The Problematic Use of Noun Diminutive Forms in English

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Abstract:

In language structure, a diminutive (or diminutive form), is a form of a word used to describe smallness of the object or quality named, intimacy, or endearment. Diminutives are created by adding suffixes to a word.

It has been hypothesized that Iraqi EFL learners find difficulty in using noun diminutive suffixes correctly in their writing tasks since there are different suffixes used to form diminutive nouns. The present study is an attempt to identify the errors made by advanced EFL learners in the Department of English Language / College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon in the use of noun diminutive forms.The current study falls into two parts, theoretical and practical. The theoretical introduces a general background to noun diminutive forms where they are classified according to form and function. A representative sample of Iraqi EFL learners has been chosen for error analysis. Errors have been pinpointed and results have been analyzed and statistically treated. This study is expected to be valuable to both EFL learners and instructors , on one the hand and translators to and from English and Arabic, on the other.

Key words:

Errors, Noun Diminutive Forms, Error Analysis, EFL learners

الكلمات الدالة:

الأخطاء، تشكيل (صياغة) الاسم المصغر، تحليل الأخطاء، والمتعلمين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية .

الخلاصة:

في بنية اللغة، التصغير او تشكيل المصغر من الاسم، هو شكل من كلمة تستخدم لوصف صغر حجم الكائن أو نوعية اسمه، العلاقة. يتم إنشاء الاسم المصغر عن طريق إضافة اللواحق لكلمة واحدة.

لقد تم الافتراض بأن المتعلمين العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية يجدون صعوبة في استخدام اللواحق الاسم المصغر بشكل صحيح في كتاباتهم لأن هناك لواحق مختلفة تستخدم لتشكيل الأسماء المصغرة. هذه الدراسة هي محاولة للتعرف على الأخطاء التي يرتكبها المتعلمين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية في قسم اللغة الانجليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة بابل في استخدام أشكال او الصيغ الاسمية المصغرة. تقع الدراسة الحالية إلى قسمين، النظرية والعملية. يقدم الجانب النظرية خلفية عامة لأشكال الاسم المصغر حيث يتم تصنيفها وفقا للأنواع والوظيفة. وقد تم اختيار عينة من المتعلمين العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية لتحليل الأخطاء. وقد تم توضيح الأخطاء وتحليل النتائج ومعالجتها إحصائيا. ومن المتوقع أن تكون هذه الدراسة ذات قيمة لكلا المتعلمين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية والمدربين، من جهة والمترجمين من وإلى الانجليزية والعربية، من جهة أخرى.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem

The term 'diminutive' has been used to refer to words which denote smallness and possibly also expressing an attitude. The expressed attitude can be either positive or negative, i.e. either affectionate or derogatory, depending on the specific interplay of linguistic and situational factors in a given context"(Schneider, 2003).

Iraqi EFL university learners have a lot of difficulties concerning how to use noun diminutive forms correctly. When they come to deal with them, transfer phenomenon may take place. Such difficulties may be due to the native language interference, lack of knowledge or to the complexity of the second language. On the other hand, such difficulties may be due to the nature of the English system which is different from Arabic system at the level of phonology, morphology and syntax. For example, in English, diminutive forms are realized through external changes, whereas in Arabic the equivalent forms are realized through internal and external changes:

- Birdie = Bird + ie
- Roomette = Room + ette

Moreover, the addition of some diminutive suffixes to many words involves other sounds and spelling changes in patterns already unfamiliar to the learners:

- darling = dear + ling
- sterling = star + ling (from the small star stamped on the coin)
- shilling = shield + ling
- gosling = goose + ling (a young goose)
- a coronet = crown + et(a small crown)
- doggie = dog + ie
- mommy = mom +y
- roomette = room + ette
- rivulet = river + let (a small brook or stream)

This study tries to examine noun diminutive forms in order to find out to what extent the Iraqi students face difficulty in using these forms.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims at:

1- Identifying and classifying the errors made by fourth year students in the Department of English language / College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon.

2- Locating the areas of difficulty that the Iraqi EFL learners encounter in learning categories of noun diminutive forms.

1.3 The Hypotheses

1-Iraqi EFL learners are unable to identify properly noun diminutive forms. This is due to the nature of English system which is different from Arabic system in phonology ,morphology and syntax.

2   Such learners are unable to use noun diminutive forms properly in communication.

3   *Intralingual Transfer* has a greater influence on recognizing and producing noun diminutive forms than other strategies such as intralingual transfer, context of learning... etc.

1.4 Procedures

The procedures followed in carrying out the research include:

1-   Presenting a brief and relevant background of noun diminutive forms.

2-   Conducting a diagnostic test based on the noun diminutive forms under the study. The test will be administered to (50) of fourth – year students in the Department of English / College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon.

3- Analyzing testees' responses in term of interlingual and intralingual and developmental processes to relate these responses to their possible causes.

1.5 Limits of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

1- Iraqi EFL learners in the fourth – year, Department of English language, College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon during the academic year 2014- 2015.

2- Identify, classify and analyze errors made by those learners in using noun diminutive forms.

1.6 Values

This study is hoped to be valuable in:

1- Providing pedagogical insight to those specialized in foreign language teaching and learning such as syllabus designers, learners, teachers, textbook writers and testers.

2-Tracing the errors made by fourth year students, classifying and analyzing them in order to suggest some remedies which will be of value for both the teachers and students.

2. Noun Diminutive Forms

2.1 What is a *diminutive*?

In language structure, a diminutive (or diminutive form), is a form of a word used to describe smallness of the object or quality named, intimacy, or endearment. Diminutives are created by adding suffixes to a word.

Traditionally, the term 'diminutive' has been used to refer to words which denote smallness and possibly also expressing an attitude. The expressed attitude can be either positive or negative, i.e. either affectionate or derogatory, depending on the specific interplay of linguistic and situational factors in a given context" (Schneider, 2003). For examples:

- a *piglet* (= a young pig)
- a *kitchenette* (= a small kitchen)

(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,2015:3)

- a *booklet* (a small book)
- a *circlet* (a small circle)
- a *duckling* (a young duck)
- a *hillock* (a small hill)
- a *novelette (* a short novel)
- a *wavelet* (a ripple or small wave)
- a *rivulet* (a small brook or stream)
- a *gosling* (a young goose)
- a *coronet* (a small crown)
- an *eyelet* (a small hole)
- a *droplet* (a tiny drop)

Sinclair (2002:188) mentions that the diminutive suffixes combine with any nouns or names in order to give a more affectionate or familiar form. These words used by children , by adults when they want to express affection. These words are informal. For examples:

- I'll find out for you, *Jeney*.
- Sam wanted me to take him to see the *birdies* in the park.

Diminutives can be a shortened form of a name (such as "Jen" for "Jennifer" and "Dick" for "Richard") or a name with a diminutive suffix added to it (such as "Bobby" for "Bob").e.g.

- *hanky* for *handkerchief*,
- *doggie* for *dog*
- *Tommie* for *Thomas*.   (Trask,2000: 22)

Diminutives are not common in standard English, unlike many other languages, however diminutives of people's first names are often used, e.g. *Maggie* (from Margaret), *Suzie* (from Suzanne) or *Jimmy* (from James). Words like *mummy* (mom) and *daddy* (dad) are also common everyday examples of diminutive forms of nouns.

Moreover, Wierzbicka (1991:2) states that productive diminutive derivation hardly exists at all, despite the existence of isolated baby forms such as *handies, doggie* or *birdie* (one can say *girlie* but not **mannie, auntie* but not **unclie, horsie* but not **goatie*, and so on.

2. 2   Noun Diminutive Forms

In English ,they are morphemes that convey a meaning of smallness or endearment or both. The most common suffixes are:(-ie, -i, -y),(-ette),(-kin, -ikini, -kins),(-ling),(-et)and (-let).The vowels of these diminutive suffixes are three front vowels /i/, /I/, and /ɛ/. Though these vowels have often reduced to /ə/

in English because of lack of stress. The first suffix /i/ is highly productive. It is frequently attached to one syllable first names to suggest endearment and intimacy or smallness as in:

- *Johnny*, *Jamey,Jackie*.

Similarly, it is attached to common nouns, sometimes indicating a diminutive notion about a participant in a discourse more than about one person or thing being referred to, as in

- *doggie, sweetie, birdie*, or *mommy*.

In addition to these six diminutives, many others have come into English as a part of borrowed words. These are diminutives in their own or parent language but are nonmorphemic in English.

A large variety of suffixes were used to form diminutives in English. These suffixes can be classified as follows:

1. **-aster**: This generally pejorative suffix denoting resemblance was common a couple hundred years ago but is rare today; the only well-known surviving instance is *poetaster*, a word describing an inferior poet. This suffix is an old a genitive suffix.

2. **-cule**: This ending, sometimes with the letter *(c)* omitted, is common in medical and scientific vocabulary. The common examples are :

- *Capsule* ; *molecule* ; *animalcule*   (Zandvoort, 1965:299)

3. **-culus**: This direct borrowing from Latin is rarer than its Frenchified counterpart; *calculus* is perhaps the best-known form, though *homunculus* ("little man") is an interesting example.

4. **-el**: This unassuming French diminutive appears frequently in ordinary language:

- *chapel* ; *tunnel*

5- **-ella**; **-ello**: The feminine form of this Italian suffix is best known as part of Cinderella's name; among objects, *novella* is perhaps the most familiar usage. When appended to a person's name, *-ella* is often used in forming the scientific name of a species of bacteria, as in *salmonella* (the legacy of one D. E. Salmon). The masculine form is seen in *bordello*.

6. **-elle**: This rare suffix occurs in *:*

- *organelle*.

7. **-en**: This suffix denotes a small or young form, as in *kitten*, though *chicken* is a reverse example: Originally, in Old English (as *cicen*), the term for adults was *fowl*, and *chicken* denoted a young bird. It also refers what something is made of, as in: *woolen* .

8. **-erel**: It is from French. As with -rel, words ending in -erel are sometimes pejorative, as in *:*

- *doggerel*; *cockerel*;

9. **-ers**: This diminutive does not literally suggest a reduction in size; it's employed in coining slang such as:

- *bonkers* ; *preggers*.

10. **-ster**: This diminutive refers to a person who does or is what the root word indicates: *gangster* (and

bankster, the recently coined sardonic extension in reaction to the perceived criminality of large banks).
Another examples:

- *youngster*;

11. **-et**, ; **-ette**: The masculine form of this French diminutive appears in such ubiquitous words as *faucet* and *wallet*. English is poor in famine or diminutive suffixes and they are used with decreasing frequency. The feminine form of -et, is seen in words such as:

- *cigarette* ; *kitchenette*; *roomette*   (Quirk et al., 1989: 994)

12 . **–etto**; **-etti**: The singular and plural Italian equivalents of -et are evident in borrowings from that language such as *:*

- *amaretto* and *spaghetti*.

13. **-ie**: Words with this suffix are from English (as in *doggie*; *Sweetie*), Scottish (for example, *laddie*), or Dutch (such as *cookie*), or are diminutives of personal names, as in *:*

- *Charlie*; *Auntie; Jackie*

14. **-il**: Words ending in -il, came to English from Latin through French. such as *:*

- *codicil* and *pencil*

15. **–illa**; **-illo**: This Spanish diminutive appears in such words as:

- *vanilla* and *cigarillo*.

16. **–illus**; **-illi**: This Latin form is rare, confined in usage to *bacillus/ bacilli*   and *lapillus/lapilli*.

17. **-ine**: This French diminutive is on display in *figurine*, *tambourine*, and the like. Sometimes, as with *linguine*, words so appended derive from Italian.

18. **–ina**; **-ino**; **-ini**: These feminine and masculine forms, of Italian or Spanish origin, are shown in *marina*, *palomino*, and many other words. The plural form, -ini, is mostly associated with food:

- *panini*, *zucchini*.

19. **-ing**: This English diminutive generally appears in references to fractions or parts, as in :

- *farthing* or *tithing*

20. **-ish**: This suffix can be added to almost any noun to create an adjective noting the connection or similarity of one thing to another as in *greenish*

21. **–ita**; **-ito**: Spanish words including the feminine form -ita (such as *fajita*) and -ito (*burrito*, for example) have been borrowed into English.

22. **-kin**: This Dutch diminutive is usually found in obscure words like *cannikin*, but *napkin* survives in general usage; *mannequin*, more common than the Dutch-derived *manikin*, is the only French derivation to be used widely in English. The plural form is often attached to given names to form an affectionate diminutive: *Mollykins*, for example.

- *bodkin* or *firkin*; *napkin*   (Stageberg, 2000:335)

23. **-le**: Words with this ending can either be of Latin origin (such as

article or *particle* — which, like particular, stems from *particula*) — or from Middle English (*bundle, puddle*). Another examples:

- *nibble*

24. **–let**; **-lette**: These forms, respectively indirectly and directly borrowed from French, are seen, for example, in *booklet* and *roulette*; *omelet* was formerly written as *omelette*.

- starlet; eyelet   (Ibid.,102)

25. **–ling**: (Anglo Saxony) . Words formed with this diminutive are generally but not exclusively affectionate:

- *underling* = under + ling

- darling = <u>dear + ling</u>

- sterling = <u>star + ling (from the small star stamped on the coin)</u>

- shilling = <u>shield + ling</u>

- fingerling = finger + ling

- gosling = goose + ling

26. **-o**: This diminutive can be endearing or belittling:

- *kiddo*; *wacko*.

27. **-ock**: This form from Old English is best known in the plural usage *buttocks*, but it's also recognizable in:

- *hillock* ; *mattock*,

(Stageberg. 2000:102)

28. **-ola**: This artificial suffix is seen in slang (*payola*) or current or former brand names (respectively, *Victrola* and *granola* or *pianola*).

29. **-ole**: This rare French suffix appears in *:*

- *casserole*.

30. **-olo**, **-oli**: *Piccolo*, borrowed from Italian by way of French, is a double diminutive, because the root word means "little"; *ravioli* includes a plural form of -olo.

31. **-olus**: This Latin diminutive shows up in scientific terminology from Latin, such as

- *nucleolus*.

32. **–ot**; **-otte**(s): These French endings are rare in common nouns (*harlot*, *culottes*) but are seen in given names like:

- *Charlotte* and *Margot*.

33. **-rel**: This more common variant of -erel is often but not always pejorative: *mongrel* and *scoundrel*, but not *kestrel*.

34. **-sie**(s) or **-sy**: The first variant of this baby-talk slang is found, for example, in *footsie* and *onesies*,

while the second appears in *teensy-weensy* and the like and names like *Betsy*.

35. **-ula**: This Latin suffix shows up in *formula*, *spatula*, and other words.

36. **-ule**: This diminutive, found in *granule*, *nodule*, and other words, comes directly from Latin or indirectly from it through French.

- Globule (Quirk et al,1989:995)

37. **-ulum**: This Latin suffix appears in such words as *:*

- *pabulum* and *pendulum*.

38. **-y**: This form, with doubling of the preceding letter, is seen both in diminutives of given names, such as *Bobby* and *Patty*, and in words like *puppy* and *mommy*. Another examples:

- *dreamy, roomy, earthy, tiny, hearty, seedy*

Sinclair(2002:188) mentions that the suffix – **y** combines with any nouns or names in order to give a more affectionate or familiar form. These words used by children , by adults when they want to express affection. These words are informal. For examples:

- "Where is your father, *Danny*? Can I speak to him?'

3.The Test

A language test is a systematic method and a means of checking the student's performance through the elicitation of certain behaviour to make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual (Bachman, 1990:20).The test is designed to locate the precise area of difficulty faced by Iraqi EFL university students in using noun diminutive forms and identifying the causes and the types of their errors.

The sample of the test is (50) learners taken randomly from the fourth stage / Department of English/College of Education for Human Sciences /University of Babylon during the academic year 2014 - 2015.

The test consists of one question .This question has twenty five items and each item has words and the students' task is to form diminutive nouns by adding a suitable suffixes to these words.

3.1 Item Analysis

Davis (1968:162) states that "items analysis is a means of speculating how much information each single item contributes to the information by the test as a whole". The most widely used types of item analysis are the discrimination index and the facility value (Baker ,1989: 51).

3.1.1 Item Discrimination Index (DI) and Facility Value (FV) of the Test 's Items

Item discrimination index refers to the degree to which it discriminates between students, with high and low achievements. Such item discrimination has the following formula:

DI= Correct U – Correct L / N

The following formula can be illustrated as follows:

DI= represents " discrimination index"

U= represents " upper half"

L= represents " lower half"

N= represents "the number of the students taking the test in one group"

Facility value ,on the other hand, refers to the percentage of students who answer the item correctly and it shows how easy or difficult the item is. The facility value of an item can be calculated by dividing the number of correct answers by the number of students. the following formula is used to find out the level of difficulty for each item in the test:

FV= R / N

The following formula can be illustrated as follows:

FV: represents "item facility value"

R = represents "the number of correct answers"

N = represents "the number of the students taking the test"

The following tables show the discrimination index and the facility value of the items of the test:

Table(1) The Discrimination Index and the Facility Value of the Tests Items

No. of Items	DI	FV
1	0.65	0.61
2	0.47	0.54
3	0.43	0.37
4	0.46	0.42
5	0.80	0.77
6	0.32	0.48
7	0.28	0.33
8	0.48	0.42
9	0.54	0.47
10	0.68	0.62
11	0.81	0.76
12	0.31	0.24
13	0.24	0.17
14	0.75	0.54
15	0.56	0.42

16	0.78	0.42
17	0.50	0.48
18	0.75	0.52
19	0.19	0.32
20	0.47	0.42
21	0.66	0.54
22	0.56	0.42
23	0.45	0.48
24	0.32	0.24
25	0.19	0.26
The Mean	0.54	0.47

This table shows the following results:

1. There is no negative discrimination index for any item since all test items have positively valued discrimination indices. The (DI) of the item ranges from (0.19) to (0.80) which refers to the individual differences among the learners. The mean of the (DI) for the whole test is acceptable as the acceptable range of (DI) of the test items stands between (0.20 and 0.90) according to (Mousavi, 1997: 69).

2. The facility values of the test items range between (0.17) and (0.77) which are very apart and the mean of (FV) of the whole test is (0.48) which is acceptable.

4 Results of the Subject's Responses

The following table summarizes the performance of the students in the test's items:

Table (2)The Performance of The Students in the Test's Items

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	30	60	20	40	14	7	14	43	86

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2	9	18	41	82	15	15	30	35	70
3	11	22	39	78	16	16	32	34	68
4	20	40	30	60	17	9	18	41	82
5	17	34	33	66	18	5	10	45	90
6	22	44	28	56	19	12	24	38	76
7	19	38	31	62	20	6	12	44	88
8	31	62	19	38	21	9	18	41	82
9	27	54	23	46	22	13	26	37	74
10	17	34	33	66	23	17	34	33	66
11	27	54	23	46	24	6	12	44	88
12	13	26	37	74	25	19	38	31	62
13	21	42	29	58	**Total**	**398**	**31.84**	**852**	**68.16**

According to the results of the test, the number and percentage of the incorrect responses in the whole test are (852, 68.16%) which are more than that of correct responses (398, 31.84 %). These results indicate that the students encounter difficulty in using diminutive noun forms in English and this in turn verifies the hypothesis of the study.

5. Errors Analysis

Errors analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that the learners make. It involves a comparison between the errors made in   the target language and the target language itself.

6. Sources of Errors

Brown (1987:177) mentions four factors to which students' errors can be attributed. They are interlingual transfer, interalingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies.

6.1 Interlingual Transfer

Errors found to be traceable to first language interference are termed "interlingual" or" transfer errors".This kind of errors is the main concern of this study. Those errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term "interlingual " was firstly introduced by Selinker (1972). He uses this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner's L1 and the target language (Abi Samra, 2003:5).While the term "transfer" , which is derived from the Latin word "transferre", means "to bear' , "to carry" or "to print" a copy from one surface to another(Webster 's third new world international dictionary , 1986). It is also defined (ibid) as " a generalization of learned responses from one type of situation to another "

Ellis (1984:48) states that many errors result from the influence of the mother tongue . In an attempt to make up the deficiencies of his knowledge of the target language, the learner may recourse to the appropriate parts of the native language. Some of the students' responses to Item (2) ,(5), (9)and (15) can reflect this influence:

Item (2) * goosey

Item (5) * deary

Item (9) * Anny

Item (15) * cooky

Interlingual transfer has been found to explain (8.57%) of all students' errors.

6.2 Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual errors are the errors which result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer (Keshavarz, 2003:62; Fang and Xue - mei , 2007:11). Erdogan (2005:266) adds " intralingual errors occur as a result of learners ' attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it". These errors are common in the speech of second language learners and they are often analyzed to see what sorts of strategies are being used by the learners.

Richards (1974:6) states that intralingual errors are items produced by the student which do not reflect the structure of the mother tongue.

These are due to the generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. Such errors may be attributed to certain factors:

a. Overgeneralization: which refers to the incorrect application of the previously learned material to a present foreign language context.

b. Ignorance of rule restrictions: which leads the students to apply some rule to a category to which it is

not applicable.

c. Incomplete application of rules: which involves a failure to learn more

complex types of structure rules.

d. False concepts hypothesized: that may derive from faulty comprehension of a distinction in the target

language.

The items (4),(6),(15), (16) and (22) can illustrate the subjects' strategy of *overgeneralization*:

Item (4) * locking

Item (6) * babycare

Item (15) * cooker

Item (16) * damie

Item (22) * global

The items (1), (2) ,(11), and (16) are examples of the *students' ignorance of rules* restrictions:

Item (1) *Boby

Item (2) * gooser

Item (11) * dropping

Item (16) *cooking

The items (10) ,(13) and (17) are examples of the strategy of incomplete applications of rules:

Item (10) * lording

Item (13) * *falsie*

Item (17) *mosquitie

The items (6), (7), (9), (19) * and (23) can illustrate the false concepts hypothesized:

Item (6) *babysit

Item (7) * circular

Item (9) *Anny

Item (19) * hiller

Item (23) * booter

The percentage of such errors is (45.42%) of the total errors.

6. 3 Context of Learning

Errors of context of learning refer to the negative influence of elements of learning situation, such as the classroom, the lecture, and the curriculum. These kinds of errors are also called "induced errors", which refer to the errors caused by the way in which language items have been taught (VanPatten, 1990: 4). The impact of the context of learning can be found in items items (5), (7), (15), (17),(20)and (22) of the test:

Item (5) *deary

Item (7) *circular

Item (15) * cookling

Item (17) * mosquitte

Item (20) * nibber

Item (22) * poette

The percentage of such errors is (25. 23%) of the total errors.

6. 4 Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are used by learners to overcome a communication problem caused by a lack of or inability to access L2 knowledge (Ellis, 2003: 340).Second language learners will inevitably experience moments where there is a gap between communication intent and their ability to express that intent. Some learners may just stop talking; others will try to express themselves using communication strategies (Yule, 2006 : 197). Corder (1981: 104) states that the subjects' errors in communication strategies are due to reduction or avoidance strategies .He calls the first one as "risk-avoidance" and the second one as "risk -taking" or "resources expansion".

"Avoidance" is one of these strategies. It means not saying what one wants to say, so one has the ability to solve the problem of how to express it (Yule, 2006 : 197).According to this strategy, the subjects may tend to give no responses or make no choices. In other words, avoidance strategy has been used and represented by the items that were left by the subjects with no responses.

The influence of this strategy can be seen in items (6, 8, 11, 14,21, 23 and 24) which the subjects left these items without answer.

Paraphrasing(circumlocution), on the other hand, is another strategy. It is classified under what is called risk-taking strategies. To use paraphrase or circumlocution is to get round the problem with the knowledge available, which is perhaps intelligent, but successful (Corder, 1981: 1 05).Some of these errors of this strategy can be clarified in items (14,16,21,23, and 25):

Item (14) * formular

Item (16) * damsie

Item (21) * globuler

Item (23) * chicknet

Item (25) * ducker

The percentage of such errors is (20.77%) of the total errors.

The following table shows the percentage of sources of errors

Strategies of errors	No. of Errors	%
Intralingual Transfer	387	45.42
Context of Learning	215	25.23
Communication Strategies	177	20.77
Interlingual Transfer	73	8.57

Total	852	100

7. Conclusion

According to the findings of the test which has been applied to a random sample of Iraqi EFL university learners (50 students) from the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of Babylon. The total number and percentage of the incorrect responses are (852, 68.16%) which are more than that of correct responses (398,31.84%). These results indicate that the students face difficulty in using noun diminutive forms in English and these results confirm the hypothesis of the study.

The poor performance of the learners can be attributed to the following strategies:

a. Intraligual transfer has the majority of students' errors because it accounts for (45. 42 %) of the total errors. These errors are related to different grammatical errors committed by the students.

b. The effect of context of learning constitutes (25.23 %) which is the second rate of errors.

c. The students' use of communicative strategies in the third rate of errors (20.77 %) when the students attempt to structure what they mean.

d. Interlingual interference constitutes (8.57 %) which is the fourth rate. These errors are related to the use of the rules of the native language and the use of literal translation by the students.

8. Recommendations

In the light of the discussion of the results of the present study, the following recommendations can be posited:

1. Students should be encouraged to think in English as a separate language that differs from their own native tongue. Teachers should be careful in that all

language practice must focus, in a systematic manner, on those points of language use that present significant learning problems as shown by error analysis.

2. More emphasis should be given to the topic under investigation at all levels of education.

3. English language must be taught by means of communication tasks and real -life situations which provide meaning or in the form of conversation.

4. More practices and exercises should be conducted among students in noun diminutive forms so that the students can recognize the types of these forms .

5. Depending on the types of the errors made by the subjects of this study, the teachers/ instructors should take these errors into consideration and ask their students to avoid such errors.

6. Due attention should be giving to teaching noun diminutive forms in English as it is a problematic area for Iraqi EFL university learners.

7. More exposure to the English language through reading and listening is

necessary.

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Appendix (I)

The Test

Q.1/ Form diminutive nouns out of these words?   (25 Marks)

Words	Answers
1. Bob	……………
2. goose	……………
3. statue	……………
4. lock	……………
5. dear	……………
6. baby	……………
7. pa	……………
8. table	……………
9. Ann	……………
10. lord	……………
11. drop	……………
12. lad	……………
13. cigar	……………
14. false	……………
15. form	……………
16. cook	……………
17. dam	……………
18. mosque	……………
19. nap	……………

20. hill   ……………

21. nib   ……………

22. glob   ……………

23. boot   ……………

24. chick   ……………

25. duck   ……………

Appendix (II)

The possible answers of the test

1. Bobby

2. gosling

3. statuette

4. locket

5. dearie

6. babykins

7. packet

8. tablet

9. Annie

10. lordling

11. droplet

12. cigarette

13. falsetto

14. formula

15. cookie

16. damsel

17. mosquito

18. napkin

19. hillock

20. nibble

21. globule

22. poetaster

23. chicken

24. bootee

25. duckling