Chapter 11

Morpho-Syntactic Developmental Features of Syrian Primary School Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Choosing and structuring a word, making a statement, and comprehending the formulated statement require complex principles and processes. Within this context, complicated procedures and processes might be faced in the second language learning as well. Learning a second language means grasping the syntactic principles of a language and transforming these principles into language skills. In our very specific study, ten Syrian primary school students coming from diverse psychological and sociological backgrounds, and being at varying ages were investigated. The participants were asked to narrate the pictured book Frog, Where Are You? by Mercer Mayer in Turkish language and the narrations were audio-taped by the researchers. Based on a descriptive research design, the data were collected and analysed qualitatively. As a result of this study which investigated the morpho-syntactic developmental features of Syrian primary school students, diverse and common morpho-syntactic features were detected among students coming from different backgrounds.


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INTRODUCTION

Morpheme is described as the smallest meaningful segment of language (Lim, 1975), while morphology is the study of words which focuses on how words are formed, and which hints on the relation of words with other words of the same language. Besides, morphology examines the word patterns referring to stems, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. It also considers the speech parts, stress, and intonation. Within this framework, morphology goes through context which can alter a word’s pronunciation and meaning. In other words, the scope of morphology is based on words. Affixation is the most seen word formation in English language, for instance. It is the practice of word formation by adding the affixes or bound morphemes in roots (Crystal, 1980). When it comes to Turkish language, it is a notably agglutinative language that the words in Turkish have many grammatical suffixes or endings that establish the meaning. Furthermore, Turkish vowels are subjected to vowel harmony, in that if a suffix is linked with a stem, the vowel in the suffix typically accords in front-ness or back-ness, as well as in roundedness with the last vowel in the stem. To sum up, referring to the morphological structure, Crystal (1980) states that it is the formation of words mainly based on the practice of morpheme construct.

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, syntax, the adjective form of which is syntactic, addresses the principles of grammar that are employed for ordering and attaching words to construct phrases or statements. Crystal (1980) describes syntax as the study of ties between components of sentence structure, and the principles ruling the settlement of the sentences in sequences.

Morphosyntax is the unity of morphology and syntax in that they are integrated as they own close relationships. Simply, it is a linguistic concept structured on grammatical groupings or possessions for whose description principle of morphology and syntax both administer. For instance, the divergence of numbers in nouns creates a morphosyntactic grouping: number variation influences syntax in that singular subject necessitates a singular verb. Furthermore, they call for morphological rationale, e.g. add –s for plural. Among many scholars, Lieber (1981), Kiparsky (1982), Selkirk (1982), and Zwicky (1985) have concentrated on the mentioned terminology.

Languages discriminate among words indicating functional and lexical categories. They clearly make a distinction among open and closed class elements. While verbs, adjectives, and nouns refer to the lexical grouping, auxiliaries, conjunctions, prepositions, determiners, complementizers, modals, etc. take place in functional categories. The difference between lexical and functional groupings has a significant function in portraying the syntactic features of sentences (Chomsky, 1986; Abney, 1987; Pollock 1989). Words in functional groupings represent phonological characteristics highly different from the words in lexical groupings (Selkirk, 1986; Nespor and Vogel, 1986; Berendson, 1986; Kanerva, 1989; Zec, 1993). In English,
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