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Minor Sentences in Selected Disney Children's Stories

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This study is intended to investigate the use of minor sentences in Disney children's stories. These sentences do not follow the regular clause structure patterns or the variants of those structures. Minor sentences are of two types: irregular sentences (henceforth IrrSs) and nonsentences (henceforth NonSs). The study aims at (i) investigating the most frequent subtypes of IrrSs and NonSs in Disney stories, and (ii) identifying the most frequent type of minor sentences in Disney children's stories. Fulfilling the above aims, the study hypothesizes that *independent phrase* is the most frequent subtype of NonSs, while *elliptical sentence in dialogue* is the most frequent subtype of IrrSs. The study examines the use of IrrSs and NonSs in fifteen Disney children's stories. The data are analyzed according to Quirk et al.'s (1985) model. The results show that IrrS appears (293) times while NonS occurs (711) times, with percentages of (29.18%) and (70.81%) respectively. It is found also that *elliptical sentences in dialogue* is the most frequent subtype of IrrSs with a frequency rate amounting to (126, 43%) and *independent phrases* is the most frequent subtype of NonSs that occurs (302) times with a percentage of (42.47%). The study concludes that NonS is the most frequent type of minor sentence. It is also concluded that *elliptical sentences in dialogue* and *independent phrases* are the most frequent subtypes of IrrSs and NonSs respectively.

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الجمل الثانوية في قصص دزني للأطفال مختارة

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الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من استخدام الجمل الثانوية في قصص دزني للأطفال. لا تتبع هذه الجمل أنماط بنية الجملة القياسية أو متغيراتها المختلفة. تتكون الجمل الثانوية من نوعين: الجمل غير القياسية و

اللاجمل. تهدف الدراسة إلى (1) تحديد الأنواع الفرعية الأكثر شيوعًا للجمل غير القياسية و اللاجمل في قصص ديزني ، و (2) تحديد أكثر أنواع الجمل الثانوية شيوعًا في قصص أطفال ديزني. تحقيقًا للأهداف المذكورة أعلاه ، تفترض الدراسة أن العبارة المستقلة هي النوع الفرعي الأكثر شيوعًا من اللاجمل ، بينما الجمل المقتطعة في الحوار هي النوع الفرعي الأكثر شيوعًا للجمل الغير قياسية. تبحث الدراسة في استخدام الجمل غير القياسية و اللاجمل في خمسة عشر قصة أطفال من ديزني. تعتمد الدراسة نموذج كويرك وآخرين (1985) لتحليل البيانات المختارة. بينت النتائج أن الجمل الغير قياسية ظهرت (293) مرة بينما ظهرت اللاجمل (711) مرة وبنسبة (29.18٪) و (70.81٪) على التوالي. كما وجد ان الجمل المقتطعة في الحوار هي النوع الفرعي الأكثر شيوعًا للجمل الغير قياسية بمعدل تكرار يصل إلى (126،43٪) والعبارات المستقلة هي النوع الأكثر شيوعًا للاجمل التي تكررت (302) مرة بنسبة (42.47٪). استنتجت الدراسة أن اللاجمل هي النوع الفرعي الأكثر شيوعًا في الجمل الثانوية. خلصت الدراسة أيضًا إلى ان الجمل المحذوفة في الحوار والعبارات المستقلة هي الأنواع الفرعية الأكثر شيوعًا للجمل غير القياسية واللاجمل على التوالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجمل الرئيسية ، الجمل الثانوية ، الجمل غير القياسية ، اللاجمل.

1. Introduction

Many types of sentences in English grammar do not follow the regular clause structure patterns or the variants of those structures. Minor sentences are the terms most grammarians use to describe such sentences. A great deal of colloquial English in everyday conversation represents these types of sentences. Furthermore, there are other examples of these patterns that are often encountered by people on different occasions in life such as proverbs, literary writing styles, newspaper headlines, notices, labels, advertisements, and instructional texts. Minor sentences are divided into two main types IrrSs and NonSs. IrrSs deviate from the regular clause structures in the order of the structure elements, lacking obligatory elements, or using subordinate clauses as independent sentences. NonSs are free-standing utterances that do not have clause structure and convey complete thoughts. IrrSs are classified into twelve subtypes while NonS are classified into four subtypes.

Despite the wide use of minor sentences in various linguistic contexts, EFL learners and researchers often face a problem in justifying the use of these forms because of their structures that are deviated from the standard forms that they knew and studied before. This work sheds light on the structures of these two types of sentences in selected comics from Disney children's stories. The study questions are (i) what are the most frequent subtypes of IrrSs and NonSs used in Disney children's stories? (ii) what is the most frequent type of minor sentences used in Disney children's stories?

The study can be useful in pedagogical aspects related to teaching English grammar, especially in helping students to understand the structures of the defective sentences they encounter in their daily lives and their differences from the regular sentences they learn in the classroom.

2. Classification of English Sentence

Yahya & Kareem (2021, p.4) state that knowing what each word means isn't enough for successful understanding. Grammatical rules interweave and interact with conceptualization and knowledge to convey meaning (Ghanim and Salman, 2022, p. 64). Ogden and Richards cited in Kline (1976, p. 3) state that although the sentence is the most prominent, it is not the only symbolic device used to demonstrate the interconnectedness of references. This means that there are other devices by which meanings are conveyed. Crystal & Davy (2013, p. 45) divide formally complete English sentences (incomplete sentences: the sentence in which the speaker never comes to the end of what he was about to say due to whatever reason, possibly interruption) into major and minor types. This division is based on whether they are formed in a regular or irregular pattern. Major sentences are regular while minor ones are irregular (Crystal, 2018, p. 228). The major sentences are divided into simple and multiple

sentences while the minor sentences are divided into IrrSs and NonSs (Berry, 2012, p. 54-55; Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002, p. 14; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 838).

2.1 Major English Sentence

Major sentences are those that follow the regular patterns of clause structures in the major syntactic classes or derivatives of those forms. They are syntactically regular and identical to those found in the language's neutral sphere. Although perspectives differ in what defines a sentence as regular or irregular, the inclusion of both a subject and a finite-verb predicate in a complete sentence structure is the most commonly accepted criterion of a regular sentence (Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002, p. 14; Mala, 2000, p. 80, 2001, p. 24; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 838). Depending on the number of clauses, the major sentences are of two types: simple and multiple (Berry, 2012, p. 54; Crystal, 2018. p. 228; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 719).

The simple sentence is a sentence that has a single independent clause. It contains one subject and one predicate with or without complement, adverbial, or vocative (Berry, 2012, p. 54, Crystal, 2018, p. 228, Quirk et al., 1972, p. 342, 1985, p. 720-721, Quirk and Greenbaum, 1990, p. 204). Such as:

(1) Mary ate the apples.

The multiple sentence consists of more than one clause. Within a multiple sentence, clauses might have equal or unequal status, they are either two or more independent clauses or two or more clauses in which one of them is dependent and relies grammatically on another clause (Coffin et al., 2004, p. 121; Crystal, 1996: p. 32; Mittins, 2015, p. 100; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 719). For example:

(2) The wind dropped and the sun came out.

2.2 Minor English Sentence

In his famous book *Language*, Bloomfield defines a minor sentence as "[a] sentence which does not consist of a favorite sentence-form". By favorite sentence, Bloomfield means the regular sentence that has "actor-action construction" (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 171-172, 176; Graffi, 2001, p. 236). Crystal & Davy (2013, p. 49-50) define a minor sentence as any structure other than the major sentence structure, that has functional characteristics of a major sentence, particularly non-dependence and graphological or prosodic features sentence-ness.

Quirk et al. (1985, p. 838-339) analyze minor structures in terms of basic regular clause elements and adopt this criterion to classify these irregularities into two types; IrrSs and NonSs. The structures of IrrSs can be analyzed by comparing them with regular structures while this is not possible with NonSs. The distinction between these two types of minor structures represents the distinction between sentential ellipsis analysis, the full finite sentences that have undergone deletion/ellipsis, and non-sentential analysis, base-generated words, phrases, or small clauses (Progovac, 2013, p. 597).

2.2.1 Irregular English Sentence

IrrSs do not follow the regular clause structure patterns or the variants of those structures seen in the major syntactic classes. This type of sentence deviates from the regular clause structures in (2.1) above in many ways; they have a different pattern such as structures with subject-verb inversion or with omitted obligatory elements, they come also as independent subordinate (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002, p. 14; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 838). IrrSs are divided into many subtypes which are:

(1) Sentences with optative subjunctive: the subjunctive is a grammatical term that refers to the verb form in particular or sentence type in general. It is used in

sentence classification of mood in contrast to inductive and imperative. The subjunctive mood is used generally to express wishes, desires, uncertainty, etc., so it usually refers to non-factual or hypothetical situations, in contrast to the indicative mood (Crystal, 2008, p. 462; Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002. P. 62; Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 375). The IrrSs of this type are realized by the base form of the verb regardless of the number of subjects, plural or singular (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 155, 839; Fergusson & Manser, 2011). For example:

(3) Long live the Republic!

(2) Irregular wh-questions: the two forms of regular interrogatives, namely *yes-no* and *wh*-interrogatives are not alone for inquiring. There are different irregular forms of wh-questions that are distinguished from regular ones in many things. Jassam (2019, p. 20) lists three points by which irregular wh-questions are recognized from regular wh-questions: (i) irregular wh-questions cannot be analyzed into elements of clause structure, (ii) irregular wh-questions lack some of the elements that are obligatorily present in regular ones, and (iii) the syntactic structure of irregular wh-questions is specific and often characterized by a fixed opening. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 839) and Mala (2000, p. 82) list many types of wh-question that are used generally in daily conversation. For examples:

(4) How come you are so late?

(3) Subordinate clauses: Quirk et. al. (1985, p. 841) treat independent subordinate clauses as IrrSs. These subordinate clauses are used independently without main clauses to convey exclamation. The main clause is omitted to express astonishment without words. For example:

(5) That he should have left without asking me!

(4) Adverbials as directives: In English, there is a special use of adverbials that have discernible predicative power. These verbless adverbial particles that have a meaning of their own are used to give commands as directives. Such minor types of commands have implied verb of motion and are found in the language of the military, so they are quite forceful and presuppose immediate compliance. For Example:

(6) Forward!

(5) Aphoristic sentences: Mac Coinnigh (2015, p. 117) states that all languages have certain structural formulae towards the proverb as a linguistic form that shows a high degree of peculiarity. Taylor (1931, p.16) confirms this by stating that new proverbs have often been made on old models. There are a set of syntactic devices that occur in proverbs such as parallelism, parataxis, and multiple instances of inverted word order. The grammatical parallelism in proverbs is a more rigid form of syntactic repetition in which the grammatical class of each individual element is mirrored in the binary structure that follows (Mac Coinnigh, 2015, p. 113, 117, 123). For example:

(7) The more, the merrier.

(6) Subject - plus - complement construction: constructions of this type are verbless and consist of either subject and subject complement or just complement. Verbless clauses, in general, are syntactically compressed and maybe also subjectless. They miss the form of the verb *be* which with the possible missing subject are recovered from the context (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 844, 996). For example:

(8) They are thick as thieves, and that is no mistake.

(7) Block language: Block language is the language of newspaper headings, notices, titles, labels, and advertisements that is characterized by being reduced

or compacted in order to convey a message economically. The structures of block language are in two types, simple that consists of a noun or noun phrase or nominal clause in isolation, and other forms that have recognizable clause structures (Aarts et al., 2014, p. 50; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 844-845). The block language with recognizable clause structures appears mainly in newspaper headings, personal letters, postcards, and dairies. For example:

(9) THREE JOCKEYS HURT.

(8) Abbreviated sentences in instructional writing: these texts that include (instructional labels on products, technical manuals, recipes, and consumer leaflets on assembling or using products) are characterized mostly by simple surface structures such as imperative sentences which normally instruct, command, or warn the user of a given product. They have abbreviated structures with the frequent omission of certain elements. Articles as in newspaper headlines are often omitted (Massam & Roberge, 1989, p. 134, 135; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 847; Weir, 2018, p. 158). For example:

(10) Just heat and serve.

(9) Abbreviated sentences in informal conversation: in informal spoken English, the initial ellipsis occurs at the beginning of a turn or clause. The initial omitted words are characterized to be unstressed and have low information value. The omitted pronouns and auxiliaries are recoverable either from linguistic context, depending on initial words in the sentence, or from the situational context in case of ambiguity (Biber et al., 1999, p. 157-158, 1104; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 848, 895-896). For example:

(11) You doing anything tonight?

(10) Abbreviated sentences in broadcast commentaries: during fast action, extralinguistic limitations (events time and rhythm) force the commentator to

use very brief utterances with a non-standard structure in order to keep up with the event. Many studies that deal with the syntactic structure of sports commentaries conclude that grammatically incomplete and deviated sentences are used in this genre (Augendre et al., 2018, p. 197; Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002, p. 219, 221). For example:

(12) Two players wounded.

(11) Elliptical sentences in dialogue: Churcher et al. (1997, p. 4) point out that sentences' ellipsis in dialogue commonly occurs for the reasons of economy, style, or emphasis. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 848) state that elliptical sentences occur both in spoken and written dialogues that comment on, respond to or ask about previous sentences produced by another participant. These sentences can be analyzed through a reconstruction, based on preceding sentences. For example:

(13) A: Who painted the wall?

B: Simon.

(12) Elliptical sentences without change of speaker: the last type of IrrSs is found in a single contribution of the speaker or writer. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 849) state that this type appears in written form, especially in fiction and advertisements. By using ellipsis, the advertiser achieves many commercially desirable effects: to decrease the advertisement space where words cost money, and to avoid calling attention to aspects of the message that are not beneficial to the advertiser. In fictional description and narration, elliptical sentences are also common and appropriate (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002, p. 185). For example:

(14) Janet felt uncomfortable. Yes, very uncomfortable.

2.2.2 Nonsentences

Progovac (2013, p. 597) defines NonSs as "free-standing utterances, which are, or at least appear to be, smaller than a sentence". According to Bryant & Aiken (1962, p. 33), NonS is "complete thought lacking formal subject and predicate". These independent units have no sentence structure and may have some grammar at the phrase level (Aart et al., 2014, p. 272; Berry, 2012, p. 54; Nelson, 2001, p. 165). Quirk et al. (1985, p. 849) present four types of NonSs in English:

(1) Simple block language: the second group of block language which includes (titles, headings, labels, notices, and advertisements) is simple and does not have recognizable clause structures. Instead, these types of block language consist of a noun or noun phrase or nominal clause in isolation and there is no need for verbs because they are understood from the context (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 845). Wilson (2014, p. 79) argues that although these structures occur in isolation, they are generally unambiguous because their interpretations are conventionalized within a specific context of situation. For example:

(15) Fresh today.

(2) Independent phrases: the second type of NonSs includes independent noun, adjective, and prepositional phrases. There are many types of noun phrases that are used independently such as:

(16) The door!

The situational context is important to understand some of these directives, example (16) above for instance has more than one meaning depending on its situation, it may mean *Shut the door*!, Open the door!, *Watch the door!*, or *Leave the door* (Aikhenvald, 2010, p. 280; Quirk et al, 1985, p. 850; Nuyts &

Van Der Auwera, 2016, p. 162). Examples about adjective and prepositional phrases are shown below:

(17) Fantastic!

(18) Of all the stupid things to say!

(3) Formulae: formulaic utterances are fixed expressions that are conventionally associated with particular speech acts, such as apologizing, making requests, giving directions, complaining, and others. When people engage in a conversation, they use such expressions to initiate or keep social relations among them or to keep the flowing of the conversation (Berry, 2012, p. 242; Schmitt, 2006, p. 15). These expressions which are called also (fossilized or stereotyped sentences, or routines) are taught first as units without an understanding of their internal structure (Crystal, 2018, p. 514; Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 229). For example:

(19) Happy Birthday.

(4) Interjections: Ameka (1992, p. 101) defines interjections as "those little words, or non-words, which can constitute utterances by themselves". They have exclamatory functions that express the speaker's emotion or attitude including delight, grief, surprise, shock, disgust, dislike, approbation, etc., such as *ah, hey, oh, oops, ouch, sh, ugh, wow,* and others (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1083; Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 293; Sweet, 2014, p. 151).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this research presents a brief description of the research's data collection, its size, the model adopted, and the procedures of analysis. In addition, the researcher gives his justifications for choosing the genre of Disney children's stories as data for this work.

3.1 Data Description

The data that the researcher selects for analysis in the present study is a collection of children's stories produced by The Walt Disney Company. This company, commonly known as Disney, is an American multinational entertainment and media conglomerate that has a wide range of children's publications among other divisions that are dedicated to adult and children's entertainment, including broadcasting, streaming media, theme park resorts, and consumer products. From a different number of printed genres, the researcher chooses Disney comics, which are comic books and strips featuring characters from the company's films and shorts.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The researcher selects fifteen Disney comics as a sample for the present study. The selected comic strips represent the most famous stories of Disney. These stories are *Beauty and the Beast, Brave, Cinderella, Frozen, Monster University, Mulan, Pinocchio, Pocahontas, Ratatouille, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Tangled, The Lion King, The Little Mermaid,* and *The Princess and the Frog.*

3.3 Why Disney Comics?

The researcher in the present study selects publications from the Disney comics for many reasons: (i) the long history of this company, which extends for nearly a hundred years, and the fame gained throughout this time make it a reliable source for study, (ii) these years of working in children's media and literature have given it certainly accumulated experience in this field, (iii) the small number of previous studies that dealt with Disney's printed products makes it a rich linguistic material that needs more studies to explore its various aspects, and finally (iv) comics represent an ideal model for this literary genre,

through which events revolve in the form of exchanged dialogues between the characters of the story in a way that simulates the daily realistic dialogue.

3.4 The Adopted Model

The researcher adopts the model of Quirk et al.'s A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (hereafter CGEL), which is considered the most appropriate model for the current study for two reasons: (i) Quirk et al.'s (1985) CGEL deals with IrrSs and NonSs as minor sentences in more detail, by grouping them according to their structures, and (ii) because of its comprehension, it represents one of the main and famous references for researchers.

3.5 Procedures of the Analysis

In analyzing IrrSs and NonSs in the selected stories, the researcher follows three steps: (i) Underlining the minor sentences in each story, (ii) identifying the type of these minor sentences as IrrSs and NonSs, and (iii) identifying the subtypes of IrrSs and NonSs in addition to the structures and/or types related to these subtypes.

After completing the linguistic analysis using the steps above, the researcher conducts the statistical analysis by determining the frequency, percentage, the most and the least frequent subtypes of IrrSs and NonSs. Furthermore, the researcher identifies the most and least frequent types of minor sentences generally.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The results of the study show that eight subtypes of IrrSs are used. Elliptical sentences in dialogue is the most frequent subtype among the eight used with a frequency rate amounting to (126, 43%). The subtype of *abbreviated sentences in informal conversation* comes second with (94) cases

that represent (32.08%) of the total number. What follows are the subtypes of *adverbials as directives* and *irregular wh-questions* that are numerically close amounting to (27, 9.21%) and (23, 7.84%) respectively. The subtype of *elliptical sentences without change of speaker* comes next in the frequency scale amounts to (12, 4.09%). *Sentences with optative subjunctiv* and *subordinate clauses* share the penultimate position with identical frequency rates amounting to (5, 1.70%). The least frequent type is *subject-plus-complement* which occurs once only with a percentage of (0.34%).

All the above details with percentages are shown in table (1) below:

Table (1) Frequency of IrrSs in Disney Children's Stories

No.	IrrS Subtype	Frequency	Percentage
1	Elliptical sentences in dialogue	126	43%
2	Abbreviated sentences in informal conversation	94	32.08%
3	Adverbials as directives	27	9.21%
4	Irregular wh- questions	23	7.84%
5	Elliptical sentences without change of speaker	12	4.09%
6	Sentences with optative subjunctive	5	1.70%
7	Subordinate clauses	5	1.70%
8	Subject - plus - complement construction	1	0.34%
9	Aphoristic sentences	0	0%
10	Block language	0	0%
11	Abbreviated sentences in instructional writing	0	0%
12	Abbreviated sentences in broadcast commentaries	0	0%
Total		293	100%

It is worth noting that there are four subtypes of IrrSs that do not appear in the Disney stories: *aphoristic sentences, block language, abbreviated sentences in instructional writing*, and *abbreviated sentences in broadcast commentaries*, see figure (1) below:

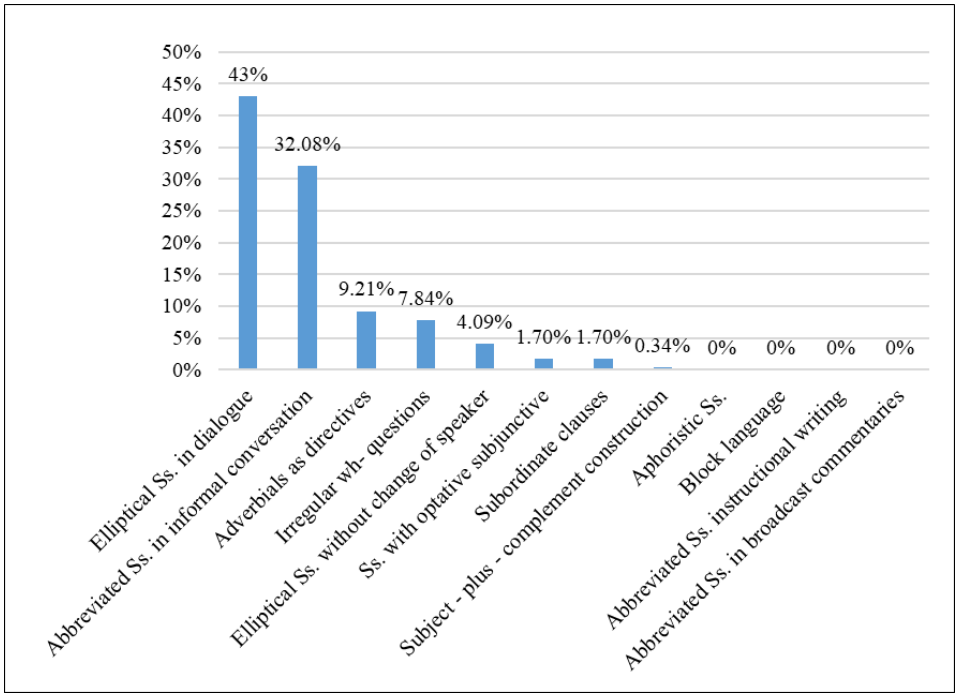


Figure (1) Rates of IrrSs in Disney Children's Stories

Concerning NonSs, consider table (2) below:

Table (2) Frequency of NonS in Disney Children's Stories

No.	NonS Subtype	Frequency	Percentage
1	Independent phrases	302	42.47%
2	Formulae	229	32.20%
3	Interjections	179	25.17%
4	Simple block language	1	0.14%
Total		711	100%

As it is shown in the table, the four main subtypes of NonSs are used in all the Disney stories. The most frequent subtype which occupies the peak of the frequency scale is *independent phrases* that occurs (302) times with a percentage of (42.47%). The subtype of *formulae* comes next which appears (229) times representing (32.20%) of the total number. *Interjections* that appear (179) times, occur in the pre-final rank with a percentage of (25.17%). *Simple*

block language occupies the last position with just one occurrence, see figure (2) below:

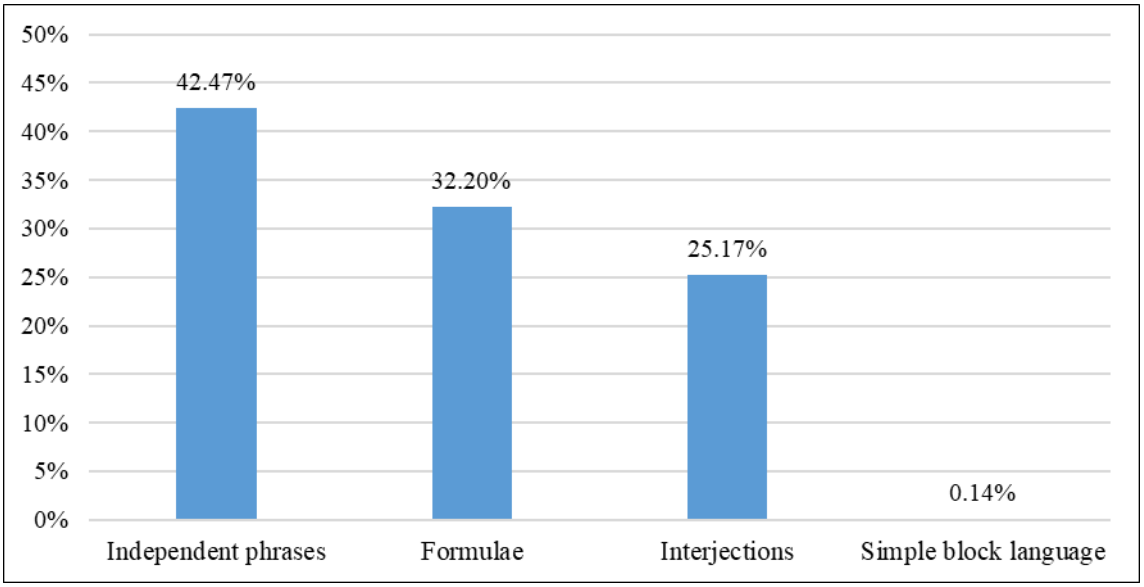


Figure (2) Rates of NonSs in Disney Children's Stories

In a conclusion of all the previously discussed results, it is found that there are (1004) minor sentences used in all the fifteen stories. The two types of minor sentences are found as table (3) shows:

Table (3) Frequency of Minor Sentences in Disney Children's Stories

No.	Minor Sentence Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nonsentence	711	71.81%
2	Irregular sentenc	293	29.18%
Total		1004	100%

IrrS appears (293) times while NonS occurs (711), with percentages of (29.18%) and (71.81%) respectively, see figure (3) below:

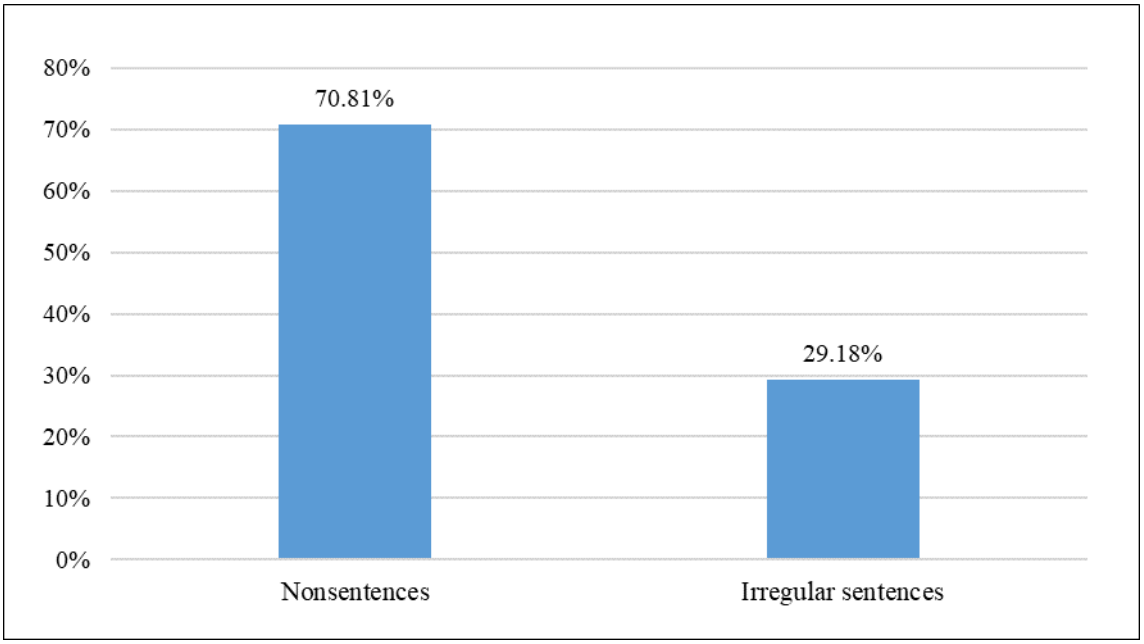


Figure (3) Rates of Minor Sentences in Disney Children's Stories

5. Conclusions

Minor sentences are commonly used in Disney comics for children, there are (1004) minor sentences in fifteen stories, that is, the rate of their recurrences in each story is approximately (67). NonS is the most frequent type of minor sentence with a percentage of (71.81%), while IrrS come next with a percentage of (29.18%). The percentage of NonS which is approximately two and a half of IrrS percentage reflects the fact that the majority of the dialogues and conversations among the characters of the stories consist of short utterances that cannot be analyzed in terms of clause structures. The subtypes of *elliptical sentences in dialogue* and *abbreviated sentences in informal conversation* are the most frequent subtypes of IrrSs, with percentages of (43%) and (32.08%) respectively. The genre of comics that is based on the exchange of conversation between the characters of the story explains this superiority in the number of these two subtypes. The least frequent subtype of IrrSs is *subject-plus-complement* which occurs once only with a percentage of (0.34%). This very low value indicates the lack of importance of this subtype of IrrSs in the Disney

stories. *Independent phrases* and *formulae* are the most frequent subtypes of NonS with a percentage of (42.47%) and (32.20%) respectively. The least frequent subtype of NonS is *simple block language* which occurs once only. This rare usage of this subtype that represents (0.14%) of the total number of NonSs is because it is used in other discourses and it appears accidentally as a book title in one of the fifteen stories.

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