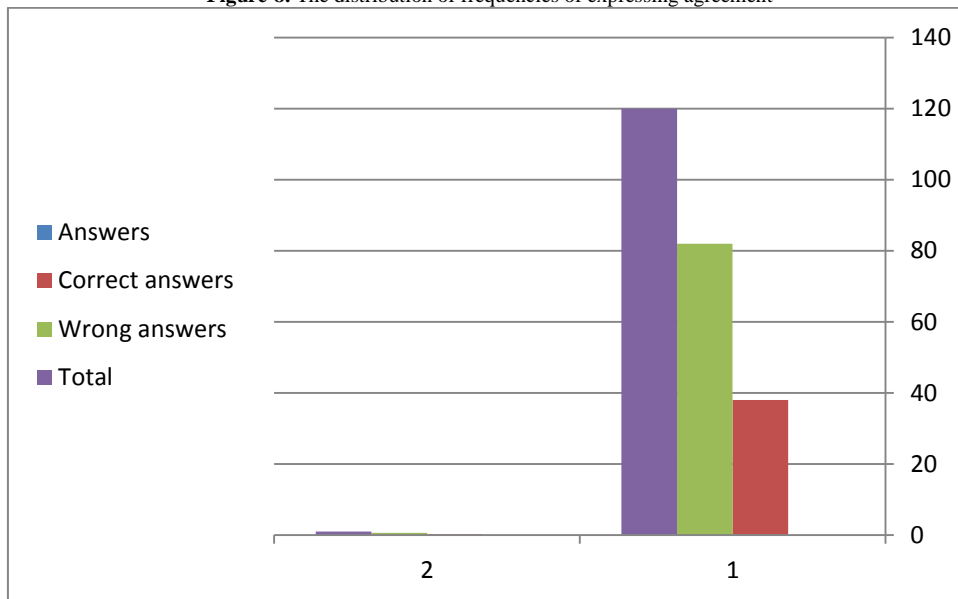
Looking at table 7, the researcher has come across an unexpected result that indicates that the type, range and scope of grammatical features required to communicate accurately and meaningfully will vary from one situation to another. Then, one can say that the students have not got the common sense as indicated in question 9 “I approve of what you are doing.” The answer is ‘approval’, which is already given in the statement.

I couldn't agree more. Agreement

Table-8. The distribution of frequencies of expressing agreement

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	38	32%
Wrong answers	82	68%
Total	120	100%

Figure-8. The distribution of frequencies of expressing agreement

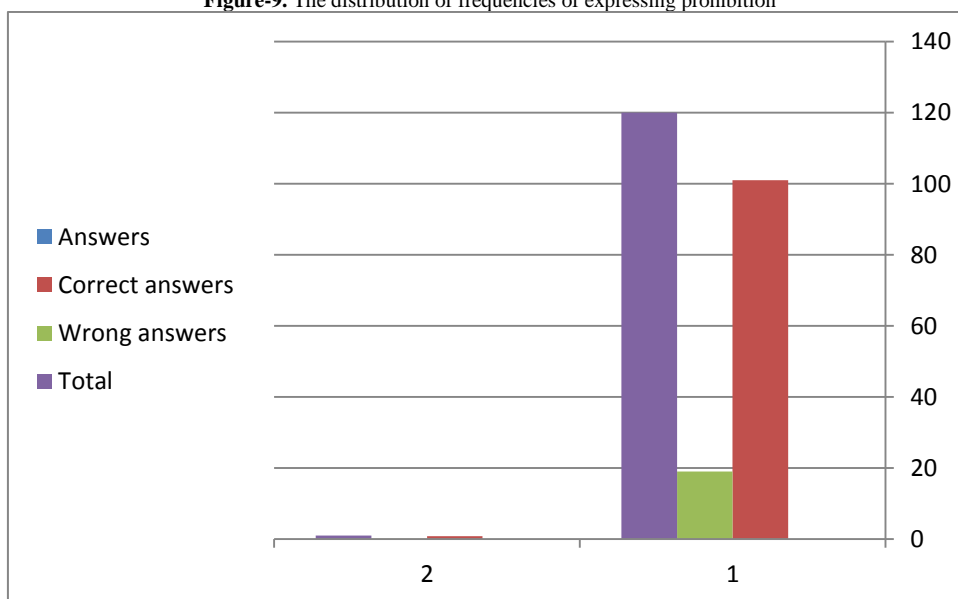


The students were given these options: ‘Advice – blame – request - approval – agreement’ to choose the correct one for this statement: “I couldn’t agree with you”. The statistical analysis of the data in table & figure 8 revealed that students performance when expressing an agreement was really disastrous. The occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 38 out of 120 that represented 32%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 82 out of 120 that represented 68%. It is worth mentioning that there seems to be an emerging agreement that the communicative language ability is multicomponential, and it includes more than grammatical knowledge. Definitions of communicative competence minimally tend to include a code component, describing a language learner’s procedural and declarative knowledge of the rules of syntax, semantics, morphology, and phonology and a use component, describing a language learner’s knowledge of the social norms governing language use and the assignment of linguistic options to speech intentions for production and comprehension. So, developing the area of expressing an approval should be highly commented.

Table-9. The distribution of frequencies of expressing prohibition

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	101	84%
Wrong answers	19	16%
Total	120	100%

Figure-9. The distribution of frequencies of expressing prohibition



As a common fact that Prohibitions are a kind of obligation, an obligation to not do something, but as drafting considerations for prohibitions are different from those for positive obligations, they are treated separately. In table and figure 11 the students were examined in one structure of prohibitive in English. Their performance as indicated

by the statistical analysis in table & figure 9 revealed that the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 101 out of 120 that represented 84%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 19 out of 120 that represented 16%. This point indicates that they are aware of the grammatical and pragmatic knowledge when expressing the same idea with different structures.

Table-10. Agreement

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
10	I couldn't agree more.	38	32%
13	That's good idea.	9	8%

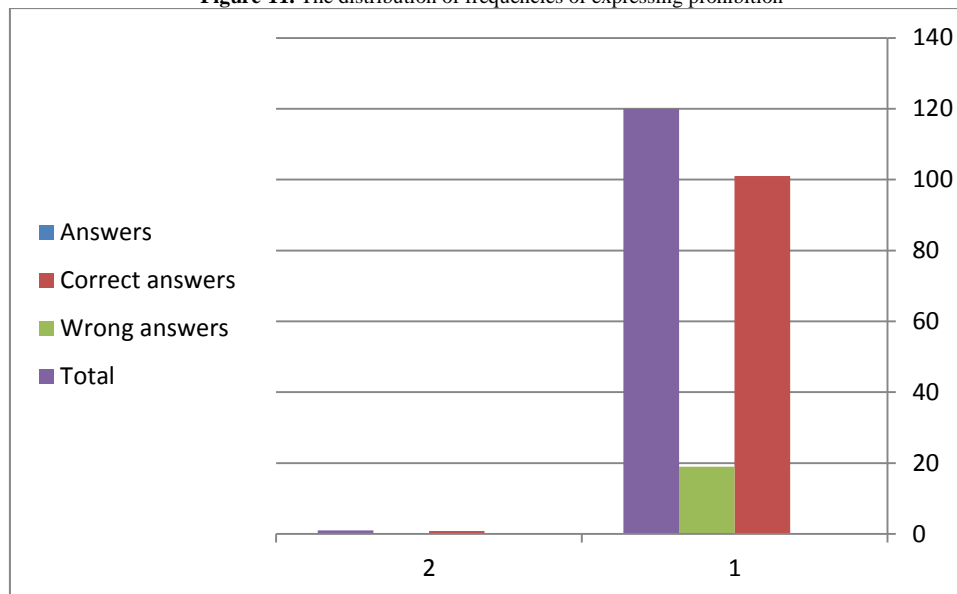
What was said about the lack of common sense by the students in table 7, can be as well said about table 20 when students tried to express 'agreement'. There is a great difference between 38 and 9 even both below standard. One can say that the students are not good at linguistic competence which is the knowledge of a particular language by virtue of which those who have it are able to produce and understand utterances in that language. If the message is not understood as intended, the message can be repaired or misunderstandings can persist. When other implied interpersonal, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, psychological or rhetorical meanings are extrapolated from grammatical forms and meanings, we have moved out of the domain of grammatical knowledge and into the domain of pragmatic knowledge - both components constitute communicative language ability.

You can't enter the hall. Young people are not allowed in. Prohibition

Table-11. The distribution of frequencies of expressing prohibition

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	101	84%
Wrong answers	19	16%
Total	120	100%

Figure-11. The distribution of frequencies of expressing prohibition



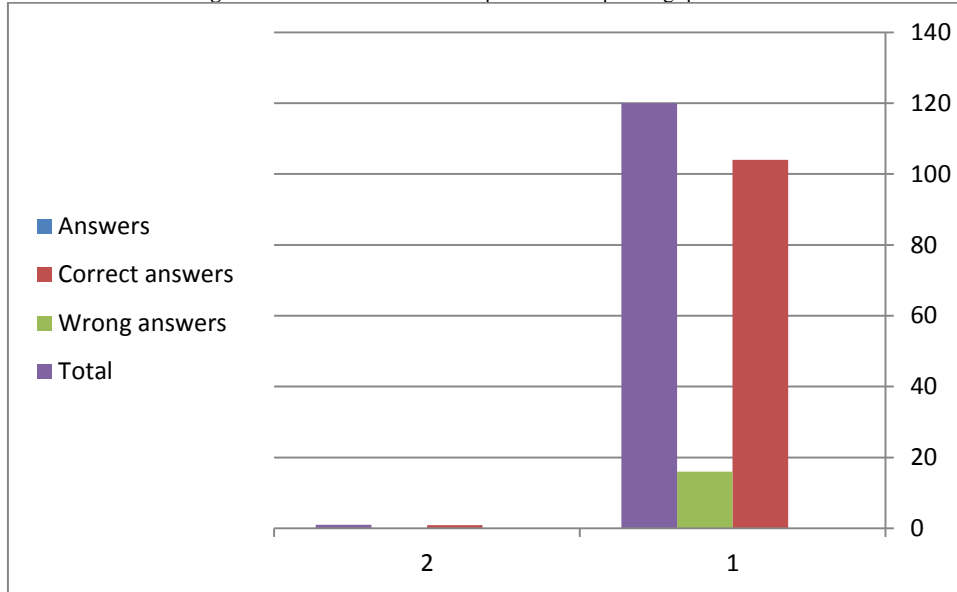
As a common fact that Prohibitions are a kind of obligation, an obligation to not do something, but as drafting considerations for prohibitions are different from those for positive obligations, they are treated separately. In table and figure 11 the students were examined in one structure of prohibitive in English. Their performance as indicated by the statistical analysis in table and figure 11 revealed that the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 101 out of 120 that represented 84%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 19 out of 120 that represented 16%. This point indicates that they are aware of the grammatical and pragmatic knowledge when expressing the same idea with different structures.

Fishing is not permitted here. Prohibition

Table-12. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘prohibition’

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	104	87%
Wrong answers	16	13%
Total	120	100%

Figure-12. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘prohibition’



In table and figure 12 the students were asked to choose the correct option from: ‘Suggestion – responsibility – probability – prohibition – surprise’ to this statement “Fishing is not permitted here.” The correct option in this case is ‘Prohibition’. The distribution of occurrence of frequencies of the correct answer was 104 out of 120 that represented 87%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 16 out of 120 that represented 13%. It was the third time that the students were asked to express ‘prohibition’. As a common fact that Prohibitions are a kind of obligation, an obligation to not do something, but as drafting considerations for prohibitions are different from those for positive obligations, they are treated separately. In table and figure 11 the students were examined in one structure of prohibitive in English. Their performance as indicated by the statistical analysis in table and figure 11 revealed that the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 101 out of 120 that represented 84%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 19 out of 120 that represented 16%. In table and figure 16 the students were asked to choose the correct option from: ‘Request – prohibition – probability – surprise - suggestion’ to this statement “It is forbidden to smoke at school.” The correct option in this case is ‘Prohibition’. The distribution of occurrence of frequencies of the correct answer was 100 out of 120 that represented 83%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 20 out of 120 that represented 17%. In the three cases the results were similar to each other.

Table-13. prohibition

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
11	You can’t enter the hall. Young people aren’t allowed in.	101	84%
31	It’s forbidden to smoke at school.	100	83%
40	Fishing is not permitted here!	104	87%

The results of the students in table 13 are the same when expressing ‘prohibition’ which are fully grammatical, with appropriate selection of lexis in different contexts of use. This similarity of results has shown that the students can deal with variable forms under different circumstances which may include such parameters as pressure of time and the amount of attention paid to linguistic form.

Table-14. pleasure

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
26	How marvelous!	25	21%

Table 14 shows the students’ performance when expressing pleasure, which can be considered as a fundamental feeling that is hard to define but that people desire to experience. Their performance is entirely below the standard and one cannot say that this has to do with grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge only, but even it has to do with psychological factors. Again, it can be said that the students insist in expressing themselves in clear direct style.

Table-15. Indifference

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
43	Who cares?	44	37%

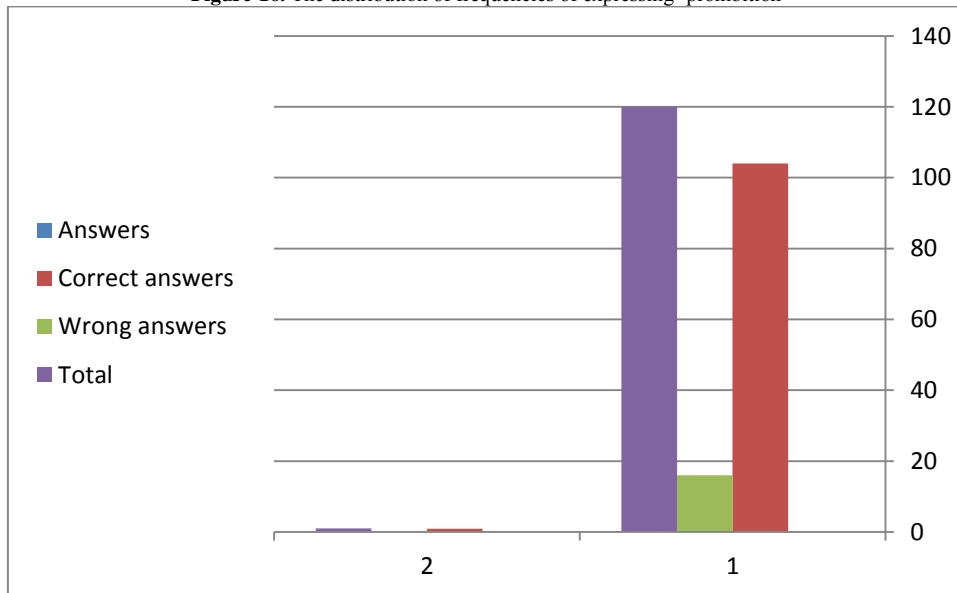
In question 43 table 15 where students are not good at expressing ‘indifference’. Their performance indicates something so serious that intervention strategies must take cognizance of the influence of mother tongue life and cultural experience in order to enhance the construction of knowledge even further. This justification is lead for the strangeness of the expression ‘who cares?’, which looks like statement of a question and it has nothing to do with any sort of shade of meaning. It could be said that they do not account for situations where they might know the form, but be unclear about the meaning. Nor do they differentiate between the different types of meanings that grammatical forms encode.

Fishing is not permitted here. Prohibition

Table-16. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘prohibition’

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	104	87%
Wrong answers	16	13%
Total	120	100%

Figure-16. The distribution of frequencies of expressing ‘prohibition’



In table and figure 16 the students were asked to choose the correct option from: ‘Suggestion – responsibility – probability – prohibition – surprise’ to this statement “Fishing is not permitted here.”. The correct option in this case is ‘Prohibition’. The distribution of occurrence of frequencies of the correct answer was 104 out of 120 that represented 87%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 16 out of 120 that represented 13%. It was the third time that the students were asked to express ‘prohibition’. As a common fact that Prohibitions are a kind of obligation, an obligation to not do something, but as drafting considerations for prohibitions are different from those for positive obligations, they are treated separately. In table and figure 9 the students were examined in one structure of prohibitive in English. Their performance as indicated by the statistical analysis in table & figure 8 revealed that the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 101 out of 120 that represented 84%, whereas the occurrence of the wrong answers was 19 out of 120 that represented 16%. In table & figure 8 the students were asked to choose the correct option from: ‘Request – prohibition – probability – surprise - suggestion’ to this statement “It is forbidden to smoke at school.” The correct option in this case is ‘Prohibition’. The distribution of occurrence of frequencies of the correct answer was 100 out of 120 that represented 83%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 20 out of 120 that represented 17%. In the three cases the results were similar to each other.

Would you mind helping me? A request

Table-17. The distribution of frequencies of expressing a request.

Answers	Frequencies	Percentage
Correct answers	105	88%
Wrong answers	15	12%
Total	120	100%

Figure-17. The distribution of frequencies of expressing a request

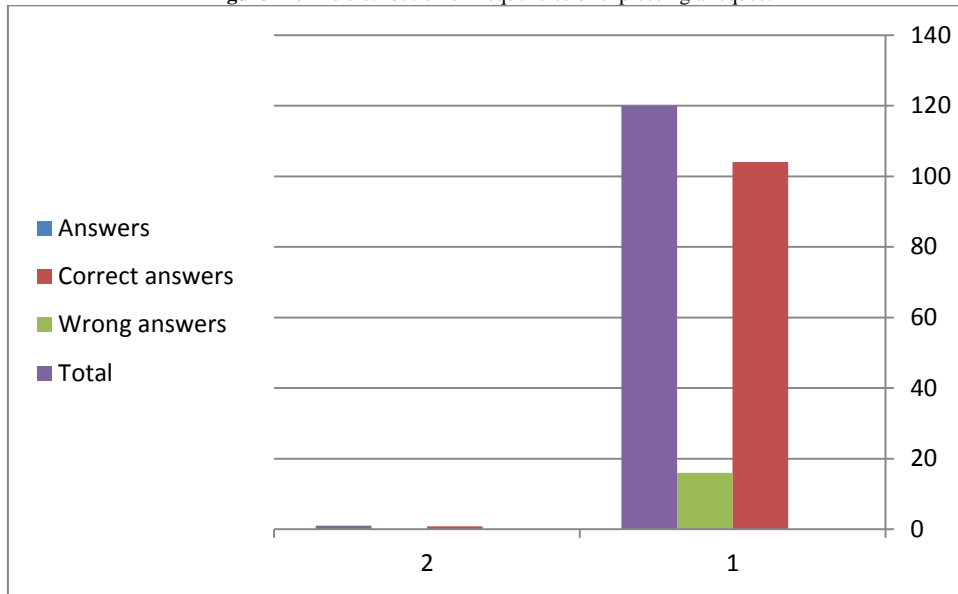


Table and figure number 17 revealed the occurrence of frequencies of the correct and the wrong answers referred to the language communicative ability of the respondents' skill at selecting the option which was appropriate for expressing a request from these given options: “ Advice – blame – request - approval – agreement” in this question ‘Would you mind helping me?’ the occurrence of frequencies of the correct answers was 105 out of 120, which was 88%, whereas the occurrence of frequencies of the wrong answers was 15 out of 120, which was 12%. The results obtained in table and figure one indicate sociolinguistic ability that refers to the respondents' skill at selecting appropriate option to express the particular strategy used to realize language communicative in the specification of the objective of a request. As well they indicate sociolinguistic ability is the students' control over the actual language forms used to realize the language function, as well as their control over register or formality of the utterance from most intimate to most formal language.

Table-18. Suggestion

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
1	Why don't we go shopping today?	95	79%
6	Why not play together?	17	14%
10	Have you ever thought of spending sometime in Egypt?	68	57%
12	Let's play chess.	104	87%

Expressing ‘suggestion’ in this study was given into four questions: 1, 6, 10, and 12 as in Table 18. The results indicated that from pragmatic knowledge point of view which is defined in terms of functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge that the students are unable to use organizational knowledge to express or interpret language functions in communicative settings. On the other hand, in the area of sociolinguistic knowledge that refers to ‘how utterances or sentences and texts are related to features of the language use setting’ (p. 68) that the students are unable to understand situation-specific language and to tailor language to a particular language-use setting.

Table-19. request

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
2	Would you mind helping me?	105	88%
8	May I have this jacket, please?	89	74%
11	I wonder if you could tell the way to the nearest hospital.	54	47%

In table 19 there are four structures about expressing ‘request’. Three of these structures are direct structures: questions 2, 8, and 11. One of these questions looks an indirect request, where the students’ results are below the average. This point indicates that the students are unable to use linguistic resources to convey literal and intended meanings. Now it could be said that a relatively good illustration of how grammatical meaning, when assessed explicitly in language tests, has been conceptualized. In other words, grammatical meaning is assessed in terms of the degree to which test-takers are able to use linguistic resources to convey literal and intended meanings, predominantly when the relationships between form and literal and intended meanings, along with their associated functions, are relatively direct, and minimally dependent upon context.

Therefore, while the relationship between form, meaning and function is still relatively direct. According to Hatch (1992), the degree of directness seems to be in direct relation to the degree to which we expect that a person will comply with a request we have made. In other words, as the risk of refusal increases, so does the indirectness of the request.

Table-20. Agreement

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
3	I couldn't agree more.	38	32%
5	That's good idea.	9	8%

What was said about the lack of common sense by the students in table 20, can be as well said about table six when students tried to express 'agreement'. There is a great difference between 38 and 9 even both below standard. One can say that the students are not good at linguistic competence which is the knowledge of a particular language by virtue of which those who have it are able to produce and understand utterances in that language. If the message is not understood as intended, the message can be repaired or misunderstandings can persist. When other implied interpersonal, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, psychological or rhetorical meanings are extrapolated from grammatical forms and meanings, we have moved out of the domain of grammatical knowledge and into the domain of pragmatic knowledge - both components constitute communicative language ability.

Table-21. Prohibition

No.	Statement	Correct answers	%
4	You can't enter the hall. Young people aren't allowed in.	101	84%
9	It's forbidden to smoke at school.	100	83%
13	Fishing is not permitted here!	104	87%

The results of the students in table 21 are the same when expressing 'prohibition' which is fully grammatical, with appropriate selection of lexis in different contexts of use. This similarity of results has shown that the students can deal with variable forms under different circumstances which may include such parameters as pressure of time and the amount of attention paid to linguistic form.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Finally, the researcher comes to a conclusion that the misuse of English grammatical structures when conveying meanings in written English texts leads to a confusion. At the same time, he as well, comes across the fact that how committing certain errors in written English structures constrains Sudanese English learners' performance and competence. The study reveals that the students are incompetent in using grammar well enough for some real-world purposes, mainly, when they express these language communicative functions: suggestion, and agreement. So, the result that highly should be appreciated that grammar knowledge offers the learner the means for potentially unlimited linguistic creativity. Since grammar is a description of the regularities in language, knowledge of these regularities can function as a machine to generate a potentially enormous number of original sentences. Knowledge on language functions resulting from holophrase memorization and practice has limited use because to a great extent the students finally have to generate their own sentences to accomplish successful communication. In addition to sentence-making machine argument, knowledge of grammar is also important because it can function as an advance organizer.

It is widely acknowledged that grammar has played a central role in language teaching. Syllabus design and a wide diversity of approaches to language teaching have relied on this assumption, namely, the fundamental role of grammar in second- or foreign-language learning. In spite of the tremendous impact that recent communicative approaches have had on the way we should tackle language in general, there seems to be a deeply ingrained belief that grammar is, or should be, the teacher's and learner's main concern and goal. A lot of second- or foreign-language learners the world over have definitely been exposed to this philosophy of teaching and, notwithstanding the degree of linguistic competence that most of them have attained, it is only when they come in contact with other speakers that the unvarnished truth dawns on them: linguistic competence is only a vehicle for mastering a language.

To conclude, the researcher comes at the fact that Sudanese students need to know the informational structures that are built up through experience and stored in long-term memory. Then the mental representation of informational structures related to language. The exact components of language knowledge, like any other construct, need to be defined. Also they need to know the grammatical knowledge which is defined as a set of internalized informational structures related to the theoretical model of grammar. And finally, the students need to know the pragmatic knowledge which is defined in terms of functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge.

Attention to language communicative ability is necessary throughout the language learning process. It must be noted that learners cannot be expected to grasp the pragmatic concepts behind grammatical forms based on one class period of explicit instruction. In this case, pragmatic instruction should be given beginning in lower class levels and should continue through advanced courses. Perhaps this aspect of language teaching is overlooked as language instructors seem to emphasize learning advanced grammar forms as the learner progresses to more advanced levels.

Instead, instructors should provide learners with pragmatic input. More specific to this study, learners will be able to successfully make a good command of expressing language communicative functions in a way that is considered appropriate in the English language. If instructors want learners to progress to higher levels of language proficiency, attention to linguistic as well as pragmatic forms is necessary. While these implications relate to what occurs within the classroom, a final implication is concerned with the aspect of this study that relates to language acquisition outside of the classroom. If talking to native speakers, and using multimedia in English are considered to be an ideal context for language acquisition, instructors should encourage students by informing them of opportunities and advantages to participating in these programmes.

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