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Inversion in English

A Paper

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

**In the name of God, the most gracious, the most
merciful**

Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous -

God Almighty has spoken the truth

To my family

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Abstract

This study examines the usage of inversion among Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Inversion, a syntactic phenomenon commonly found in English, poses challenges for EFL learners due to its varied and context-dependent usage. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, this research explores the proficiency level, frequency, and accuracy of inversion usage among Iraqi EFL learners. The study also investigates the factors that influence the learners' ability to correctly employ inversion in different linguistic contexts. Findings from this research contribute to our understanding of language acquisition among Iraqi EFL learners and provide insights for language instructors to enhance teaching methodologies and materials.

Chapter One

Introduction

Inversion in English is a versatile grammatical technique that involves reversing the usual word order of a sentence, often for distinct purposes. By placing the verb before the subject, inversion is employed to emphasize certain elements, establish a more refined or sophisticated tone, or adhere to specific grammatical rules. Primarily, inversion revolves around rearranging the subject and verb in a sentence.

1.1 The Problem

The present study tries to answer following questions:

1. What are the different types of inversions in English ?
2. What difficulties do Iraqi EFL learners face in recognizing and producing inversion?
3. How does inversion impact sentence meaning and communication in English?
4. What are the functions of inversion in English?

1.2 The Aims

The current study has the following aims:

1. Identifying the various types of inversion.
2. Pinpointing the different functions of inversion in English
3. Specifying the difficulties faced by iraqi EFL learners in producing and recognizing inversion
4. Exploring the way inversion influence sentence meaning and communication in English

1.3 The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. There are various types of inversions in English, each serves a distinct communication function.
- 2.
3. Iraqi EFL learners face many difficulties in identifying and using inversion.
4. Inversion in English primarily functions to add emphasis, create rhetorical effects, and alter sentence focus, thereby enriching linguistic expression.

1.4 The Procedures

The present study has the following procedures:

1. Presenting a theoretical background on inversion enhancing its syntactic nature.
2. Testing the fourth-year students in the English department to reveal their proficiency in dealing with instances of inversion and identifying the problems faced by these students.
3. Drawing conclusions based on the findings of the study and proposing potential solutions to address the problems mentioned in the study.

1.5 The Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the use of inversion by Iraqi EFL learners.

1.6 The Value of the Study

It is hoped that this study would be helpful to those who are interested in inversion, whether they are students or teachers.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In English, inversion is a linguistic tool that rearranges the subject and verb in a sentence to create emphasis or introduce variety. It is a fascinating feature that is commonly found in literature and persuasive writing because it adds depth and versatility to sentence structures. There are different types of inversion. According to Kreyer (2006:5), the concept of inversion has been employed to encompass a wide range of syntactically diverse structures. This assertion appears accurate, as inversion can be comprehended from various perspectives.

According to Kreyer (2006:5), the concept of inversion has been employed to encompass a wide range of syntactically diverse structures. This assertion appears accurate, as inversion can be comprehended from various perspectives. Tárnayiková (2007:105) references Crystal (1989), who provides a narrower definition of inversion as the act of reversing the order of subject and predicate.

2.2 Definition of Inversion

In English, there are two types of inversion, where the verb precedes the subject in a sentence. The reversal of the normal order of subject and verb word as inversion. Subject-operator inversion happens when the operator, which can either be an auxiliary verb or the main verb "be," is placed before the subject. This can be seen in questions or statements introduced by a negative word. Subject-verb inversion is observed in specific situations when the main verb, usually the verb "be" or a simple verb indicating position or motion, is positioned before the subject. This occurs in limited circumstances, particularly when a sentence begins with an adverbial phrase indicating place (Leech, 2006:58).

It is stated by Crystal (2008:88) that inversion refers to "a term used in grammatical analysis to denote the process or outcome of syntactic change in which another specific sequence of constituents is perceived as the reverse."

According to Leech (1989:218), inversion refers to the changing of the word order in a sentence, particularly the order of subject and verb.

As stated by Govindasamy and David (2002:116) define inversion as the appearance of the main verb before the subject of an utterance. The most frequent type of

inversion in English is subject auxiliary inversion, where the auxiliary verb is switched with its subject. This can be seen in questions like "'Is he reading?'" where the subject 'he' is switched with the auxiliary verb 'is'.

Inversion is a linguistic term used to describe the transformation or outcome of syntactical modification in which a specific arrangement of elements is perceived as the opposite of another arrangement.

For example, in English, constructing queries often involves reversing the placement of the subject and auxiliary, as in "Is he going?" (Crystal 2008:254).

2.3 Types of Inversion

In English grammar, there are four main types of inversion:

1. Subject_ operator Inversion

According to Leech (2002:378), subject-operator inversion can also occur in statements when a negative expression is used at the beginning of the sentence. An example given is: "Only after a long delay did news of Livingstone's fate reach the coast." However, in most contexts, it is more common and natural to use an it-type cleft sentence instead, as in: "It was only after a long delay that news of Livingstone's fate reached the coast."

According to Leech (1989: 915), subject-operator inversion is a type of inversion where the operator, either an auxiliary verb or the main verb "be," is positioned before the subject. This form of inversion is commonly used in questions or statements introduced by negative words. Subject-operator inversion, also known as partial inversion, differs from subject-verb inversion in several ways. It can occur with both transitive and intransitive verbs, although transitive verbs often have a heavier predicate at the end of the sentence. The triggering elements for subject-operator inversion are more limited compared to subject-verb inversion. Inversion is necessary when these specific elements are present, and it can happen with both light and unstressed subject pronouns as well as noun-headed subjects. Moreover, the effects and consequences of subject-operator inversion are distinctly different from subject-verb inversion. For example

_Statement: You are going to the party.

- Inversion: Are you going to the party?

Inversion, where the operator precedes the subject, is a phenomenon observed in various circumstances, as outlined by Quirk (1985:1381). These circumstances include elliptical clauses beginning with "so" or the corresponding negatives "neither" or "nor." For example, in the sentence "John saw the accident and so did Mary," the operator is placed before the subject, indicating that Mary also witnessed the accident. Similarly, when negative elements like "neither" or "nor" are used, as in "John didn't see the accident and neither did Mary," the subject-verb inversion occurs to emphasize the absence of both John and Mary witnessing the accident. In addition, the use of modal auxiliaries such as "may," "might," and "ought" can lead to inversion, although alternative expressions with normal word order are typically preferred.

2. Verb-Subject Inversion

As explained by Leech (1989:915), occurs when the verb precedes the subject in a sentence. This type of inversion is commonly used in sentences that begin with certain adverbs, adverbial phrases, or expressions of place or direction. For instance, subject-verb inversion is frequently employed in the following contexts:

- When the clause starts with an adverb, particularly one that describes the location or context of a situation. This adverb often connects the clause to the preceding text by using a specific noun phrase.
- The initial element may also be a subject predicative that is connected to the previous text.
- The verb used in this type of inversion is typically action-based or copular, and it holds less significance than the subject. It often indicates existence or introduces someone or something onto the scene (ibid).

3. Adverbial Inversion

As stated by Leech (1989:218), this inversion happens when an adverb or adverbial phrase is positioned at the start of a sentence to emphasize it. The subject and verb maintain their regular order. For instance: the statement "Often she goes for long walks in the park" remains unaltered in the inversion: "Often she goes for long walks in the park."

4. Negative Inversion

According to Quirk (1985:1381), this kind of inversion takes place in sentences that begin with negative words or phrases. In such instances, the auxiliary verb or the verb "be" is positioned before the subject.

For instance, the statement "He didn't see anyone at the party" is inverted to "Didn't he see anyone at the party?"

Negative inversion refers to a grammatical structure in which the subject and operator (verb) of a sentence are inverted or switched in order when a negative word or phrase is placed at the beginning of the sentence. This inversion only occurs if the negative element affects the meaning of the entire clause or sentence. The negation can be achieved through words that are negative in form and meaning (such as never, nowhere, neither, nor, not often, on no account) or through words that convey negative meaning without negative form (such as seldom, hardly, rarely). Negative inversion does not occur if the negation is sub-clausal and does not influence the positive nature of the statement. However, if the negative element placed at the beginning of the sentence causes clausal negation, subject-operator inversion becomes obligatory(Quirk, 1973:21).

2.4 Function of Inversion

The function of inversion is to reverse the normal word order of a structure. In grammar, it is used to emphasize language related to the concept of "zero or almost zero" and is typically formal in nature, used in both written and spoken contexts. It can express functions such as limiting adverbs, obligations, rules, and inaction. In literature, inversion is a technique where the normal order of words is reversed to achieve emphasis or specific rhythmic effects. It is used in poetry to create rhythm, meter, and rhyme, and in prose to draw attention to important subject matter. For example, inversion is utilized in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" to highlight the conflict within Macbeth's mind. Similarly, in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," inversion is used to create meter and rhyme. Therefore, inversion is a versatile tool in both grammar and literature, allowing for emphasis, stylistic effects, and the creation of unique rhythms (Quirk, 1985:1381).

Chapter Three

Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 The Test

According to Al-Juboury (1999: 1), the evaluation process comprises a wide array of strategies and methodologies implemented to ascertain the language abilities and limitations of students. This includes a range of modalities, such as exams, assignments, projects, and oral presentations, all designed to appraise students' proficiency in the language and their comprehension of its complexities.

Furthermore, Brown (2000: 384) provides an extensive definition of testing, explaining that it is essentially a mechanism employed to quantitatively measure an individual's aptitude and mastery in a particular field. It serves as a means to assess and evaluate the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired and retained by the test-taker. Whether it is used to gauge students' comprehension of a specific subject, their ability to solve intricate problems, or their proficiency in a language, a test offers a standardized measure to evaluate the extent to which individuals have comprehended and can effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills pertaining to that particular domain.

3.2 Qualities of an Effective Test

A well-constructed assessment should possess the following characteristics:

3.2.1 Validity

Al-Juboury (1999:84) states that validity refers to the extent to which a test accurately measures the specific skill or knowledge it intends to evaluate and effectively fulfills its intended purpose. Validity can be classified as content validity, which assesses the degree to which the test covers the curriculum comprehensively, and face validity, which considers how examinees and educational stakeholders perceive the test.

3.2.2 Reliability:

Reliability pertains to the consistency and dependability of a test's performance without deterioration or failure. It ensures that the test consistently produces consistent results (Al-Juboury, 1999:84).

3.2.3 Practicality

Refers to how convenient, efficient, and feasible it is to administer and score the test. Practical tests are easy to administer, score, and interpret within a reasonable amount of time and resources (Skehan, 1999: 30)

3.3 Sample Test

In the academic year 2023-2024, the examination was administered to a representative group of 30 fourth-year students from the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon.

3.4 Test Design

The test consists of two questions designed to assess the recognition level and production level.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data presented in Table 1 reveals the students' proficiency in recognizing questions related to inversion in English. Specifically, 78.3% of the responses were correct, amounting to a total of 235 accurate answers. In contrast, 18.3% of the responses were incorrect, comprising a total of 55 inaccurate answers. These statistics clearly demonstrate the difficulties that students encountered when answering inversion-related questions, as the proportion of correct responses outweighed the incorrect ones.

The information in Table (1) displays the performances of students at recognition level.

No	Correct Responses	Percentages	Incorrect Responses	Percent ages
1	28	93.3%	2	6.6%
2	24	80%	6	20%
3	24	80%	6	20%
4	20	66.6%	10	33.3%
5	20	66.6%	10	33.3%
6	25	83.5%	5	16.5%

7	23	76.6%	7	23.3%
8	25	83.5%	5	16.5%
9	22	73.3%	8	26.6%
10	24	80%	6	20%
Total	235	78.3%	55	18.3%

The table (1) which displays the number of correct and incorrect responses along with their corresponding percentages in an English inversion exercise, reveals several potential factors contributing to the varied results. Firstly, certain questions may inherently be more challenging, resulting in a higher rate of incorrect responses. Secondly, the varying individual understanding of English inversion among students can significantly impact their ability to answer correctly. Thirdly, external factors such as time constraints, the test environment, or the physical and mental state of the students during the test could influence their performance. Moreover, the instructional approach employed could also play a role, as certain aspects of inversion might have been emphasized more during teaching, thereby leading to better performance on those specific aspects. Lastly, students who have had more practice or are more familiar with the types of questions asked may find it easier to answer correctly. The table indicates an average correct response rate of 78.3% and an average incorrect response rate of 18.3%, suggesting an overall fair understanding of the topic among the students. However, to enhance the accuracy of the analysis, additional context about the nature of the questions and the students' background would be beneficial.

Table (2) displays the results of the Q/2 test on production level. The data reveals that a significant portion, 68.6%, of the total responses were incorrect, amounting to 205. Conversely, there were only 95 correct responses, representing 31.3% of the total responses. These findings suggest that students encounter substantial difficulties when it comes to handling the production level.,

The information in Table (1) displays performance of students at production level

No	Correct Responses	Percentages	Incorrect Responses	Percentages
1	11	36.6%	19	63.3%
2	12	40%	18	60%
3	10	33.3%	20	66.6%
4	14	46.6%	16	53.3%
5	8	26.6%	22	73.3%
6	4	13.6%	26	86.4%
7	9	30%	21	70%
8	10	33.3%	20	66.6%
9	8	26.6%	22	73.3%
10	9	30%	21	70%
Total	95	31.3%	205	68.6%

1. Point 1 (36.6% Correct, 63.3% Incorrect) The majority of students did not answer correctly, indicating that this inversion concept might not be intuitive or adequately covered in instruction.

2. Point 2 (40% Correct, 60% Incorrect) Echoing the first point, a considerable portion of the class is finding this topic challenging, pointing to a widespread issue.

3. Point 3 (33.3% Correct, 66.6% Incorrect) An overwhelming two-thirds of the class answered incorrectly, signaling a need for more focused teaching on this aspect.

4. Point 4 (46.6% Correct, 53.3% Incorrect) Nearly half of the responses were incorrect, suggesting a split in comprehension or shared errors among students.

5. Point 5 (26.6% Correct, 73.3% Incorrect) The significant number of errors indicates that this inversion topic is especially challenging or not well comprehended.

6. Point 6 (13.6% Correct, 86.4% Incorrect) With the highest rate of incorrect answers, this point likely reflects a rule in inversion that is complex or not instinctive.

7. Points 7-10 (30%-33.3% Correct, 66%-70% Incorrect) These points show similar rates of correct and incorrect responses, indicating persistent struggles among students.

Chapter Four

Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions

The following conclusion can be introduced

1.The research findings indicate that the majority of students have a good understanding of the concept of inversion in English sentence structures. However, a significant minority struggle with more complex or unfamiliar aspects of this grammar rule. The information from Tables 1 and 2 provides clear insights into how students comprehend and utilize inversion. Table 1 shows that most students (78.3%) answered correctly, indicating a solid grasp of the concept. However, a noticeable amount of incorrect answers (18.3%) suggests that some students find inversion challenging. Table 2 reveals that students encounter difficulties when trying to use inversion in actual sentences, with 68.6% making errors. This highlights a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, a common obstacle in language learning. In summary, while students may understand the rules of inversion, they struggle with its correct usage. To address this, teachers should focus on providing practical exercises that encourage active language use. Furthermore, further investigation is needed to identify the specific challenges students face with inversion, in order to enhance teaching methods. Improving students' ability to use language structures accurately will enhance their overall English proficiency.

Moreover

Iraqi EFL learners might struggle with recognizing and producing inversion due to the complexity of sentence structures, the variety of inversion types, and potential lack of exposure or practice with English grammar rules.

Furthermore Inversion can impact sentence meaning and communication by adding emphasis, creating variety in sentence structures, and highlighting certain elements of a sentence. It can also affect the tone and style of writing or speaking, influencing how information is conveyed.

Finally Inversion serves several functions in English, such as reversing the normal word order for emphasis or stylistic effects, expressing limiting adverbs, obligations, rules, or inaction, creating rhythm, meter, and rhyme in poetry, and drawing attention to important subject matter in prose. These versatile functions highlight inversion as a linguistic tool that enhances expression and communication in both grammar and literature.

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Appendix

Q1/ Choose the correct answer:

1. Which of the following sentences demonstrates verb_subject inversion?
 - a) "Suddenly appeared a bright light in the sky."
 - b) "The teacher was impressed with the students' performance."
 - c) "I have never seen such a beautiful sunset before."
2. Which type of inversion is used in the sentence: "Not only did he finish his homework, but he also cleaned his room."
 - a) Subject operator inversion
 - b) Adverbial inversion
 - c) Negative inversion
3. Which sentence demonstrates subject operator inversion?
 - a) "Little did she know, her surprise party was being planned."
 - b) "The dog is playing happily in the yard."
 - c) "Often does Jenny visit her grandparents on weekends"
4. Which of the following sentences includes negative inversion?
 - a) "She quickly ate her breakfast before heading to work"
 - b) "Never have I been so excited for a vacation.."
 - c) "John couldn't find his car keys anywhere."
5. Which type of inversion is used in the sentence: "Under no circumstances will I tolerate rude behavior."
 - a) Verb subject inversion
 - b) Adverbial inversion

c) Negative inversion

6. Which sentence demonstrates negative inversion?

a) "The children were happily playing in the park."

b) "I don't want to go to the party tonight."

c) "Rarely have I seen such a talented musician perform."

7. Which of the following sentences includes verb_subject inversion?

a) "At the door stood a tall, mysterious figure."

b) "She ran quickly towards the finish line."

c) "We have never visited that museum before."

8. Which type of inversion is used in the sentence: "Not only does he speak English fluently, but he also speaks French and German."

a) Subject operator inversion

b) Adverbial inversion

c) Negative inversion

9. Which sentence demonstrates adverbial inversion?

a) "Sometimes I like to relax by reading a book."

b) "Little did they know, a surprise party was planned for them."

c) "Rarely have I enjoyed a movie as much as I did this one."

10. Which type of inversion is used in the sentence: "At no point was I informed about the change in schedule."

a) Verb_subject inversion

b) Adverbial inversion

c) Negative inversion

Q2/ Do as Required

1. Negative inversion.(Exemplify)
2. We have never heard a more distinguished performance. (Question)
3. subject operator inversion. (exemplify)
4. This nation scarcely ever in then past faced so great a danger.(question)
5. We seldom receive such generous praise(Rewrite started with the word underlined.)
6. We shall only then begin to realize the appalling danger before us.(question)
7. We were never before asked to make a sacrifice of this magnitude. (Rewrite started with the word underlined.)
8. Negative inversion. (Exemplify)
9. There is rarely an opportunity for us to serve the community in this way(Rewrite started with the word underlined)
10. Verb subject inversion. (Exemplify)