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Error Analysis of EFL Students in Word-Formation Process

A B S T R A C T

This study analyzes errors made by EFL university students in the Word-Formation process, especially in Clipping, Blending, and Compounding. The problem of the study is that many undergraduate students at English departments who study English as a foreign language are uncertain about using the process of word-formation correctly in their post-graduate careers. The study involves (150) English as a Foreign Language undergraduate students (male and female). The results of the study show that the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the recognition and production tests of the three morphological processes (i.e., Clipping, Blending, and Compounding) is good, with fewer errors according to the mean percentage score of errors for each of the clipping, blending, and compounding processes. Students' overall performance on the recognition test of the three morphological processes is better than on the production test of the three morphological processes. On average, the performance of EFL students on tests of recognition and production in the three morphological processes is poor. According to the analysis, clipping is found to cause more errors than the blending and compounding processes. These results indicate that the EFL students make errors in the area of the English Word-Formation process (i.e., Clipping, Blending, and Compounding). Finally, it is recommended that more attention should be directed to morphological knowledge in teaching the English language.

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تحليل اخطاء الطلبة دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية في بناء الكلمات

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 عمرة إبراهيم سلطان / جامعة تكريت / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

الخلاصة:

تحلل هذه الدراسة الأخطاء التي ارتكبها طلاب جامعة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في عملية تكوين الكلمات، خاصة في القص والمزج والتركيب. تكمن مشكلة الدراسة في أن العديد من الطلاب الجامعيين

في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية غير متأكدين من استخدام عملية تكوين الكلمات بشكل صحيح في حياتهم المهنية بعد التخرج. تشمل الدراسة (150) طالب جامعي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (ذكور وإناث). أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن أداء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق في اختبارات التعرف والإنتاج للعمليات المورفولوجية الثلاث (أي القص، والمزج، والتركيب) جيد ، مع أخطاء أقل حسب متوسط درجة الأخطاء لكل من عمليات القص والمزج والتركيب. الأداء العام للطلاب في اختبار التعرف على العمليات المورفولوجية الثلاث أفضل من أداء اختبار الإنتاج للعمليات المورفولوجية الثلاث. في المتوسط، كان أداء طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في اختبارات التعرف والإنتاج في العمليات المورفولوجية الثلاث ضعيفاً. وفقاً للتحليل، وجد أن القص يتسبب في أخطاء أكثر من عمليات المزج والتركيب. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يرتكبون أخطاء في مجال عملية تكوين الكلمات الإنجليزية (أي، القص، والمزج، والتركيب). أخيراً ، يوصى بتوجيه المزيد من الاهتمام إلى المعرفة المورفولوجية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الأخطاء، عملية تكوين الكلمات، القص، المزج، التركيب.

1.0 Introduction:

Speakers have the capacity to create, and listeners can understand, an almost unlimited number of new words. The set of words in a language is never quite fixed. There must therefore be some processes by which new words are created (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010: 33). The study of the process of word-formation can be defined as the study of how new words are built on the basis of other words or morphemes (Plag, 2003: 23). English gets new words by means of easily definable processes employed by users of English. Some of these processes are: Clipping, Blending, and Compounding (Stageberg, 1981: 121).

The present study analyzes the errors made by undergraduate students in learning word-formation processes. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 138) mention that the studying students' errors serves two fundamental purposes: firstly, it

provides facts and statistics from which conclusions about the nature of the language learning process can be made; and secondly, it refers to teachers which difficulties that the foreign language students face in producing target language correctly and which error types that lead to restriction most of the students' ability to communicate effectively.

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

Many undergraduate students in English departments studying English as a foreign language are unsure of the correct use of the word-formation process in their post-graduate careers. This problem may be related to certain difficulties they face during their education, which hinder their learning efforts.

1.2 Aims of the Study:

This study aims at:

- 1- Analysing errors made by EFL university students in Word-Formation process.
- 2- Analysing errors made by EFL university students in Word-Formation process at recognition and production levels.
- 3- Investigating EFL university students' errors in applying three different types of Word-Formation process: Clipping, Blending, and Compounding.
- 4- Finding out which type constitute more errors.

1.3 Research Questions:

This study investigates the following research questions:

- 1- What are the most common errors that Iraqi EFL university students make in Word-Formation process?

- 2- What are the most common errors that Iraqi EFL university students make in Word-Formation process at recognition and production levels?
- 3- To what extent that can be Iraqi EFL university students utilize three different types of Word-Formation process without making errors?
- 4- Which type constitute more errors?

1.4 The Procedures:

- 1- A sample of students will be derived from the second year EFL students of the College of Education for Humanities, University of Kirkuk.
- 2- A diagnostic test will be constructed.
- 3- Data will be analyzed, and conclusions and recommendations will be drawn.

2.0 Theoretical Background:

2.1 Clipping:

This term refers to the process of shortening a word of two or more syllables (usually a noun) without changing its function. *Examination, gymnasium, professor*; all of them have clipped forms: *exam, gym, prof* (Adams, 1973: 135).

2.2 Types of Clippings:

2.2.1 Back-Clipping: Deletes the last part of a word while keeping the beginning part, ex: *dino* ← *dinosaur* (López Rúa, 2006: 676).

2.2.2 Fore-Clipping: Deletes the first part of the word, leaving the last part, which is a pretty noticeable word part, ex: *bus* ← *omnibus* (Marchand, 1969: 443).

2.2.3 Edge-Clipping: Deletes the beginning and end of a word, keeping the middle part, ex: *flu* ← *influenza* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 1635).

2.2.4 Random Clipping: Retains randomly some letters of the base word, especially consonants, ex: *Jpn* ← *Japan* (Mattiello, 2013: 76).

2.2.5 Suffixed Clipping: Reduces a longer word to a single syllable, and then *-y* or *-ie* is added to the end, ex: *telly* ← *television*, *barbie* ← *barbecue* (Yule, 2010: 56).

2.2.6 Clipped Compounds: Reduces a compound to one of its parts, ex: *piano* ← *pianoforte*, *plane* ← *airplane* (Mattiello, 2008: 146).

2.3 Blending:

This term refers to a word-formation process that combines two (or rarely more than two) source lexemes; at least one of them is shortened in combination, sometimes with graphic and/or phonological overlap (Mattiello, 2013: 112).

2.4 Types of Blends:

2.4.1 Total Blend: All source words are reduced to splinters, ex: *brunch* ← *breakfast* + *lunch*, *agitprop* ← *agitation* + *propaganda*, *Bullgarita* ← *Red Bull* + *margarita*.

2.4.2 Partial Blend: Only one source word is reduced to a splinter, ex: *carbecue* ← *car* + *barbecue*, *narcoma* ← *narcotic* + *coma*.

2.4.3 Overlapping Blend: The source words overlap both phonologically and graphologically, ex: *slanguage* ← *slang* + *language*.

2.4.4 Attributive Blend: The first source word modifies the second one (Modifier + Head), ex: *stereorecorder* ← *stereo* + *recorder*.

2.4.5 Coordinate Blend: The source words have the same semantic status (Head + Head), ex: *broccoflower* ← *broccoli* + *cauliflower*.

(Mattiello, 2013: 126-127).

2.5 Compounding:

In English (as in many other languages), new words can be formed from pre-existing words through a process known as *compounding*, in which individual words are “put together” to form a *compound* word. For instance, the noun *land* can be combined with the noun *lord* to form the compound noun *landlord* (Akmajian et al., 2010: 35). The vast majority of compounds are interpreted as the left element modifying the right element in some way. Hence, a *film society* is a type of society (i.e., one concerned with films). In compounds, it is the head that is modified by the other member of the compound (Plag, 2003: 173). Compound words in English have a very important systematic property about their heads: their heads always appear on the right side (the so-called *right-hand head rule*, Williams 1981). The compound takes most of the semantic and syntactic information from its head (Plag, 2003: 173).

2.6 Types of Compounds:

A general method for dividing compounds is into synthetic compounds and root compounds (Lieber, 2009: 46).

2.6.1 Synthetic Compounds: Consist of two lexemes, where the head lexeme is derived from a verb and the non-head is interpreted as the argument of that verb, ex: *dog walker* (Lieber, 2009: 46).

2.6.2 Root Compounds: Consist of two lexemes, which can be nouns, adjectives, or verbs; the second lexeme is usually not derived from a verb, ex: *ice cold* (Lieber, 2009: 46-47).

2.7 Types of Compounds in Terms of Part of Speech:

2.7.1 Compound Nouns: The substructure on the left, the modifier (M), can belong to any part of speech, whether it is a noun, adjective, verb, or preposition. The substructure on the right, the head (H), is a noun. The resulting structure is a noun compound, ex: *chocolate milk, softball, in-group* (Hamawand, 2011: 203).

2.7.2 Compound Verbs: The substructure on the left, the modifier (M), can belong to any part of speech, whether it is a noun, adjective, verb, or preposition. The substructure on the right, the head (H), is a verb. The resulting structure is a verb compound, ex: *hand-wash, shortcut, drink-drive* (Hamawand, 2011: 213).

2.7.3 Compound Adjectives: The substructure on the left, the modifier (M), can belong to any part of speech, whether it is a noun, adjective, verb, or preposition. The substructure on the right, the head (H), is an adjective. The resulting structure is an adjective compound, ex: *bittersweet, fail safe, overactive* (Hamawand, 2011: 209).

2.7.4 Neo-classical Compounds: The two lexemes involved in their formation are not English lexemes (or lexemes of the other European languages involved), but classical Greek and Latin lexemes. Such words as: *biology, geology, astronaut*. Their status and the rules for their formation are not clear at the moment and are a kind of linguistic oddity (Bauer, 2003: 46).

2.8 Types of Compounds in Terms of Semantic Relationship:

2.8.1 Endocentric Compounds: Contains a head. The head expresses the basic meaning of the compound and belongs to the same lexical category as the whole compound, e.g., *goldfish*. It has a head, *fish*, which determines the meaning or the lexical category of the entire compound (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 114). Lieber (2009: 48) states that with endocentric compounds, the referent of the compound is always the same as the referent of its head. Thus, a *windmill* is a type of *mill*.

2.8.2 Exocentric Compounds: The second (rightmost component) is obviously not the semantic head of the compound; the compound as a whole refers to something other than what the second component refers to. Thus, a *redhead* is not a type of head but a person who has red hair (Lieber, 2004: 53). Again, Lieber (2009: 48-49) states that with exocentric compounds, the referent of the entire compound is not the referent of its head. Thus, a *pickpocket* is not a kind of pocket but a sort of person (who picks pockets).

2.8.3 Attributive Compounds: Contains two parts, a head and a non-head, which both contain lexical stems and in which the non-head is interpreted as a modifier of the head. Thus, a *windmill* is a type of mill that is powered by the wind (Ingason & Sigurðsson, 2020: 1).

2.9 Productivity:

Human language is inherently productive. It can generate countless different sentences without repetition. This is what makes human language different from animal communication, which does not have the same level of productivity. Clipping, blending, and compounding are some of the productive tools that language users use to convey messages to the receiver. They are productive because there are many examples of these word-formation processes in different languages (Baram & Noori, 2019: 45).

The productivity of word-formation has been an important factor in providing the vast vocabulary of English over the centuries, and the fact that the process of creating new lexemes with new forms has not vanished can be seen by consulting a dictionary of newly invented words or phrases, such as Barnhart (1973) (Bauer, 1983: 63).

Word-formation processes are variably productive, but they are constantly working to expand the lexicon as new meanings emerge, social and technological changes occur, and individuals create new forms (Malmkjær, 2002: 361).

2.10 The Origin of Error Analysis:

The origins of error analysis in English teaching can be turned back to the mid-20th century, when language teachers became interested in understanding the mistakes made by second language learners. One of the key figures in the development of error analysis was Corder (1967: 161-70), who argued that errors made by second language learners were not random but rather reflective of the learner's underlying knowledge of the language. This led to a shift in thinking about errors, from viewing them as mere mistakes to be corrected to understanding them as valuable sources of information about the learner's language development.

2.11 Types of Errors:

Interlingual and intralingual errors are two types of errors commonly observed in second language learning.

- 1- Interlingual Errors (also known as “interference errors” or “cross-linguistic errors”): Interlingual errors occur when a learner's first language (L1) influences their second language's (L2) production or comprehension. These errors result from the transfer of linguistic features, structures, or rules from the native language to the target language. The learner may apply L1 grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation patterns inappropriately to L2. Interlingual errors can arise due to similarities or differences between L1 and L2.
- 2- Intralingual Errors (also known as “developmental errors” or “overgeneralization errors”): Intralingual errors occur within the target

language system itself. These errors are a normal part of language development and reflect the learner's ongoing process of understanding and internalising the rules and structures of the target language. Intralingual errors may arise due to incomplete knowledge of the target language's grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation.

(Brown, 2007) , (Ellis, 2008).

3.0 Procedure and Administration of the Test:

3.1 Introductory Note:

This study aims to discover and analyze errors in the word-formation process (i.e., Clipping, Blending, and Compounding) made by the second year students of the English department. To achieve the aims of the study, a diagnostic test has been constructed that serves the purposes of the study. The test consists of several items. Its effectiveness is indicated by the items and their arrangement, which depend on the test content, its validity, and reliability.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study:

The population in the current study is (186) second year Iraqi EFL undergraduate students (male and female) who are studying in morning studies in the Department of English at the College of Education for Humanities / University of Kirkuk for the academic year 2022-2023. The number of students in the total sample has been randomly selected since the sample for this study includes (170) students. The number of students who have been examined is (150). The pilot study has included (20) students.

3.3 Test Construction:

The diagnostic test consists of two levels, and the total number of items in the test is (50). The first level is in the form of a recognition test, which consists of two questions specifically designed to reveal the students' ability, at the recognition level, to recognize and identify three different types of word-formation processes (Clipping, Blending, and Compounding). The second level of the test is in the form of a production test, which consists of two questions specifically designed to test the students' ability, at the production level, to form or produce new words by using Clipping, Blending, and Compounding processes.

3.4 The Scoring Scheme:

The students' responses are corrected by the researcher with the help of the supervisor and the professor who taught them; they are either correct or incorrect. When the response is correct, the item has scored two marks, and when the response is incorrect, the item has scored zero. There are no biased scores, i.e., when an item is left unanswered, it is counted incorrectly. Thus, it is scored zero. The total marks for the test are (100).

3.5 The Pilot Study:

To discover the difficulties in the test, a pilot study is conducted to achieve the following:

- 1- Estimate the time needed for the final administration of the test.
- 2- Have an idea about the requirements and arrangements for the final administration of the test.
- 3- Make any necessary modifications for the final administration of the test in order to determine its suitability and efficiency.
- 4- Find out the reliability of the test.

The pilot study has been applied to twenty students (second year students) who are chosen randomly from the College of Education for Humanities at the University of Kirkuk and are assigned to be members of the pilot study. These students are asked to answer the questions of the test after being told its purpose. Besides, the time needed to achieve this task is about one hour.

3.6 Test Validity:

3.6.1 Content Validity:

According to Anastasi and Urbina (1997: 14), content validity refers to “the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of behaviour domain to be measured”. This is accomplished by using a specification table of content and behavior (i.e., whether for recognition or production).

3.6.2 Face Validity:

Face validity emphasizes what teachers and students think of the test. Underhill (1987: 106) states that it should be a particularity of the test by applying the test to teachers to produce very informative and objective comments about the test with their own personal performances.

For the current study, to achieve the face validity of the test, questions of the test have been submitted to a jury members with a covered letter requesting giving comments and their opinion about the construction of the test. Therefore, certain suggestions and modifications that have been made by the jury members on the test are taken into consideration.

3.7 Test Reliability:

Verma and Beard (1981: 86) define reliability as one of the important characteristics of a good test. A test that is conducted with the same conditions for the same sample of students is reliable if its degree of accuracy stays stable and consistent at each time. Reliability means that no matter what it tests, the degree of the test's stability should be stable (Best & Kahn, 2006: 289).

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. However, there is actually no lower limit to the coefficient. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale (p. 231).

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). Using SPSS for Windows step by step: a simple guide and reference.

3.8 Test Administration:

The administration of the test for this study has been applied on March 26th, 2023. The purposes of the test are initially explained to the students by the researcher, who has distributed the sheets of the test to the testees, and they have been given instructions to help them do what is required. What they need to do in response to the test has been demonstrated to them in English and Arabic.

The test papers have been printed to be as interesting as possible. The test paper has been used as an answer sheet. After that, all the test papers have been collected within the time limit to be scored according to the designed scoring scheme.

4.0 Analysis of Data:

4.1 Results:

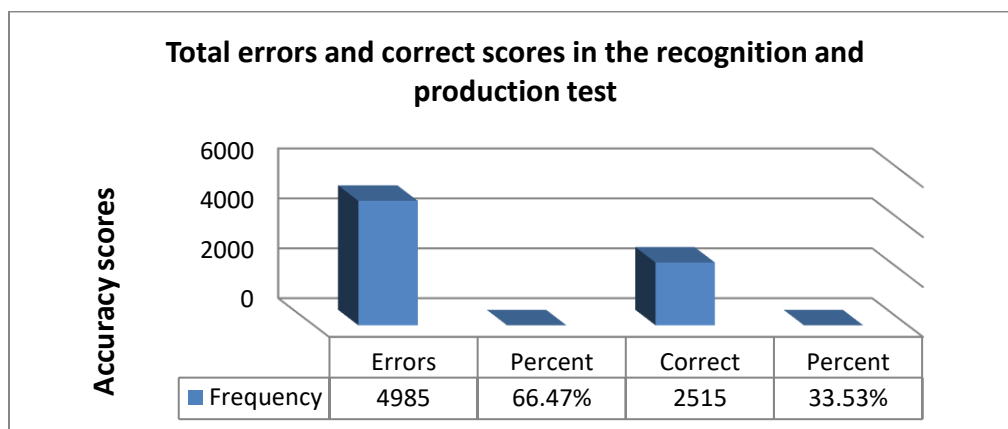


Figure (1): Total Errors and Correct Scores in the Recognition and Production Test

As indicated above in Figure (1) the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the recognition and production tests in the morphological processes is a poor performance with a mean percentage score of errors (66.47%) in contrast with their correct answers with the mean percentage score (33.53%) respectively.

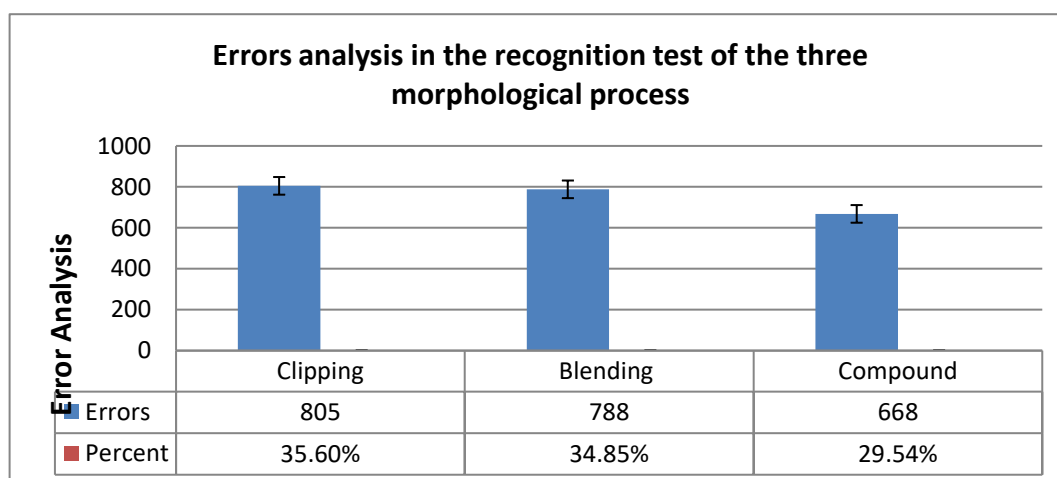


Figure (2): Errors Analysis in the Recognition Test of the Three Morphological Process

Figure (2) illustrates the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the recognition test of the three morphological processes which was a good performance and less errors with a mean percentage score of errors (35.60%) for the clipping process, (34.85%) for the blending process and the mean percentage score error for the compounding process was (29.54%) respectively.

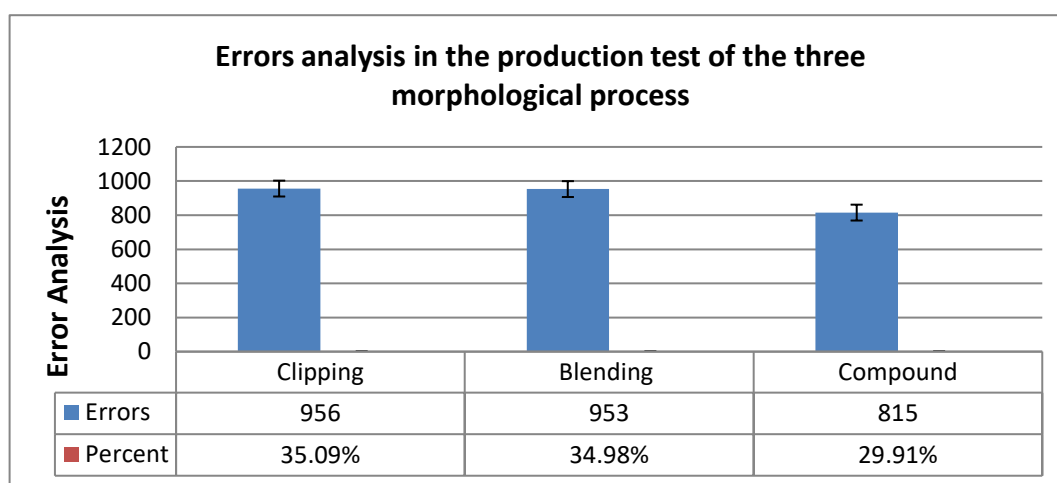


Figure (3): Errors Analysis in the Production Test of the Three Morphological Process

Figure (3) illustrates the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the production test of the three morphological processes which was a good performance and less errors with a mean percentage score of errors (35.09%) for the clipping process, (34.98%) for the blending process and the mean percentage score error for the compounding process was (29.91%) respectively.

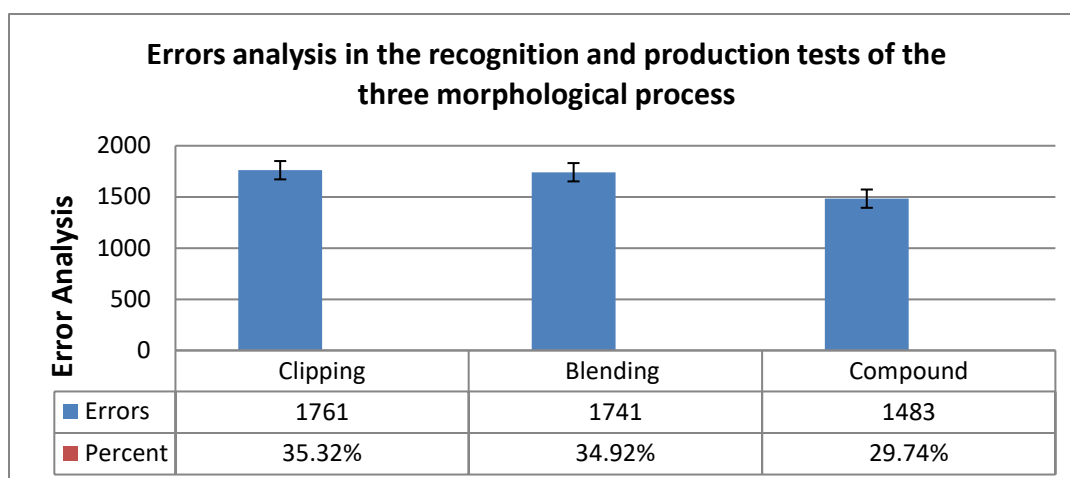


Figure (4): Errors Analysis in the Recognition and Production Tests of the Three Morphological Process

Figure (4) illustrates the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the recognition and production tests of the three morphological processes which was a good performance and less errors with a mean percentage score of errors (35.32%) for the clipping process, (34.92%) for the blending process and the mean percentage score error for the compounding process was (29.74%) respectively.

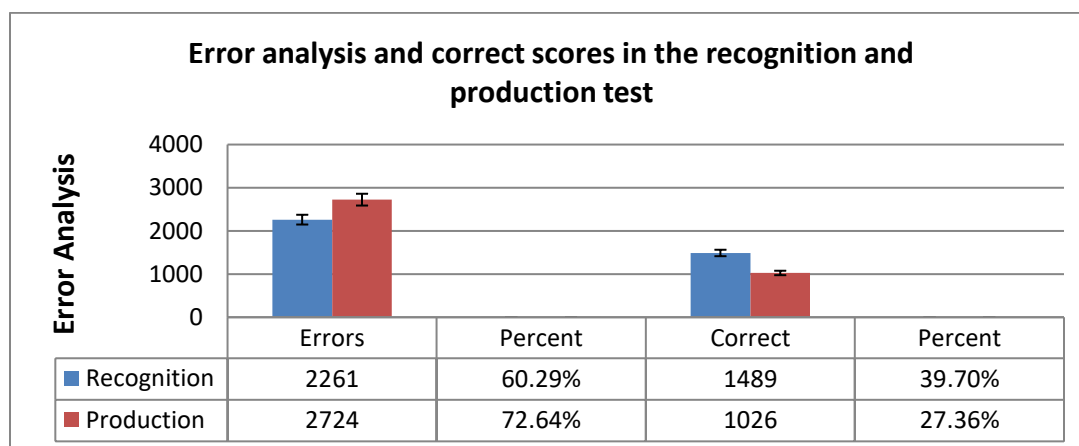


Figure (5): Error Analysis and Correct Scores in the Recognition and Production Test

Figure (5) represented that the overall performance of Iraqi EFL subjects in the recognition test of the three morphological processes is better than their performance in the production test of the three morphological processes with a mean percentage of the error score (60.29%) and accuracy scores percentage (39.70%) in contrast with their performance in the production test with the mean percentage error score (72.64%) and accuracy scores percentage (27.36%).

4.2 Discussion of Results:

The obtained results of the current study show that the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in the recognition and production tests of the three morphological processes is good, with fewer errors according to a mean percentage score of errors for each of the clipping, blending, and compounding processes.

Moreover, the overall performance of Iraqi EFL subjects in the recognition test of the three morphological processes is better than their performance in the production test of the three morphological processes.

On average, Iraqi EFL learners performed poorly in the recognition and production of the three morphological processes, as measured by the percentage of errors and the percentage of correct answers to the three morphological processes.

Based on the analysis, the results indicate that the clipping process is the type that causes more errors than the blending and compounding processes.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:

5.1 Conclusions:

According to the obtained results of the current study, the following points have been concluded:

- 1- Students make errors in the area of English word-formation processes (i.e., Clipping, Blending, and Compounding). These errors are related to many topics that deal with this area.
- 2- Students' errors in word-formation processes may be turned back to the following possible reasons:
 - Students' carelessness in this subject.
 - The influence of the mother tongue.
 - Students may find this subject difficult, and they cannot master it.
 - Students' insufficient training in grammar rules in earlier stages of education.
 - Teachers at higher education levels do not emphasize the basics of grammar, thinking that students have already learned them at earlier education levels.
- 3- Students' overall performance on the recognition test of the three morphological processes is better than their performance on the production test of the three morphological processes, with a mean percentage of the error score of (60.29%) and an accuracy score percentage of (39.70%) in the recognition test, as opposed to a mean percentage of the error score of (72.64%) and an accuracy score percentage of (27.36%) in the production test.
- 4- The performance of EFL students on tests of recognition and production in the three morphological processes is poor according to the percentage of errors (66.45%) and the percentage of correct (33.53%) responses in the three morphological processes.
- 5- According to the analysis, clipping is found to cause more errors than the blending and compounding processes, with a mean percentage score of

errors of (35.32%) for the clipping process, (34.92%) for the blending process, and (29.74%) for the compounding process.

6- Errors must be treated with extra exercises on the topic.

5.2 Recommendations:

In terms of the obtained results and drawn conclusions, the following recommendations are put forward:

- 1- Many kinds of errors in the word-formation process can be eliminated by giving the students more information and lessons generally about the word-formation process, but especially about Clipping, Blending, and Compounding.
- 2- More emphasis should be given to the English word-formation process, especially Clipping, Blending, and Compounding. Because this area of grammar is very important for students of English to learn and is more necessary for the structure of the English language.
- 3- The grammar books, which are studied by college students, must include more subjects about the English word-formation process, Clipping, Blending, and Compounding.
- 4- Students at the university level should be provided with some additional supplementary books about problematic areas in the word-formation processes.
- 5- More attention should be paid to word-formation processes at all levels of education.
- 6- Meaningful and contextual meaning should be provided. The teachers of English need to teach English word-formation processes in contexts that provide meaning.

- 7- Teachers are recommended to give sufficient attention to word-formation processes during the lectures and encourage students to use Clipping, Blending, and Compounding processes more effectively to reduce the errors made by students in this area.
- 8- Attention should be paid to the classification of errors.
- 9- Error analysis should be concentrated to improve the learning of the English language in all skills.

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Abbreviations:

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

M = Modifier

H = Head

L1 = First Language

L2 = Second Language