

Editing Task for Assessing L2 Writers' Knowledge of Morphosyntax

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### Abstract

The study piloted an editing task containing morphosyntactic errors that L2 learners of English (L1 Arabic) were requested to edit/correct. The editing task contained morphosyntactic violations which are contained in three influential studies (i.e., DeKeyser, 2000; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Linebarger, Schwartz, & Saffran, 1983). The task was completed by thirteen English L2 learners attending level 5 in a five level intensive English program. Participants' performance on the editing task was very poor; their average score was 3.6 out of 24. Hence, the data obtained from these participants was not included in further analysis.

## Background

Most of the research that investigated impact of age on morphosyntax depended on Grammaticality Judgment Tests (GJTs) predominantly (DeKeyser, 2000; DeKeyser, Alfi-Shabatay, & Ravid, 2010; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Seol, 2005). One caveat of intuition-based GJTs is that the participants can guess responses correctly just by chance. Moreover, such measures don't inform about participants' ability to use the tested morphosyntactic features in their writing.

An alternative approach that might control for the aforesaid methodological weaknesses is assessing participants' morphosyntactic knowledge through an editing task. As opposed to an intuition based GJT, an editing task should yield results based more on rationale decision making. With this aim in mind the pilot study attempted to answer following questions.

1. Do L2 learners identify and correct morphosyntactic mistakes in a reading passage?
2. If yes, does the instrument achieve an acceptable reliability standard?

## Method

### Data collection

Thirteen L2 learners (L1 Arabic) who were attending level 5 in a five-level Intensive English Program participated in the pilot. The data obtained was insufficient to make detailed analyses because the completion time was not recorded and some participants did not attempt the complete editing task. Moreover, L2 learners' performance on the editing task depicted a lower level of proficiency as compared to the intended participants in the actual study. However, this preliminary analysis suggested shortening the text and reformulating some sentences that contained the morphosyntactic features.

## Results

A short description of the results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviation, Reliability (Cronbach's alpha), and Average Time Spent on Editing*

<i>n</i>	Number of items	M	SD	Reliability	Average time spent	Sd for av. time
13	24	3.8	2.6	.69	6.3 mins	1.5

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### Relevance to PIE

Since data for the study was obtained from students attending level 5 in PIE, the results of the study suggest an explicit focus on teaching of morphosyntax to students enrolled in the program.

## References

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