

Errors committed by Iraqi EFL University students in using stative and dynamic verbs in writing composition

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to investigate the Errors committed by Iraqi EFL University students in using stative and dynamic verbs in writing composition at the University of Babylon.

The design of this study is descriptive qualitative research. The sample of the study comprised 20 students in their third year, and it was selected randomly. The findings of the study showed that 75% of the students were unable to distinguish between dynamic and stative verbs in writing their composition.

The findings show that errors frequently appear in the choice of defining verbs that can be used as stative and dynamic, depending on the context they appear in the groups of verbs of appearance; verbs, describing mental processes and verbs of senses. L1 interference and overgeneralization are the two most common sources of errors.

This study recommends students should be well-trained on how to use stative and dynamic verbs in text because stative verbs are usually not compatible with the progressive while dynamic verbs can be used in the simple and perfect forms as well as the continuous or progressive forms.

Keywords: dynamic, stative verbs, EFL, writing, errors.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Problem

Verbs in English can be classified into two categories: stative verbs and dynamic verbs. Dynamic verbs (sometimes referred to as "action verbs") usually describe actions we can take, or things that happen; stative verbs usually refer to a state or condition which is not changing or likely to change. The problem arises from the state that most Iraqi EFL university learners often committed errors and deviations in the usage of specific stative verbs because the major difference between dynamic and stative verbs is that stative verbs cannot normally be used in the continuous (BE + ING) forms.

1.2 Aims

The study aims to:

1. Exploring a comprehensive study about stative and dynamic verbs in English.
2. Presenting the comparison between stative and dynamic verbs in English.

1.3 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL university learner's often committed errors in using stative and dynamic verbs in writing their composition.

1.4 Procedures

1. What are stative verbs in English?
2. What are dynamic verbs in English?
3. What are the types of noun phrases in English?
4. What are the differences between Stative and dynamic verbs in English?

1.5 Limits

The paper is limited to stative and dynamic verbs in English and the test will be applied to a random sample from the third-year students in the Department of English/College of Basic Education / University of Babylon during the academic year (2022-2023).

1.6 Value

The research will be of value for the teachers and students who want to study stative and dynamic verbs in English.

2. Stative and Dynamic Verbs

2.1 Stative Verbs

Stative verbs are relatively less temporal and because of that, they have fewer restrictions on what time they may encode (Frawley 1992:147-8).

To illustrate Frawley's point, the examples below are used:

1. The dress cost \$10
2. The dresses will cost \$10
3. The dress costs \$10.

The above sentences are past, future and present respectively and yet they are all compatible with the verb cost which is a state verb. The stative situation type is divided into two, qualities and states.

1. Qualities

Qualities are relatively permanent and inalienable properties of the subject referent.

These are normally introduced by the primary verbs be and have (Quirk 1985:200)

4. Olivia is dark.
5. She has dark eyes.

If examples (4 and 5) are studied, it will be observed that it is indeed true that qualities are permanent and cannot be physically transferred to another except through genes. Sentence (4) connotes that Olivia will be dark forever, while (5) illustrates that her dark eyes cannot be given to someone else. In addition to the above characteristics of qualities, (Quirk 1985:200) continues to state that qualities do not occur with the progressive in normal circumstances but at the same time, he doesn't guarantee that the prior statement is completely true as there may be exceptions, for example, where have and be are used with the progressive.

2. States

States are, according to Comrie (1976:49-50) situations that may or may not involve change considering the fact that some verbs are looked at as states whether they change or not. An example is the state of standing; being in standing position.

6. Yesterday, that book stood on the shelf on the right but now it is standing on the shelf on the left

Example (6) explains Comrie's point in such a way that even if the book was somewhere else yesterday as compared to where it is today, the same verb stand is still used and in a stative way although a dynamic implication is inferred considering the change of its standing position. The above can further be described by stating that change of state and change of location in a single clause cannot be brought into mutual relation directly but indirectly, via a mediating component that plays an enabling role (Lee 2008:93).

Since the subject of the sentence (book) did not actively participate in causing of the change, Lee's statement makes it clear that the change is caused by an invisible agent. Although states are ongoing, it does not necessarily mean that they do not start and end. It should be noted that the start or end of a state is dynamic since for a state to be started or stopped, something must have come about to bring about the change into or out of this state (Comrie 1976:49-50).

The above does not imply that states are punctual since a punctual situation involves a change of state but that they are static (McIntyre 2008:2).

3. States Verbs with the Progressive

Stative verbs are defined as the verbs that generally describe a state or quality. They are stable and they lack shift or variation. In this sense, they refer to constant states and they are durative over time. Stative verbs such as possess, know, understand, love, and want are claimed to resist the progressive because they denote static situations and lack internal structure as there are no stages progressing to an end (Bland, 1988).

Thus, stativity of stative verbs contradicts with the non-stativity of the progressive form. Stative verbs taking progressive aspect are argued to be even not grammatical. Despite this, certain stative verbs were claimed to occur rarely with the progressive aspect in certain exceptional cases in spoken language (Schubert, 2002). These exceptional cases and instances are illustrated below.

Firstly, stative verb might occur in progressive form if it takes a non-stative and dynamic meaning (Comrie, 1976). In this sense, Leech et al. (2009) argue that only the stative verbs, which allow both stative and dynamic interpretations, can occur in progressive constructions. The authors divided these verbs into four categories:

- a) Perception and sensation
(e.g. imagine, see, sound, hear, smell)
- b) Cognition, emotion, attitude (e.g. think, feel, remember, hope, want, forget)
- c) Having and being (e.g. be, have, cost, require, rely)
- d) Stance (e.g. stand, live, lie) (Leech et al., 2009: 129;130)

Secondly, stative verbs can occasionally appear in the progressive form to express 'states changing by degrees' (Leech et al., 2009).

7. I'm understanding more about quantum mechanics as each day goes by.

The stative verb understand refers to a developing process and it is used non-stativity to indicate the change in the degree of understanding. Another exceptional case is that some stative verbs might occur with the progressive 'to express intensity of emotion' (Comrie, 1976).

8. I've only had six whiskies and already I'm seeing pink elephants.

The speaker is not seeing pink elephants but imagining things (Comrie, 1976: 37). Here, the progressive use of this stative verb indicates the intensity of feeling and emphasizes the emotive effect.

Thirdly, stative verbs can be exceptionally used in the progressive form to indicate temporary state (Leech et al., 2009).

9. George is loving.

All the attention he is getting this week", the stative verb love is used to emphasize the feeling of loving lasting for a period of time in a limited duration (Kroeger, 2005: 153).

2.2 Dynamic Verbs

Dynamic verb is a type of verb that shows whether the demonstrations still continue or will continue in the future. The dynamic verb is the opposite of a static verb. Actions that can be represented with dynamic verbs can have a certain duration. These actions occur over time. They may or may not have an end point defined by these time intervals and may still not be realized. (Lee 2009:113)

These distinctions also lead to different forms of direction and time. Actions denoted by dynamic verbs have duration. They occur over a duration of time. This time span may or may not have a defined endpoint, and may or may not yet have occurred. These distinctions lead to various forms related to tense and aspect. For example, a dynamic verb may be said to have a durative aspect if there is not a defined endpoint or a punctual aspect if there is a defined endpoint.

Examples of dynamic verbs in English are 'to run', 'to hit', 'to intervene', 'to savour' and 'to go'.

A striking feature of modern English is its limited use of the simple present tense of dynamic verbs. Generally, the tense is required to express an action taking place in the present (I am going). The simple present usually refers to a habitual action (I go every day), a general rule (water runs downhill), a future action in some subordinate clauses (if I go) or the historical present (President signs

bill). In other Germanic languages a progressive aspect of a dynamic verb is often not marked; for example, English 'I am going home' in German is simply *Ich gehe nach Hause*, using the present indicative. (Kroeger, 2005).

A dynamic verb expresses a wide range of actions that may be physical (to run), mental (to ponder), or perceptual (to see), as opposed to a stative verb, which purely expresses a state in which there is no obvious action (to stand, believe, suppose etc.).

Examples of dynamic verbs in English include 'hitting', 'running', 'going', 'fighting', 'enjoying' and 'swimming'. The most striking feature of the modern style English language is the limited use of dynamic verbs in the present time. In general, time may be required to fully express an action that can take place in the present time. (Leech et al., 2009) As an example, the verb "I'm going" can be given. In simple terms, it generally refers to a usual action (I always go), to a general event (the river flows downhill), sometimes to side sentences (if I go) or to a move that will make place later on.

Dynamic verb refers to many different kinds of actions that can be mental (thinking), physical (running) or perceptual (tasting) rather than a verb that expresses an event in which there is no clear action in general. Let's examine examples of dynamic verbs; (Leech et al., 2009)

10. Median is having a shower now.
11. Tom drank soup before coming home at night.
12. Elissa is having lunch with her boyfriend at the moment.

Besides all these, the definition of some types of verbs, as well as physical dynamic verbs, is not so clear. Many activities such as reading, sleeping or writing may not be very active practically. However, they are still classified in the dynamic verbs group and are used in the same way.

A good way to understand the difference between dynamic and stationary verbs is to realize whether there is an explicit start and an end in the activity of the verbs. Dynamic verbs have a clear start and end time, even after a long time. For example.

13. Micheal drank two glasses of coffee during the day
14. Cannes is being very angry at the moment.
15. Layan was thinking about his dog and cats.

Activity Verbs

Identical in meaning to the simple tense form. I'm begging you. I beg you.

I was learning French. I learn French

They will be playing upstairs. They will play upstairs. (Leech, 2009:391)

Process Verbs

Identical in meaning to the simple tense form.

The corn is growing rapidly. The corn grows rapidly.

Traffic is slowing down. Traffic slows down (Lee 2009:432).

3. Dynamic and Stative Verbs Text Analysis

In this chapter I'm going to describe dynamic verbs and stative verbs. The test of this study will be as exercises. These exercises will show the differences and similarities between dynamic and stative verbs in using. A lot of students faced many problems in distinguish between dynamic and stative verbs so; these exercises will help them to understand and distinguish between these verbs.

Let's look at some examples; First, here is a list of some dynamic verbs. You can see that they are all used to describe an action, change, or process. Most of them are used to describe an activity which has a start and an end. Examples of dynamic verbs: **eat walk learn grow sleep talk write run read become go**. These words can be used in the progressive form.

Example sentences with dynamic verbs:

"I can't **talk** right now, I'm **eating** dinner." Present progressive used to describe an action happening now. "Sorry, I'm out of breath because I've been **running**." Present perfect progressive used to describe an action that started in the past, continued for some time and has results now. "I didn't **steal** the necklace. Past progressive used to talk about an action that was happening at a particular time in the past.

Here is a list of some of the stative verbs. Some of these describe relationships between things or people (for example, own) and some describe emotions or states of mind.

Examples of stative verbs: **love hate like prefer doubt seem know own understand**.

Here are some examples, showing that these words cannot be used in the progressive form. Correct: "I **like** chocolate, but I **prefer** cake."

Incorrect: "I'm **liking** chocolate but I'm **preferring** cake." Correct: "I don't **understand** you when you speak quickly." Incorrect: "I'm not **understanding** you when you speak quickly."

There are also some verbs that can be either dynamic or stative, depending on their meaning and context in the sentence. I'm sure you know by now that there are many words in English that can have more than one meaning. Examples of verbs that can be either dynamic or stative: **Think mind have smell sound** Let's look at some examples of how these verbs are used differently. **Example sentences:** "I **think** it is wrong to hit children."

Here, **think** is a stative verb. It means "to have an opinion" and it cannot be used in the progressive form in this case. BUT "I'm **thinking** about buying a new car." Here, thinking is describing a process, or an action. This is something that is happening, rather than simply being. So here we can use the progressive form. "I don't mind if we watch a movie tonight." Here, mind means "be bothered by", which is a state of mind, not an action. Therefore, it is stative. But "I'm not being nosy. I'm **minding** my own business!" Here, **minding** means "**looking** after" and is therefore a process and a dynamic verb. "I have three brothers." Have here talks about the family relationship the speaker has with her brothers and is therefore stative. But "I'm having a bad day today. I'll call you when **things** are better." Having in this sentence means the speaker is going through the process of a bad day. It is therefore dynamic.

4. Conclusion

During the study, it was discovered that all the linguists whose works were consulted implied that states go on for a long period of time and they cannot be executed, the agents have no say or control over the situations and finally, stative verbs are usually not compatible with the progressive. Dynamic verbs can be used in the simple and perfect forms as well as the continuous or progressive forms. There are many types of dynamic verbs, but most of them describe activities or events which can begin and finish.

Therefore, any stative verb can co-occur with the dynamic when motivated by a message that required the progressive use to succeed in communicating that message. In this regard, context also plays a role in the choice of the progressive use of stative verbs. Thus, text can make use of both the communicative need in the context and the frequency information based on a variety of language sources to determine which function and types of stative verbs best illustrate the dynamic use in present-day English to help learners grasp the changes and use the target language in pragmatically appropriate contexts. According to the findings of the test, the number and percentage of incorrect responses for the whole test are more than those of correct responses which indicates that 75% of Iraqi EFL University students faced many problems in distinguishing between dynamic and stative verbs in writing their composition.



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