

Grammatical Zeroes: An Evaluative Study

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1. Abstract

Linguists often use the term *zero* to signify the absence of a word (or part of a word) in a structure where that morpheme typically appears.

However, the term *zero* is also used to refer to other aspects where little or no apparent syntactic change occurs. In such cases, the context can help to determine such change.

This research tries, as far as possible, to shed light on these grammatical zeroes where [function words](#) or [morphemes](#) can be omitted; yet grammatical information can be expressed. It also aims to see the extent to which the Iraqi EFL college students are able to recognize and use them.

It is hypothesized; therefore, that the students might face difficulties in recognizing such *zeroes*. Moreover, their performance on the production level is not expected to be good because the absence of certain words or morphemes is not conditioned free. In fact, as the research will show, removing a word or morpheme may cause the sentence to be grammatically incomplete or incorrect.

A diagnostic test is intended to be applied to a sample of Iraqi EFL college students to find out if they are able to recognize and produce grammatical zeroes appropriately and if more efforts are needed to account for this subject.

2. Grammatical Zeroes

2.1 Zero Relativizer .

There are various ways of supplying more information about a noun in English. Frequently, adjectives are used (*a helpful teacher*) and often other nouns (*a university teacher*). A relative clause is another way of supplying more specific information about a noun. It serves to expand the meaning and specify the reference of the head noun in a noun phrase. It is usually introduced by a relativizer which refers to the head of the noun phrase. In addition, all relative clauses have a missing constituent, which again corresponds in meaning to the head noun (Biber et al.

2002:281). Thus, in the following example, the relative clause is constructed of the head noun *earnings*, the relative pronoun *that* referring to *the earnings*, and the gap occurs in the direct object position, after the verb *wore*:

(1) *the diamond earnings that Mama wore. ~ Mama wore the earnings.*
(Ibid.:282)

This example shows one way in which the information is used in the decoding of the sentence to enable the hearer to identify the referent of the noun phrase. This type of relative clause is called *restrictive* and is usually separated by no comma between it and the referent. Compare the *non-restrictive* relative clause in the following example:

(2) *His sister, who is a doctor, lives in Oslo. ~ He has a sister. She happens to be a doctor. She lives in Oslo.*
(Hasselgård, 1999:30)

The clause here adds extra information about the noun phrase and, thus, does not limit or restrict the reference of its antecedent in any way. It is usually signaled by commas in writing (Ibid. : 22).

In addition to these two types, a relative clause can also be *sentential*, i.e. its antecedent is the main clause. As such, it is analyzed as a disjunct, since it represents a comment on the fact or action represented by the main clause:

(3) *Gertrude got very angry, which surprised even herself.*
(Ibid. :30)

There are eight different relativizers that can introduce a relative clause. Five of these are **relative pronouns**: *which*, *who*, *whom*, *whose*, and *that*. The other three are **relative adverbs**: *where*, *when* and *why*. A relative pronoun substitutes for a noun phrase in the relative clause (4), whereas a relative adverb substitutes for an adverbial phrase (5). This is only possible when the antecedent is an expression denoting time, place, or reason. The syntactic function of the relative clause is still postmodifier within a noun phrase (Biber et al. 2002:282):

- (4) *The boy who is playing the piano is my brother.*
(5) a. *This is the period when he lived here.*
b. *This is the place where he was born.*
c. *This is the reason why he spoke.*

(Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:368)

Moreover, in many cases, the relativizer can be omitted resulting in a *zero relativizer* (\emptyset). The omission is correct since it does not bring a verb to the head of the relative clause and the sentence will make complete sense without it. The relativizer removed could be an adverb (6.a) or pronoun (6.b):

(6) a. *The reason \emptyset she left him is still mysterious.*

b. *I disagreed with most of the points \emptyset she raised.*

(Nordquist, 2011:1)

In other sentences, removing the relativizer would make a verb the first word in the clause and cause the sentence to be grammatically incomplete:

(7) a. *I ate the ice cream **which was in the refrigerator.** (Correct)*

b. *I ate the ice cream **was in the refrigerator.** (incorrect)*

(Ibid.)

According to Johannesson (1999: 6-7), the factors on which the choice of a relativizer (*whose* not included) depends are :

- **If the clause is restrictive or non-restrictive.** All relative pronouns can be used in both types of clause; *that* and *zero* can only be used in restrictive clauses.
- **If the antecedent is personal or non-personal.** *That* and \emptyset can be used with both types of antecedent, *who/whom* only with personal antecedent, and *which* only with non-personal antecedent.

However, if the antecedent is a **non-referring** noun phrase (e.g. a subject Predicative), *who* cannot be used, even though the Head of the antecedent noun phrase is a person-denoting noun:

(8) a. *They accused him of being a traitor, **which** he wasn't.*

b. *She*

*is not the brilliant actress **that/** \emptyset she used to be.*

- **If the relative pronoun functions as subject** (followed by a verb) **in the relative clause.** *Who* is chiefly used as subject, *whom* and \emptyset can only be used as non-subject (followed by a noun or pronoun), *which* and *that* can be used in either case:

(9) a. *The apple **which is** lying on the table is fresh. (subject pronoun)*

b. *The apple **which/** \emptyset **George** lay on the table is fresh. (object pronoun)*

• **If the relative pronoun is the complement of a preposition, is the preposition *preposed* (occurs at the beginning of the clause) or *stranded* (occurs with no overt following object at the end of the clause). *Who*, *that* and \emptyset can only be used with a stranded preposition, *whom* and *which* in either case.**

(10) a.* *This is the man \emptyset to I wrote.*
b. *This is the man \emptyset I wrote to.*

• **If the style of the text is formal or informal.** *That* and \emptyset are more likely in informal texts, the others are more likely in formal contexts. Moreover, Newbrook (2011:4) mentions that *that* and *zero* cannot be marked for genitive case (11.a and b). Instead, *whose* functions as a possessive determiner in a noun phrase in the relative clause (10.c):

(11) a.**This is the man *that's* book I borrowed.*
b.**This is the man \emptyset 's book I borrowed.* c. *This is the man *whose* book I borrowed.*

It is concluded from the above that the *zero relativiser* can be a pronoun or an adverb. It can only be used in restrictive clauses, with personal or non-personal antecedent as non-subject, and in informal texts more than in formal ones. Zero relativizer, as the examples above show, has a syntactic function as a clause element in the relative clause. Below are more examples for its function as object of the verb (12.a), object of a preposition (12.b), and adverbial (12.c):

(12) a. *The man I saw \emptyset was Mr. Jones.*
b. *The music \emptyset we listened to last night was good.*
c. *I'll never forget the day \emptyset I met you.*

(Azar, 1999:268-77)

2.2 Zero Infinitive

Zero infinitive, also known as bare infinitive, is a type of complement with an infinitive verb form that is not preceded by the particle *to* (Biber et al. 2002:455).

Zero infinitive is used:

- After most auxiliaries (*e.g. must, can, should, may, might*)

(13) *They **must** leave before 10.00 a.m.*

- After verbs of perception (*e.g. see, hear, and feel*) with the pattern **verb+ object+ zero infinitive**:

(14) *We heard them close the door.*

- After the verbs *make, let, bid, watch* and *have* with the pattern **make/let/bid/watch/have + object+ zero infinitive**:

(15) a. *Her parents let her stay out late.*

b. *Don't make me study that boring grammar book!*

c. *They had me repeat the message.*

(Hughes, 2001:118)

In the passive, however, *make* takes the full infinitive (16.a), whereas *let* is often replaced by another verb (16.b and c). The verb *have* does not occur in the passive.

(16) a. *He made me move my car. ~ I was made to move my car.*

b. *They let me know... ~I was told....*

c. *They let him see the documents. ~ He was allowed to see them.*

- After the expressions *had better/ better*:

(17) *You had better start at once.*

- After *would rather/sooner, rather/sooner than* when referring to the speaker's own actions:

(18) a. *I'd rather wait till tomorrow.*

b. *Rather/Sooner than risk a bad crossing, he postponed his journey.*

-After *but* and *except* when they follow **do + anything/ nothing/ everything**:

(19) *He does nothing but complain.*

- After the verbs, *help* and *know* which can also be followed by full infinitive:

(20) a. *He helped us (to) push it.*

b. *I have known John (to) give better speeches than that.*

(Thomson and Martinet, 1986:220-1)

- After the question word *why* in suggestions:

(21) *Why wait until tomorrow?*

(Hughes, 2001:207)

It is worth mentioning that the zero infinitive and its complements can be fronted where the subject and auxiliary verb following their normal position. Emphatic *do* is used if there is no other auxiliary verb. The fronted zero infinitive is often associated with (22.a) or without (22.b) the echo of a previous verb:

(22) a. *I had said he would come down and come down he did.*

b. *Work I must, and for money.*

(Biber et al. 2002:403).

The zero infinitive may function as subject complement (23.a), subject in a pseudo cleft sentence (23.b), or object complement (23.c):

(23) a. *What the plan does is **ensure** a fair pension for all.*

b. ***Mow** the lawn was what I did this afternoon.*

c. *They made her **pay** for the damage.*

(Quirk et al. 1985: 1067)

2.3 Zero Article

The article is a type of function word that signals definite (by using *the*) or indefinite (by using *a/an*) meaning. In the following example, the identified subject *the man* (or the particularised but not identified subject *a man*) came in with the identified object *the letter* (or particularised but not identified object *a letter*). In all of its varieties, the context helps us to decide which to use:

(24) ***The/A** man came in with **the/a** letter.*

(Johnson, 2005:2)

Sometimes an article is not used. The absence of an article in a noun phrase is referred to as *zero article* (Hasselgård, 1999:39).

Like *a/an* with singular countable nouns, the zero article signals indefiniteness with uncountable nouns (25.a) and plural countable nouns (25.b). The reference is to indefinite number or amount (often equivalent to *some*):

(25) a. *I've got **sand** in my shoes.*

b. ***Carrots** are good to you.*

(Ibid.)

Zero article phrases commonly express non-specific or generic reference but there are also some special uses of zero article with singular countable nouns where, otherwise, *the* or *a/an* is expected to occur. These include:

- **Names of meals:**

(26) *She is having **lunch** with her publisher.*

(Leech And Svartivik, 1994:238)

- **Names of places** (if they consist of a proper name and another noun as well as names of countries, continents, lakes, etc. (27.a)) **and places as institutions** (when the concern is the purpose of the place rather than the place itself (27.b)):

(27) a. *Victoria Station* is in the centre of **London**.

b. The ceremony took place in **church**.

(Biber, et al., 2002:69)

• **Names of sports, games, and activities:**

(28) *Rummy* is definitely much more difficult than **solitaire**.

• **Names of Languages** (29.a) rather than the population of the nation (29.b):

(29) a. *English* uses many words of **Latin** origin.

b. *The Spanish* are known for their warm hospitality.

• **Proper names and titles:**

(30) *Turner* is my favourite painter.

The indefinite article *a*, however, is used when referring to a painting by Turner:

(31) *A Turner* hangs in the bedroom.

• **After the 's possessive case:** His brother's **car**, Peter's **house** etc.

• **With professions:**

(32) *Engineering* is a useful career.

(Hughes, 2001:96)

• **Names of transport and communication.** The zero article is found mainly after the preposition *by*:

(33) *Did you get here by train or by car?*

• **Times of the days, months, seasons, and holidays** especially after the prepositions *at*, *by*, *after*, and *before* (34.a). They are also possible with no preposition (34.b):

(34) a. *These birds are mostly active at dawn and at dusk.*

b. *It's almost dawn.*

• **Illness** especially where it bears a technical medical name:

(35) *She has anemia/ cancer/ diabetes/ influenza /toothache.*

(Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:83)

• **With what and such** when coming with plural count nouns and uncountable nouns:

(36) *It's amazing what beautiful designs they come up with.*

(Leech And Svartivik, 1994:272)

• **Parallel structures** like *X and Y* or *from X to Y* when X and Y are identical or contrasting nouns:

(37) a. *They are husband and wife.*

b. *We met face to face.*

(Ibid.:238-9)

• **Block language**, i.e. abbreviated language used in newspaper headlines, labels, lists, instructions, manuals etc. The following headline can clarify this:

(38) *Fire kills teenager after **hoax**.*

• **Vocatives**

(39) *No hard feeling, **Doctor**.*

With some of these special uses of zero article, it is worth noting that the same type of noun can occur with the definite article when a more specific meaning is intended:

(40) *Bye bye, dear, thanks for **the lunch**.*

(Biber et al., 2002:69-70)

2.4 Zero Plural

Zero plural refers to the absence of the plural markers *-s* and *-es*. which is identical to the singular form. The sign of zero plural is that the same form can be used with singular and plural concord:

(41) a. *The **sheep** is infected by ingesting the mollusc.*

b. *In its grassy centre, the dark-wooled **sheep** were grazing.*

(Ibid. : 233)

This example shows one type of nouns with zero plural, i.e. **animal names**. Animals other than *sheep* which *always* have zero plural are: *Deer, cod, plaice, salmon, and grouse*.

Others that *usually* have zero plural are: *pike, trout, carp, moose, bison, quail, and swine*.

Some animals have both regular and unchanged plural: *antelope(s), fish(s), flounder(s), herring(s), reindeer(s), shrimp(s), and woodcock(s)*.

(Leech And Svartivik, 1994:342)

Quirk et al (1985: 307) mention that zero plural tends to be used by people who are especially concerned with the animals, partly when the animals are referred to in the mass as prey or game:

(42) *We caught only a few **fish**.*

Other types of nouns with zero plural include:

- **Nationality nouns ending in –ese:** *Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Sinhalese, Vietnamese, etc.*

Certain nationalities are sometimes used without –s: *Eskimo(s), Bantu(s), Apache(s), and Navaho(s).*

- **Quantitative nouns:** *dozen, hundred, thousand, and million* have zero plurals when they are premodified by another quantitative word (43.a). *Million* can take plural –s if no noun head follows (43.b):

- (43) a. *several million inhabitants*
 b. *They want several million(s).*

Though the zero form is common enough, the plural form is normally used with all four nouns when an of-phrase follows:

- (44) *(many) dozens of glasses.*

When a numeral follows, *foot* (denoting length) and *pound* (denoting weight) often have zero plural (45.a), whereas *pound* (denoting currency) may have zero or regular plural (45.b):

- (45) a. *She's only five foot two.*
 b. *This ticket costs two pound(s) fifty.*

(Quirk et al. 1985: 309)

Other quantitative nouns with zero plural include: *brace, gross* (12 pounds), *head, horsepower, hundredweight* (12 pounds), *kilohertz, quid* (pound), *score, stone* (4 pounds), *yen* (Japanese currency), and *yoke*:

- (46) *This engine has only fifty horsepower.*

(Ibid.)

- **Nouns with equivocal number** which can be treated as singular or plural:

Barracks (also *s*-less form *barrack*), *craft, crossroads, data, dice, gallows, headquarters, innings, kennels, links, means, mews, oats, offspring, series, species, works* (factory, plant and with compound *streetworks*, for instance) all part of this category:

- (47) *The harbour was full of small craft.*

(Chalker, 1984:42)

- **Nouns as modifiers:**

(48) *The building has offices in it. It is an **office** building.*

Zero plural is also used when the attributed noun is a countable unit of measurement preceded by a number. The hyphen is usually used: *a three-hour exam, a two-part story, a twenty-mile march, etc.*:

(49) *She has a five-year-old son.*

(Azar, 1999:105)

2.5 Zero Genitive

The term *genitive* is used to describe a relation of ownership or association, in which the [referent](#) of the marked [noun](#) is the possessor of the referent of another noun.

In written English, the genitive case of nouns in the singular as well as irregular plural nouns is written with apostrophe + s (*a nurse's skills, the children's bikes, etc*), whereas regular s-plural nouns is indicated only by an apostrophe (*the two chefs' favourite dishes*). In spoken English, singular and plural genitive sound alike and pronounced /ɪz/ (after bases ending in sibilants: /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, and /dʒ/), /z/ (after bases ending in vowels and voiced consonants other than sibilants), or /s/ (after bases ending in voiceless consonants other than sibilants) (Leech And Svartivik, 1994:276).

Quirk et al. (1985: 318), however, mention that since the genitive adds nothing to a regular plural noun in speech, and nothing except the final apostrophe in writing, the plural genitive may be called *zero genitive*.

In addition to its normal use with regular plural, the zero genitive is used to avoid repetitive or awkward combinations of sounds in the following cases:

1. with Greek names of more than one syllable which end in –s, as in *Euripides' /di:z/ plays, Socrates' wife, etc.*
2. with many other names ending in /z/ where, in speech, zero is a variant of the regular /ɪz/ genitive, as in Dickens' (*Dickens's*) /dikinzi:z (dikinzi)/ novels.
3. with fixed expressions of the form **for ... sake**, as in *for goodness' sake, for conscience's sake*, where the noun ends in /s/ (Ibid.: 320-1):

(50) *He did it for charity's sake.*

(Ibid.:325)

2.6 Zero Derivation

Zero derivation (also called conversion) is a type of word formation in which a word is shifted from one lexical category to another without the use of any affixes, for example, the derivation of the verbs *access* and *network* from the corresponding nouns. Conversions of verbs *brown* and *goofproof* from corresponding adjectives, nouns *wash* and *delay* from the corresponding verbs, and adjectives from nouns and vice versa are common in English. (Trask, 1993:309).

Since zero derivation involves no change of form, it is only in a given syntactic context that a case of zero derivation can be recognized. In (51. b), for example, the verb *access* is derived from the corresponding noun:

(51) a. *Students must have **access** to good resources. (Noun)*

b. *The files are **accessed** every day to keep them up-to-date. (Verb)*

In the spoken form, however, the process of zero derivation is accompanied by a shift of stress, for instance, *con'flict (v.)*, '*conflict (n.)*; *trans'fer (v.)*, '*transfer (n.)*; and *ex'port (v.)*, '*export(n.)* (Johannesson 1999:8).

2.7 Zero Conditional

A conditional sentence is a sentence consisting of two clauses: an if-clause (which presents condition) and a result clause. The order of the clauses is not fixed - the 'if' clause can be first or second (Ibid.:412). In zero conditional sentences, the tense in both parts of the sentence does not change and it is in the simple present:

'IF' Clause (Condition) , **Main Clause (Result)**
If + simple present **simple present**

In zero conditional sentences, the time is *now* or *always* and the situation is *real and possible*. They are used to make statements about the real world, and often refer to general truths, such as scientific facts (Hughes, 2001:121). The important thing about zero conditional is that the condition always has the same result:

(52) a. *If you are kind to others, they are kind to you.*

b. *If you heat ice, it turns to water.*

c. *If there is a shortage of any product, prices of that product go up.*

(Thomson and Martinet, 1986:198)

As the above examples show, the zero conditional is used to describe rules and situations where one event follows the other.

When can also be used instead of *if*:

(53) *When I get up late, I miss my bus.*

In addition, this structure is often used to give instructions, using the imperative in the main clause:

(54) *Ask Pete if you're not sure what to do.*

(Hughes, 2001:121)

2.8 Zero Preposition

A preposition usually links nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence and describes the relationship between them. The preposition, its object and any associated adjectives or adverbs constitute a prepositional phrase. In itself, a word like "in" or "after" is rather meaningless and hard to define in mere words. Often prepositions change the meaning of a sentence or structure, or even make a statement clear:

(55) a. *Tom and I will meet **at/beside/in/next to...** this afternoon.*

b. *The bakery **behind/in front of/next to/...** the main church*

(Chalker, 1884, 213-4)

Apart of its importance, a preposition is sometimes not needed. The time adverbial takes the form of a noun phrase instead of a prepositional phrase when a preposition of time is absent. This happens:

● Before the deictic words *last*, *next*, *this*, and *that* (56.a) as well as nouns which have one of these words as an element of their meaning (56.b):

(56) a. *I'll mention it **next time** I see her.*

b. *I'll see her **tomorrow evening**.*

- Before the quantitative words *some* and *every*:

(57) *Some day you'll regret this decision.*

- In frequency expressions:

(58) *Every Sunday we usually go for a walk.*

- In phrases of duration with a verb used with stative meaning (59.a) and in phrases which begin with *all* (59.b):

(59) a. *We stayed there three months. ~ for three months.*

b. *We stayed there all (the) week. ~ (for) the whole week.*

(Quirk et al. 1985: 692-4)

In addition to the above mentioned cases where prepositions of time are generally omitted, Wikipedia (2011:1) mentions other cases where nonstandard absence of prepositions *at*, *to*, and *of* in places where standard English have them leading to sentences like the following:

(60) a. *Meet me five. ~ Meet me at five*

b. *Set the clothes out dry. ~ I set the clothes out to dry.*

c. *They had a piece pie. ~ They had a piece of pie.*

3. The Test

In order to diagnose the difficulties that Iraqi EFL college students encounter in using grammatical zeroes, a test has been constructed. It consists of four questions with two sub-questions (A and B) for each. Each sub-question has five items (See Appendix 1). Sub-question A in each question is meant to measure the subjects' responses on the recognition level, whereas sub-question B is designed to measure their responses on the production level.

As it seems difficult to measure the students' performance in using all types of grammatical zeroes since some of them involve no overt change (See the previous section), only the first four types mentioned in this research are going to account for as EFL college students are more familiar with.

Grammatical Zeroes: An Evaluative Study

The first question is assigned for zero relativizer, the second for zero infinitive, the third for zero article, and the last one dealt with zero plural.

The items included in the test cover as far as possible all the cases related to each type.

The sample to which the test has been administered consists of one hundred subjects of the fourth year students for the academic year (2010-2011) of the Department of English at the College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon. The fourth year students have been chosen to apply the test as the topic under investigation has been taught in their previous years of study.

3.1 The Results of the Test

Sub-question A of each question, as mentioned earlier, is assigned to the recognition level. The results obtained after analyzing the subjects' performance on each item in these sub-questions show that their performance on the zero relativizer and zero infinitive is better than theirs on zero article and zero plural as the percentages of the correct responses of the first ones are (57.4% and 54% respectively); whereas the percentages of the correct responses of the second ones are (30% and 36.2% respectively). This is clarified in the following table:

Table (1)
Subjects' Performance on the Recognition Level

Type of Grammatical Zero tested	No. of Question	No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Zero Relativizer	1. A	1	68	68	32	32
		2	50	50	50	50
		3	29	29	71	71
		4	83	83	17	17
		5	57	57	43	43
		Total	287	57.4	213	42.3
Zero Infinitive	2. A	1	46	46	54	54
		2	67	67	33	33
		3	89	89	11	11
		4	14	14	86	86
		5	54	54	46	46
		Total	270	54	230	46
Zero Article	3. A	1	52	52	48	48
		2	30	30	70	70
		3	16	16	84	84
		4	34	34	66	66
		5	18	18	82	82

		Total	150	30	350	70
Zero Plural	4. A	1	29	29	71	71
		2	43	43	57	57
		3	34	34	66	66
		4	40	40	60	60
		5	35	35	65	65
		Total	181	36.2	319	63.8

The shaded items in the above table represent those that involve grammatical zeroes. The percentage of the correct responses for item (1) (with relative pronoun) in *zero relativizer*, as the results indicate, is higher (68%) than those of items (3) and (5) which have relative adverbs (29%, and 57% respectively). This might be due to the fact that the relative pronouns might be focused on through the subjects' years of study more than relative adverbs.

The percentage of the correct responses for the items that involve *zero infinitive* (1, 2, and 3) is also lower significantly than those that involve *to infinitive* as the percentages of the first ones are (46%, 14%, and 54% respectively); whereas the percentages of the latter's (2 and 3) are (67% and 89%).

Though the *articles* are presented thoroughly through the subjects' years of study, their performance on the recognition level in Question (3.A) is not fine (See Table 1).The subjects were unable to recognize where the article should be used and where not. They might not be familiar with such types of questions.

This is also true for Question (4.A) which is allocated for zero plural. The percentage of the correct responses is not good not only for the items that involve zero plural but also for the others.

On the contrary, the subjects' performance on the production level for zero article and zero plural is better, though not good in both, than their performance on the recognition level as the percentages of the correct response on the production level for those grammatical zeroes are (43% and 48.2%), whereas the percentages of the correct responses on the recognition level are (30% and 36.2%). The subjects might be familiar with the questions presented in the production levels more than those presented on the recognition level. The highest rate of the correct responses in Question (4.B) which is allocated for zero plural, for example, is noticed in item 3 (82%). In this item the subjects were asked to give the plural form of the word *sheep*

which most of them succeeded to produce correctly as they are familiar with it from their early years of study.

Table (2) shows the subjects' performance on the production level:

Table (2)
Subjects' Performance on the Production Level

Type of Grammatical Zero tested	No. of Question	No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Zero Relativizer	1. B	1	50	50	50	50
		2	20	20	80	80
		3	38	38	62	62
		4	19	19	81	81
		5	9	9	91	91
		Total	136	27.2	364	72.8
Zero Infinitive	2. B	1	36	36	64	64
		2	24	24	76	76
		3	64	64	36	36
		4	51	51	49	49
		5	22	22	78	78
		Total	197	39.4	303	60.6
Zero Article	3. B	1	7	7	93	93
		2	87	87	13	13
		3	72	72	28	28
		4	10	10	90	90
		5	39	39	61	61
		Total	215	43	285	57
Zero Plural	4. B	1	5	5	95	95
		2	31	31	69	69
		3	82	82	18	18
		4	65	65	35	35
		5	58	58	42	42
		Total	241	48.2	259	51.8

As for *zero relativizer* and *zero infinitive*, the percentages of the correct responses for these grammatical zeroes on the production level are less (27.2% and 39.4% respectively) than theirs on the recognition level (57.4% and 54% respectively).

In Question (1.B), the subjects were asked to define the words given using suitable relative pronouns that should be omitted when possible (See Appendix I). As the results in the previous table show, most of the subjects were unable to produce correct sentences especially for those that require zero relativizer represented by

items 2, 4 and 5 as the percentages of the correct responses for those items are (20%, 19%, and 9% respectively). The subjects do not seem to know when it is necessary to use relative pronoun and when it is not.

In Question (2.B), on the other hand, the subjects were asked to underline the sentences with incorrect infinitive and correct it but most of them mark the sentences that require zero infinitive (but are written with *to infinitive*) as being correct. This is reflected by the percentages of the correct responses for those sentences: 36%, 24%, and 22% for items 1, 2, and 5 respectively.

Table (3) sums up the subjects' performance on the recognition and production level on the grammatical zeroes tested. It reveals clearly that their performance on *zero relativizer* and *zero infinitive* is better on the recognition level than theirs on the production level, whereas their performance on the production level for *zero article* and *zero plural* is better than theirs on the recognition level:

Table (3)

**Subjects' Performance on the Recognition and Production Level
on the Grammatical Zeroes Tested**

Type of Grammatical Zero tested	Level	Correct		Incorrect	
		No.	%	No.	%
Zero Relativizer	Recognition	287	57.4	213	42.3
	Production	136	27.2	364	72.8
	Total	423	42.3	577	57.7
Zero Infinitive	Recognition	270	54	230	46
	Production	197	39.4	303	60.6
	Total	467	46.7	533	53.3
Zero Article	Recognition	150	30	350	70
	Production	215	43	285	57
	Total	365	36.5	635	63.5
Zero Plural	Recognition	181	36.2	319	63.8
	Production	241	48.2	259	51.8
	Total	422	42.2	578	57.8
Total		1677	41.925	2323	58.075

Conclusions

The term *Zero* is commonly used by linguists to signify an omitted word or suffix which leaves vacant a structural position in a phrase or clause. This is true for certain types of grammatical zeroes such as the zero relativizer (where a relative pronoun or adverb before a relative clause is absent) and zero article (where a definite article *the* or an indefinite article *a* or *an* before a noun is absent). Other types involve no overt change in form such as zero derivation and zero plural where context plays a vital role in distinguishing the form of the word.

The analysis of the subjects' responses to the items of the test yields that though the subjects are familiar with the grammatical zeroes tested as they are presented to them through their years of study, they face difficulties in recognizing and producing them as the rate of their total correct responses in the test (**41.925%**) is lower than that of their incorrect ones (**58.075%**). This indicates that the subjects' comprehension in the subject under study is not well either.

The subjects' performance on *zero relativizer* and *zero infinitive*; however, is better on the recognition level than theirs on the production level as the percentages of their correct responses on the recognition level are (**57.4%** and **54%** respectively); whereas theirs on the production level are (**27.2%** and **39.4%** respectively)

The subjects' performance on the production level for *zero article* and *zero plural*, on the other hand, is better than theirs on the recognition level as the percentages of the correct response on the production level for those grammatical zeroes are (**43%** and **48.2%** respectively), whereas theirs on the recognition level are (**30%** and **36.2%** respectively).

Knowing the exceptions of the language studied is so important and interesting. Grammar is full of regularities but exceptions are few and could, if not mastered, be controlled. More concentration; therefore, is needed to be paid on this side on the part of the teachers. Students could be guided to make posters related to the subject to be hanged all over the class to stimulate learning or encouraged to work in groups to make short papers to be discussed in the class. Varied methods of teaching could be used in an exciting way to accomplish this task.

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Appendix I

The Test

Q.1 A. *Decide whether the relative pronouns or adverbs in the following sentences must be used (necessary) or not (not necessary):*

1. The person **that** you don't trust won't trust you either.
2. Bill Clinton, **who** was the President of the USA, has only one daughter.
3. That's the restaurant **where** we met for the first time.
4. The tree under **which** they had their home was large.
5. I'll never forget the day **when** I met you.

B. *Write sentences with relative pronoun to explain the meaning of the following words. Use: **who, which, or that**. (Sometimes there is more than one correct answer). **Don't use the relative pronoun if possible:***

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Example: *Gloves are things that you wear on your hand.*

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| 1. A butcher | He | sells | meat |
| 2. Presents | You | give | them to others |
| 3. A kettle | It | heats | water |
| 4. A briefcase | You | carry | papers in it |
| 5. A target | You | try | to hit it |
-

Q2. A. Choose the correct form of *the infinitive* between brackets:

1. Better (**to do / do**) this again.
2. Tell me when (**to press / press**) the button.
3. It is hard (**to change/ change**) jobs after twenty years.
4. I bade him (**to come / come**).
5. He dare not (**to refuse / refuse**).

B. Some of the following sentences have incorrect infinitive. Underline the error and correct it:

1. Work I must, and for money.
2. I'd rather not to eat meat.
3. I got my brother to carry my suitcase.
4. They were made move their car out of the park.
5. Why not to spend a week in Beirut and a week in Cairo?

Q3. A. In the following sentences, the *articles* are sometimes used and sometimes not used. Say whether they are used correctly (**correct**) or used incorrectly (**incorrect**):

1. I can't believe I failed yesterday's test!
2. I lived on Main Street when I first came to town.
3. The sunshine is warm and cheerful.
4. I hardly believe such good luck was mine.
5. He has an influenza.

B. Complete the sentences with *a/an/the or Ø*

1. The ceremony took place in -----church.
 2. He pays me ----- weekly visit.
 3. I usually go home by ----- car.
 4. They are experts on ----- eighteenth-century furniture.
 5. -----Japanese often work day and night.
-

Q4: A. Say whether *the plural form* of the underlined words is *right or wrong*:

1. The harbour was full of small craft.
2. He ordered a three-courses meal.
3. John is out of shooting duck.
4. This is a busy crossroads.
5. Several millions inhabitants lived in that country.

B. Write *the plural form* of the words between brackets:

1. My son is nearly six (foot) tall.

2. They want a few (hundred) empty cans.
3. There were (sheep) on the road.
4. The factory is run by five (Chinese).
5. Many (dozen) of glasses are used in this project.